



FORTY-THREE

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

NEWSLETTER

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Another Conundrum From Keith

I've heard it said that sometimes ministry in a Meeting will speak to you directly, but nevertheless I was a little taken aback when it happened to me.

Some time ago, my wife Kath had her mobile phone stolen. That's far from the worst thing that could have happened, of course; no one was hurt and the phone can be replaced. However, the theft created a lot of inconvenience and not a little hurt as Kath felt, for a while at least, that her security and safety had been violated.

I have to confess that I was thinking about these things in Meeting when a Friend stood up and gave a short ministry based on Matthew 7:14 and 15, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." That Friend was right on target, wasn't he?

So I started to think about what I would do if I were in the position of deciding what should happen to those who stole Kath's phone. Would I forgive them? As I said, it's not a particularly heinous crime, so I would like to believe that it wouldn't be too difficult for me to forgive.

But here's my conundrum – forgiveness is all very well for someone who steals a mobile phone, but

what if it had been a more serious crime involving, say, injury or death? Would I then be able to forgive and, possibly even more interesting, would forgiveness still be the right response?

I suppose it depends on what is meant by forgiveness, but my personal feeling is that, if you forgive someone for an action, you can't subsequently penalise them for that action. Initially, that might seem acceptable. After all Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, says, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

Continued on page 2, column 1

From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

We Quakers say we have no creed. We almost do! For nearly all of us would say we believe in 'that of God in everyone'.

How easy that is to say. How difficult to live! If we mean it, we have to live it. That is why some of us in Northern Ireland do speak to the men of violence. It does not mean we agree with what they do. It does mean believing in the good that is in everyone and in the potential for growth and change that is in us all.

From *QF&P 29.08* Diana Lampen, 1991

Deadline for contributions to the February 2013 issue: noon, Friday 18 January

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated to newsletter@oxfordquakers.org, and items for the calendar on page 6 can be emailed to 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

Continued from page 1, column 2

But does that mean that no earthly penalty should ever be imposed for any crime? No sanctions against murder, torture or even genocide? Surely that would be the height of injustice. And I have in mind that one of the principal Quaker testimonies calls upon us to work to change the systems that “cause injustice and hinder true community”.

Perhaps by now you see my problem. In my eyes at least, forgiveness is a central theme of the Christian message, not something that depends merely on careful cherry picking of passages from the Bible. Yet justice is surely equally important, especially to Quakers. So how is it possible to reconcile justice with forgiveness? Once again, my friends, I would welcome your comments and insights.

Keith Wilson



Quakerism at work in preparing a play

I've been directing a professional production of *Hamlet*. As I tend to bring my identity as a

Friend to everything I do that I feel is meaningful (as I hope most things I do are), it occurred to me to take the whole cast to the lower Lake District and house them for two weeks at the old Friends' Meeting House at Rookhow, in the stables, which are now a hostel. As professionals, the actors found it somewhat difficult to get away for that long, but those I ultimately found (casting in Hampstead Meeting House) were devoted enough to Shakespeare to agree. Part of my 'deal' with Rookhow was a preview performance without costume, lighting or all the props at Swarthmoor Hall, between which, and the public performances in Oxford, there will be three more full rehearsals. One of our cast members is a practising Muslim, who prays at regular times of day. How will rehearsing in a building built for religious worship affect him? And how will it affect me as a Friend?

The production is set in the 1920s. One thing we noticed in choosing the period is that in our version religion can't really be taken for granted, as it would have been in Shakespeare's day. By the

1920s, after a dreadful war, it was questioned. This has proved interesting to explore. I set it in the '20s because I'm fascinated by how in this play, as in others by Shakespeare (especially *Richard II*), there is a clash or major shift going on, from a formal, relaxed, ceremonious society, which includes heroic armed combat, to a brasher new one based on practicality, business methods and covert violence and on brief, hectic celebrations. *Hamlet* takes place in a period when both these trends are present, in conflict with each other, and I needed a period sufficiently familiar to a modern audience in which I could show past and present at once: we long for the certainty of the past while recognising the present trend as more practical, even more exciting. That seems to me to have been the case in the '20s: society was going through a massive change and could never be the same again. The conflict is clearest in *Hamlet* himself, caught between the old revenge code and his conscience.

I taught Shakespeare in Estonia for twelve years. In my first year I told my students I didn't propose to lecture on *Hamlet*, because everyone knew it. They responded by actually begging me to lecture on it because they had been taught under the Soviet system that it was a play against religion and kingship. So I gave (completely spontaneously and without notes) one of the best lectures of my life, partly showing how this *was not* a way in which it could be viewed. And yet...?

Hamlet will be on at the Old Fire Station, **25 - 27 January**, 7:30 pm, Friday, 2:30 pm and 7:30 pm Saturday and Sunday, tickets from www.wegotickets.com/OxfordChamberTheatre.

Arthur Kincaid

Calling all Artists

If you are willing to let us tap into your creativity, newsletter@oxfordquakers.org would love to hear from you, We continually need illustrations to accompany articles.

Please join our wonderful Artist Bank!

BPM



Premises and Finance Committee 2013 – time for the great leap forward

The work of the Premises & Finance (P&F) committee doesn't always sound very exciting or spiritual. But what the group does affects everyone in the Meeting, so it is important we try to get things right, let people know what is going on and what challenging projects lie ahead in 2013 and beyond.

Who we are: from January there are several new people on the committee, and thankfully several experienced people continuing. From 2013-15 the group will be: Fiona Mullins, Ruth Mason, Elisabeth Salisbury, Jon Brown, Richard Stamper, Val Ferguson (Assistant Convenor), Iain Maclean (Treasurer of the Meeting), Dennis Price, Alan Allport, Ursula Howard (Convenor), Sandra Figgess and Simonne Samuelson.

What we do: everything from minor repairs, security and paying bills to exciting building projects. We work on behalf of Oxford Meeting, and we are responsible to Meeting for Business for buildings, finances, managing and supporting our wardens, for lettings, the gardens, and the Meeting's relationships with a host of people. These include Area Meeting committees, Area Trustees, and others outside the Meeting, like auditors or conservation officers. What drives a lot of P&F's work is our shared aim to be a greener, more sustainable, low-carbon community, drawing on the aspirations of Britain Yearly Meeting 2011's message to Quakers.

What are the big challenges in 2013? How will they affect you? As many of you know, local Meeting for Business has given the go-ahead for a major improvement to our Meeting House. Subject to the Area Trustees' agreement, we are going to insulate the building, install underfloor heating and renovate the toilet area to include an accessible toilet. This is a major project which, is planned to start in mid-August 2013. Once it is done, the Meeting House should be nicely warm while using lots less energy.

That's the good news. Now the difficult part: the work is likely to run to the end of November at the earliest. So as a Meeting, we all have to work out how and where we hold our Meetings while the Meeting House is being transformed. P&F will be working actively to make this a positive experience rather than an inconvenience. Some have suggested meeting all over FMH in small meetings; others have suggested going to other Meetings in OSAM; someone suggested meeting in each others' houses, and getting together for one big gathering in a hired space during the break. We must go on welcoming newcomers, too. ALL IDEAS ARE WELCOME.

Looking ahead to 2014 and 2015:

You'll know that Local Meeting for Business approved the idea of creating a Solar Room in the back garden (leaving space for our children's garden). This will help us become more self-sufficient in renewable energy and create a beautiful light space for us to enjoy and let out. Planning has already started, but the biggest challenge is money. We will have a fund-raising appeal and seek grants. In the New Year we will share more of our ideas, and display designs and more detailed information for you to respond to.

Communication: we will try to keep in touch with everyone about P&F's work. Please give us your ideas and thoughts.

One thing I've quickly found out: P&F's role in the Meeting is complex and demanding, as well as everything from useful to inspiring. We depend on a lot of other people inside and outside the Meeting to make things happen. Those of us new to the role feel huge gratitude to Tony Joyce and others who have worked incredibly hard over the last six years to keep our Meeting House a beautiful place for worship and also to think ahead; so we are building on very sound foundations.

Ursula Howard,
ursula.howard@pop3.poptel.org.uk
(Illustrations from the BYM website)





Meeting for Meeting

Please come in February
 – fun, frolic and friendship –
 Put the date and time in your diaries now!

Saturday **23 February** at FMH, Oxford
 from 10 am to teatime

‘Meeting for Meeting’ is an opportunity for people from our Meeting to get to know each other more deeply, and to bridge the gaps between the different Meetings. The event will be held at the Meeting House in St Giles, and will include a delicious bring-and-share lunch, entertainments and activities to help us know each other better. The detailed programme is to follow.

All members and attenders of Oxford and Headington Meeting are very welcome.

Please contact **Alan Allport, Matthew Gee, Jo Dobry** or **Tanya Garland** with any offers of help.

Economic Justice Group

The next meeting will be on Tuesday **15 January** in the Garden Room at 7 for 7:30 pm.

We’ll be considering our actions on Banking Reform, Tax Justice and the NHS. In addition, we will be planning for our Friday with Friends meeting on **15 February**, when we are to join with Friends from Abingdon and Headington as part of the ‘Ministry in all its forms in the Society of Friends’.

Dennis Price

Faith and Identity: *Embracing Difference*

at Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, Oxford

Corrymeela Conference: Sat. **2 March**, 10-4 pm

Corrymeela Sunday service: **3 March**, 10:30 am

The conference will provide an opportunity to meet with people from different faiths, and to discuss the links between faith and identity, and to consider how and why these can change. There will be speakers from three faith communities (Revd Nigel Hardcastle, Imam Monawar Hussain, and Rabbi Norman Solomon) and a video (‘Who am I?’) featuring a talk/discussion lead by Eleanor Nesbitt at a school in Slough. The event will be chaired by Indejit Bhogal, leader of the Corrymeela Community.

Conference cost (inc. lunch) £20/£10 for students. Booking form and detailed programme at corryoxon@gmail.com or from me.

Elizabeth Johnston



Our Library... Something New, Something Old

You may have noticed a smart wooden box in the library, on the left of the fire-place. This is our new Book Exchange Box. Please feel free to give or take one book at a time to/from this box, without entering them in any Borrowing Book. This box is *not* part of the library’s borrowing system. So give or take one book at a time: thereby sharing any book which you like and which you want to pass on to other readers. It would be nice if you put a slip of paper inside the book explaining why you think it is a good read. This is not a box for getting rid of unwanted books. It is for giving away/ passing on, books you want F/friends to read. If you take a book you need never return it, but pass it directly to someone else, whether part of the Meeting or not.

Stephen Yeo

Discover Something New for 2013?

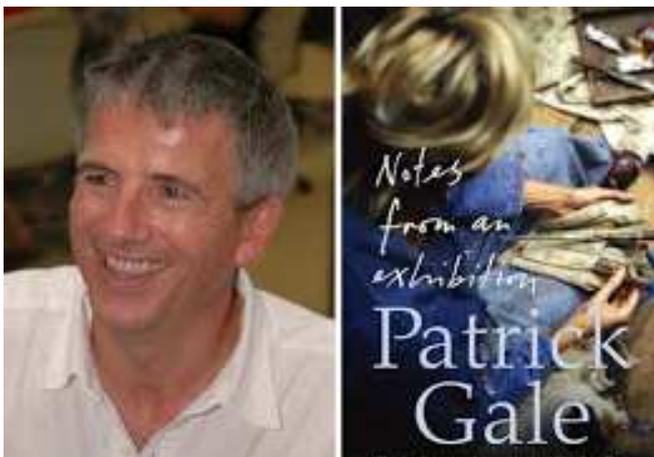
“**T**here are many different ways in which the call comes to serve peace, and some of them are surprising. I believe that to be a Friend is to have that call, that we need to listen carefully to its content; we may be told to go on doing what we are doing or to free ourselves for something else; to make subtle changes in our approach to our work; to let the earning of a good salary sit more lightly on us; to examine our lifestyle; to look at our relations with those we live or work among; to study or to leave off formal study; to stay in a job that does not seem in itself of great value and to use some of our spare time in service; to stay where we are or to take a great leap into something quite new.

“I try to remember that the Light that guided early Friends, and that emerged so clearly and so irrevocably in the Quaker Peace Testimony, is available to us still in our too complicated world. If we could manage to stand in that Light, we might be surprised and delighted to look around and understand what room there is for diversity among those who serve the Light.”

Canadian Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice*, 4.37.
Jo Vellacott, 1989

“**W**hen they took her to her first Meeting for Worship and she witnessed the potent combination of quiet contemplation with the lack of Christian paraphernalia she had long dismissed as nonsense, she found herself marvelling that Quakerism had not become the dominant world faith. It seemed so accessible, sane and adaptable.”

Notes from an Exhibition, page 141



Meetings and Notices

Garden News

I shall be garden manager-person from 2013 until 2016. Gardens take a long time to grow, and there will be shorter-term changes caused by other developments during this time. I shall try to make opportunities for thoughts about the garden to be shared early in 2013. But meanwhile, please email me any thoughts, complaints (surely not!), visions, practical actions you may wish to bring to the garden, and its wonderful present and its future.

Stephen Yeo, stephen.yeo@phonecoop.coop

Flowers for Meeting

Please could we have some volunteers who, while not on the regular rota for bringing flowers for the central table, could be called upon to do this on an occasional basis. We often need help during holidays or when there is a fifth Sunday in the month. You need to be able to arrive by about 9:10 am, before early MfW. Bringing flowers is a lovely and satisfying thing to do. Please contact me on daphne.hampson@theology.ox.ac.uk or 01865 240513. Many thanks.

Daphne Hampson, Convenor of Flowers

Friday with Friends

*Live Adventurously:
From Cowley Road To Kabul*

Friday 25 January

7 for 7:30 pm in the Garden Room

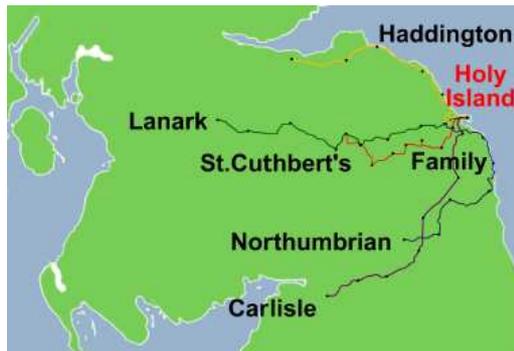
Our Friend **Susan Clarkson** will share with us her experiences of being in Afghanistan in December as a member of a UK peace delegation.

CALENDAR FOR JANUARY 2013

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Thursday 10	7:30 pm	MfW for Young Adults	Monday 21	4 -6 pm	Poems in the Library
Saturday 12	10:30 and 2 pm	Area Meeting (at Marlborough MH)	Wednesday 23	7 for 7:30 pm	Quakers in Focus
Wednesday 16	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing	Thursday 24	7:30 pm	MfW for Young Adults
Wednesday 16	7 for 7:30 pm	Quakers in Focus — see Nov. Issue, p. 6	Friday 25	7 for 7:30 pm	Friday with Friends — see page 5
Thursday 17	7:30 pm	MfW for Young Adults	Sunday 27	12:30 pm	Bring-and-share lunch
Friday 18	7:00 — 9:30 pm	Young Adult Friends Book Group	Wednesday 30	7 for 7:30 pm	Quakers in Focus
Saturday 19	10 am - 4 pm	Sharing our Spiritual Gifts — see Dec. Issue, p 1)			

Thinking Ahead: 23 - 31 March



Every year during the week before Easter, Christians from many backgrounds walk the **Northern Cross Christian Walking Pilgrimage**. See www.northerncross.co.uk

Poems in the Library: Mondays 4-6 pm: 21 January, 18 February, and 25 March.

Stephen Yeo

We hope that **Friendly Bible Study** will take place at 11 am each Sunday.

Tina Leonard

15 January is World Religion Day



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

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)