



# FORTY-THREE

OXFORD FRIENDS' MEETING  
43 ST.GILES OXFORD OX1 3LW

## NEWSLETTER

Number 405 (online version)

DECEMBER 2012

40 pence

### Recognising your spiritual gifts in the service of the Meeting

Over the last few years I have been looking at ways of nurturing the spiritual life of Oxford Meeting. One of the opportunities which I took whilst doing the two-year 'Equipping for Ministry' course at Woodbrooke was to participate in a two-part course with Thomas Swain, of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, on Spiritual Gifts. These courses were the most inspiring ones I have ever done, and since then I have been hoping to offer something similar to Oxford Friends. I attended two more courses with Thomas this summer and one of the other participants, Wendy Hampton, is also keen to offer this work to Meetings in Britain Yearly Meeting.

So what are Spiritual Gifts? Our gifts are part of who we are, what makes up our uniqueness. They are something given to us to make us whole, and also to help us build the Meeting community. We all bring gifts to the Meeting. We can think of them in a spiritual or religious setting as being such things as healing, speaking in tongues, visions and prophesy; these are extreme and unusual. A gift is often so normal to oneself that it is difficult to recognise.

In our workshop we will use exercises to help reveal each other's spiritual gifts, and to find how they can be used well in the service of the Meeting and in the wider community. It is important to

realise that when we are working with our gifts, it is a pleasure and doesn't feel like work at all; we can serve in joy and not with a sense of burden! We are using something that we have been given to use. A problem that we have, in this country, is that we are raised to be modest to the point of hiding our gifts, and are often embarrassed when we shine. Through this work we are trying to overcome this attitude, and if we all do this, our Meetings will be invigorated and our communities will flourish!

Wendy has undertaken many roles in the Society at both local and national levels. She teaches students with learning disabilities, and has been a trainer and facilitator for over twenty years. She is currently clerk of Sawley Meeting, in Pendle Hill Area Meeting. We have both been trained by Thomas Swain, who has been teaching for many years in this area of building community through the nurturing of spiritual gifts.

*Continued on page 2, column 1*

### **From Quaker Faith and Practice**

Do you recognise the needs and gifts of each member of your family and household, not forgetting your own? Try to make your home a place of loving friendship and enjoyment, where all who live or visit may find the peace and refreshment of God's presence.

### **Advices and Queries 26**

**Deadline for contributions to the January 2013 issue: noon, Monday 17 December**

*Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated to [newsletter@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:newsletter@oxfordquakers.org), and items for the calendar on page 6 can be emailed to [alessandro.simari@keble.ox.ac.uk](mailto:alessandro.simari@keble.ox.ac.uk). Paper copy can be left in the newsletter pigeonhole at the Meeting House. For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit [www.oxfordquakers.org](http://www.oxfordquakers.org)*

Continued from page 1, column 2

Together we are going to run a workshop for OSAM on **Saturday, 19 January** at FMH. It will be both positive and affirming – a great way to energise yourself and enhance your service to your Quaker Meeting.

To book a place, please contact me on 01865 557 464 or [tina.leonard3@gmail.com](mailto:tina.leonard3@gmail.com) or via the pigeon holes. There is a cost of £10 to cover expenses.

**Tina Leonard**



## News from Cuba Friends

I expect that like me, you will have been concerned about effects of Hurricane Sandy on our Friends in Havana. Kirenia says that in eastern Cuba, Banes (which is the Quaker community nearest to Haiti) has suffered damage. I will try to find out more from the Yearly Meeting and hope we will hold them all in the Light. Kirenia writes: "Last week our island suffered the attack of a hurricane in the eastern region. The destruction was terrible. We ask you to pray for our island and for our churches. Our church in Banes was once again affected. We are getting ready to help them and a group of us will go to assist them in any way necessary."

Kirenia has written a reflection entitled *A church incarnate, a community with a mission*, and I'd be glad to share copies.

**Marigold Best**, [marigold.best0@googlemail.com](mailto:marigold.best0@googlemail.com) 2

## I'm a Quaker Life Rep – Ask Me Why?

As ever after a Quaker Life Reps Council weekend my head is buzzing with quotable quotes: "work is love made visible"; "Quaker service should be a joy not a duty"; "nominations is the holiest work"; "Quaker Life is the oil in the engine" ...

The title of this autumn's conference was 'Deepening the life of the Spirit through service'. The astronomer Jocelyn Burnell spoke about a lifetime of Quaker service in meetings all over the UK and in the States: from cutting ham sandwiches for Quaker events as a child in Northern Ireland to giving the Swarthmore Lecture. Nancy Irving spoke from her experience as General Secretary of the World Friends Committee: service for her was "simple human kindness – expressed at some personal cost"; it should not be about ambition, or power or escape. If you are not sure about taking on a particular role, "try it on and see if it fits".

Throughout the weekend, we continued to explore the personal good that can and should come out of service, whether great or small. Oliver Waterhouse (development officer for the Quaker Life Network) put it simply: "the more you give, the more you get".

In our smaller 'home' groups it was heartening to focus on all the positives that had come from our own experience of service in local and Area Meetings, from washing-up to eldering. For some however the 'elephant in the room' remained the reality gap between the ideal of 'serving with joy' and too few people for too many jobs. We shared ideas for lightening and spreading the load. The challenge for Quaker Life Reps is to pass on all the inspiration and information to the hundreds of Members and Attenders in each of our Area Meetings.

We were asked to think of just one thing we could do as 'agents of change'. Like many, I had already decided that I would try and go to Sunday Meeting for Worship at each of the local Meetings in my Area. But I found myself getting up and adding, "I'm going to have a T-shirt printed with I'M A QUAKER LIFE REP – ASK ME WHY?" "Oh bother," I said under my breath as I sat down, "now I'll have to do it". So, coming shortly to a Meeting near you will be me with my T-shirt.

In the meantime, here are some things you might want to know more about:

- All Age Meetings in April 2013; being ready for children in your Meeting; volunteering for children and young people's events.  
cypadmin@quaker.org.uk, 0207 663 1013.
- The Quaker Life Network: a growing group of Friends all over the UK with time, energy, skill and expertise, able to share their experience and help develop good practice. Could the Network meet a need in your Meeting? Might you like to join the Network?  
qlnetwork@quaker.org.uk, 0207 663 1007.

**Jo Dobry** (jcdobry@aol.com, 01865 723636)

*This article first appeared in Charlbury Meeting's newsletter, Viewpoint, issue 278 (Nov 2012), p. 3.*



## Making a Difference

Quakers are very conscious of their social witness – perhaps, indeed, rather proud of the record. So it was salutary on 27 October to join a large ecumenical conference at the King's Centre, Osney, and hear what contributions other churches are making.

A great display of coloured postcards told how churches and church members were responding to local and world needs, and I made time to read each one. Jill Green was cheered to find several cards about sustainability as an issue across faith traditions. I found less on support for asylum seekers or prisoners. The work listed ranged from helping in a charity shop or giving lifts, to running a night shelter, organising financial advice workshops and training lay pastors.

This was essentially a day of celebration, with music, singing and an imposing fair trade lunch. The keynote speakers, Loretta Minghella, Director of Christian Aid, and the author Ann Mosely, gave inspiring presentations. Often we can feel overwhelmed by the problems of the world. Here we were encouraged to share ideas about overcoming them. A core message was that we each have gifts, which can be used to benefit others.

**Peggy Heeks**

## The Two Most Important Words

As many of you will know, I have recently been diagnosed with a terminal illness and my future life expectancy is not great. There is a saying: we are not human beings on a spiritual journey, we are spiritual beings on a human journey. My own spiritual/human journey began while I was still at school. Over the next 40 years or so, I was almost permanently engaged in reading, discussion, research, experimentation and involvement with a number of religious and quasi-religious groups until finally, last year, all this activity culminated in my becoming a Quaker. After being deluged for years by a great avalanche of words, words, words, I formed the firm conviction that there are only two really important words in the English language: Love and Light.

Love is Unity, or a desire for Unity, Light is Wisdom or Mindfulness

Love alone is not enough – it can be indiscriminating and needs to be informed by Wisdom

Wisdom alone is not enough – it can be cool and detached and needs to be tempered by Love

The two combined are all-conquering, although they cannot conquer, only persuade.

To me, these two words, properly understood, are more weighty and significant than all the world's holy books, political manifestos, socio-economic systems and self-help manuals put together, because they transport us from the world of human language, forms and constructs to another level of knowledge and experience: the Spiritual World. This is what Quakerism is all about.

There is another saying: life is a bridge to be crossed, not built upon. These buildings can be physical or mental. To me, life is about building structures until we reach the realisation that all these structures get in the way of our free passage across the bridge and have to be removed.

I feel very happy that my own spiritual journey has ended with a deeply satisfying *denouement* and there is only one possible way to end this message,

Love and Light!

**Ron Hillier**



## International Day for the Abolition of Slavery: 2 December

We're all aware of the part Quakers played in campaigns to end the slave trade (1807) and the abolition of slavery within the British Empire and its colonies (1833). Probably less well known is the fact that Quakers were involved in the setting up of another organisation in 1839 to campaign against the practice of slavery in other countries. Today Anti-Slavery International, its successor, continues to work to eliminate all forms of slavery around the world.

Slavery exists today, despite the fact that it is banned in most of the countries where it is practised usually under another name. Bonded labour affects millions of people when they take, or are tricked into taking, a loan for as little as the cost of medicine for a sick child, and are then forced to work, usually indefinitely, to pay off this loan. Forced labour affects people who are illegally recruited and forced to work by individuals, governments or political parties. Some people are born into a slave class or caste and retain that status all their lives, passing it on to their descendants. Trafficking is in the news in Britain these days mainly as regards the trapping of women from eastern Europe into prostitution.

Anti-Slavery International's work with partner organisations takes many forms, such as campaigning with them for policies and programmes which would help eradicate slavery, undertaking joint research projects, and taking cases to regional or international courts in order to enforce the law. They successfully campaigned to force the UK government to sign up to a new EU anti-trafficking law, and continue to campaign for its effective enforcement.

I believe that Quakers as a society these days have no active involvement in the movement, though some members of QARN (Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network) encounter, and do their best to help, individuals affected by trafficking and forced marriage.

Like all campaigning organisations Anti-Slavery International needs money, while another way of marking this anniversary is to find out more from their website: [www.antislavery.org](http://www.antislavery.org)

Janet Toye

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the only document to be translated into 380 languages) was adopted in 1948, and since then **10 December** has served to mark **Human Rights Day**.

[www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsdays](http://www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsdays)

Since 2006, **20 December** has been observed as **International Human Solidarity Day**, in the fight against poverty.

[www.un.org/en/events/humansolidarityday](http://www.un.org/en/events/humansolidarityday)

### Think it possible ...

"Think it possible that you may be mistaken" – this is a beautiful phrase from *Advices & Queries* [paragraph 17] and, brief though it is, I've found that it repays careful consideration. I've always believed that I was quite good at seeing the other person's point of view, but only since I started attending Quaker Meetings have I realised that I am not nearly as good at this as I thought.

For example, I was strongly against the display, finery and ostentatious wealth I've seen in some churches, particularly in poorer countries, and just as strongly against programmed worship. It took wise Friends to explain that there was another point of view on these issues, just as valid as mine, if not more so.

Those ostentatious churches, they suggested, are often a source of great comfort to those who attend them, who may see them as one of the few beautiful and inspiring things in their lives. They also explained that programmed worship, though anathema to me, is the way that many people feel they can come closest to God.

Since then, I've found myself thinking it possible that I may be mistaken in all sorts of situations, and it's transformed my life, my view of the world, and my attitude toward others. I have started, for example, challenging my "usual" response to the news. Is there another side to the story, which I've been in the habit of ignoring? Often there is, and challenging my own prejudices – for that is, in truth what they are – has given me new insights.

But probably the biggest impact of “think it possible ...” has been on the more mundane aspects of my life. Do you feel that people in general are becoming more aggressive and ill-mannered? Are you tired of being jostled and harassed by people in shops, on public transport and even in the street? I would have answered these questions with an emphatic “yes” until I thought it possible I might be mistaken. And then I realised that, most of the time at least, I was.

Those people who were causing me so much stress and annoyance were simply responding to the pressures of everyday life, and my own behaviour was little different from theirs. Once I knew this, my life changed. I stopped seeing aggression at every turn. I started to feel much less stressed and much more at peace with the world. As a result, I now feel much better disposed to those around me, and better able to interact with them in a kinder and more caring way.

“Think it possible that you may be mistaken” is just a simple phrase that expresses a simple sentiment; but, for me at least, it has proved to be life-changing.

**Keith Wilson**



### ***A Franciscan Benediction***

*May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.*

*May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom, and peace.*

*May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy.*

*And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.*

*Amen.*

From the 2011 National Ethical Investment Week *Action Guide for Churches*, available from [www.eccr.org.uk](http://www.eccr.org.uk). Thanks to **Virginia Allport** and **Bridget Walker**

## **Friday with Friends**



**Friday 25 January**  
7 for 7:30 pm  
in the  
Garden Room

Our Friend **Susan Clarkson** will share with us her experiences of being in Afghanistan in December as a member of a UK peace delegation.

## **Tuesday 25 December**

On **25 December** we'll hold Meeting for Worship in the Meeting House from 10:45 to 11:30 am, followed by mince pies. We'll have our monthly bring-and-share lunch in the garden room, brought forward from Sunday 30 December.

**Steve & Karima Brooke**  
(01865 429339,  
[karima-brooke@hotmail.com](mailto:karima-brooke@hotmail.com)),  
and **Marieke Clarke**  
(01865 557807,  
[marieke.clarke@gmail.com](mailto:marieke.clarke@gmail.com))

## CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER 2012

*All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated*

Sunday 2	11:00 am	Friendly Bible Study	Thursday 13	7:30 pm	MfW for Young Adults
Sunday 2	12:30 pm	MfW for Business	Sunday 16	11:00 am	Friendly Bible Study
Monday 3	7 for 7:30 pm	Poetry reading and talk by Stevie Krayer —see October issue, p. 6	Sunday 16	10:15 am - 1 pm	Fairtrade stall in the lobby
Tuesday 4	2 - 6:30 pm	Aldermarston Vigil — see Nov. Issue, p. 2	Monday 17	4 - 6 pm	Poems in the Library
Thursday 6	7:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Young Adults	Wednesday 19	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Sunday 9	11:00 am	Friendly Bible Study	Tuesday 25	10:45 am	MfW and bring-and-share lunch — see p. 5

### Weekday Meeting Cancellations

Our weekly MfW on Tuesdays at 7:30 am will not take place on **25 December** or **1 January**.  
Likewise our MfW on Wednesdays at 12:15 pm won't occur on **26 December**.

**Brighid Schroer and Gwithian Doswell**

### Subscriptions for *Forty-Three* in 2013

Please fill in this form if you wish to continue or begin a subscription. Please circle the appropriate amount:

Mail out: 1 Year, Jan. - Dec. @ £10

Pigeonhole: 1 Year, Jan. - Dec. @ £4

Name.....

Address .....

.....

Please make your cheques out to *Oxford Quaker Meeting* and send / give to  
The Warden, 43 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LW.



You may also like to contact the warden about the environmentally friendly option to subscribe by email  
(write to [oxford@quaker.org.uk](mailto:oxford@quaker.org.uk))

#### MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

**Sundays** at 9:30 and 11 a.m. at 43 St Giles  
(followed by tea and coffee)

**Wednesdays** at 12:15 p.m. at 43 St Giles  
(followed by tea and coffee)

**Tuesdays and Thursdays** at 7:30 a.m. at 43 St Giles  
(followed by breakfast at 8 a.m.)

**Sundays** at 10 a.m. at The Priory,  
85 Old High St, Headington

#### OPENING TIMES (43 ST GILES)

Wednesday - Friday, 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

*Forty-Three* is available online, at  
[www.oxfordquakers.org/newsletter](http://www.oxfordquakers.org/newsletter)

If you are considering writing an article or notice but would prefer it not to go online, please don't hesitate to contribute it. Just indicate that the piece is not for inclusion in the internet version — no reason will be asked for. Articles and notices are very welcome to appear in the print edition only, and the same applies to calendar items.

*Editorial Team: MARK EBDEN, PENNY ORMEROD,  
and BECKY RIDDELL (Joint Editing & Production);  
TINA LEONARD, DEBORAH FILGATE (Proofreaders);  
ALESSANDRO SIMARI (Distributor and Subscriptions)*