



# FORTY-THREE

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

## NEWSLETTER

Number 418 (online version)

January 2014

40 pence

### From a Friend of Friends in Germany and Austria

In November, I took part in Germany-Austria Yearly Meeting, held in Bad Pyrmont, at the only Meeting House belonging to Friends. The *Jahresversammlung* [Yearly Meeting] was familiar and unfamiliar, but always friendly, warmly welcoming and engaging. It was moving to experience and learn about Quakerism in Germany. I want to share some impressions with Oxford Friends, who supported me to go.

Amid the yellows and burnt oranges of nearby woods, the Quakerhaus is reached through the garden, which is still a Quaker cemetery. A solid building among grand old villas, it's an immediate reminder of how long Friends have been in Germany: William Penn was among the first to visit Germany, in 1671. Over the centuries, Quakers have been banned, banished, campaigned against slavery, supported victims of war and oppression and argued over theology. Bad Pyrmont became their centre in 1792, visited by Elizabeth Fry, Goethe and even the Prussian Queen Luise.

At the Meeting I was a Friend of Friends (*Freundin der Freunde*). A much nicer term than 'Attender', I thought. One hundred and ninety-eight people were there, from 250 Quakers in total in both countries. The Meeting felt special and big (it's about the same size as Oxford Meeting), perhaps because for the rest of the year, the 30 local

Meetings are small and mostly a long way from each other. They are firmly plugged in to Quakerism worldwide and started with greetings from Quakers elsewhere and reading the BYM letter. There was a celebratory, spirited atmosphere, with lots of young people: babes in arms, children, teenagers and young adults and their parents. Fewer than half the gathering were silver-haired, and some children sported rainbow streaks and dreadlocks. It was informal, relaxed and reminded me a bit of 1970s community gatherings. Each morning began with singing from the Quaker Song Book (8:45 am prompt, German edition) followed by Meeting for Worship (*Andacht*).

Silent Meetings for Worship lasted an hour, three times each day, usually with children present. Birdsong was the only noise. The stillness was profound and healing for me. The few vocal ministries were short and towards the end of

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### From Quaker Faith and Practice

"God does not offer any kind of perfection in the actual circumstances of life..."

From *QF&P 22.70* (5th ed.) Kenneth Barnes, 1960

We apologise for garbling the subscriptions notice on page 6 of the print version of the December *Forty-Three*. We've reprinted the notice on page 6 in the current issue.

BPM

**Deadline for contributions to the February 2014 issue: noon, Friday 24 January**

*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 [lukesamuelmartin@gmail.com](mailto:lukesamuelmartin@gmail.com). 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)*

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Meetings; they spoke of the 'things which are eternal', inequality and the good in everyone.

The formal annual lecture was given by Martin Kunz, well known for Quaker work worldwide, not least the development of fairtrade rubber products. His message of moderation – see the world in greys, not black and white – was much discussed. Business meetings started with piano music: it was a treat to hear Bach beautifully played by Eugenia, a Friend from Frankfurt. A powerful letter addressed to Angela Merkel and Sigmar Gabriel (leader of the Social Democratic Party) about Lampedusa was finalised –



Bad Pyrmont MH — image from Berlin Quakers

urging fairer immigration policies as they develop their coalition agreement. It was good to hear young people asking questions, including about subsidies for international meetings. This year's theme was the 50th Anniversary of Quäker-Hilfe, a charity which supports projects in countries across the world, from Bolivia to Palestine to Congo as well as Northern Irish and German communities living with poverty. The budget and fundraising efforts are impressive.

Workshops included fairtrade, poverty, outreach and creative activities for 'juniors', and peace: I heard reflections on new approaches to the Peace Testimony. Friends have been struggling to find clearness about how to focus energies. Their countries are no longer as warlike as Britain, but they still feel the burden of the past, and Israel/Palestine is deeply complex to engage with. There are still British and armed forces based in Germany. 'The Change' in 1989 and reunification are still being worked through – the GDR had a separate Meeting from the 1960s.

We ate together, when I learned about day-to-day concerns: maintaining Quakerhaus, money, lettings, dwindling numbers, an ageing community. I got to know many people, including British Quakers in Germany – one former soldier became a Quaker while stationed near Hannover.

The last evening's festivities included games led by children and young adults, stand-up comics, storytellers, singers and musicians from the gathering, a show of children's artwork and the auctioning of a fairtrade football: a *Bunter Abend* (multi-coloured evening).

I carried away laughter, colour, strong social commitment and the depth of silent worship.

### Environment & Economic Justice Group

The next meeting will be held on **14 January** at 7 for 7:30 pm in the Garden Room. Janet and John Toye will report on the recent QCEA Conference 'Europe and Economic Justice'. We will also consider ways forward for the group in 2014, especially action on the burning of fossil fuels following our studies last year. **Dennis Price**

### Friends in Print

In *The Friend*, 29 November 2013:

- **Janet Toye**, 'The Burning Question'
- **Stephen Yeo**, 'Poetry'

Ursula Howard



### Let your Light Shine!

Do you know what spirit-given gifts you have? There will be a day workshop, celebrating and exploring what makes us unique, led by **Tina Leonard, Matthew Gee and Pam Roberts**, on **25 January** at FMH, from 10 am to 4 pm. Recent participants have found this a life-affirming experience, do join us! Please pick up a leaflet from the entrance hall for more information and for a booking form. **Tina Leonard**

### Poems in the Library

Join us from 4 to 6 pm on the following Mondays: **20 January, 24 February and 24 March. Stephen Yeo**

## Let's Focus on Peace

As many of you know, some of us are more active than others in matters relating to peace. We now have an established event on Remembrance Sunday with recognition from the City organisers, which is heartening. Some of you have taken to the suggestion of knitting against nukes and many of you work on climate change issues. These issues are vital for future peace – if land degradation worsens in places like the Sahel there will be much greater migration pressure, which could lead to wars. And if some nuclear weapons were then let off, either intentionally or by accident, this could create nuclear winter. The result would be grim, if not 'curtains'.

As Friends we have a Peace Testimony and I would like to suggest that as many of us as possible write to *Forty-Three* throughout 2014 with our updates on peace issues. The editors and I look forward to reading your contributions this year. Even a couple lines would be appreciated.

By the way, now it is the New Year Gwithian and I will arrange a meeting for all those who have made shawls to plan how to take this project forward.

Sarah Lasenby, 01865 725991



## Supporting Peace

The December issue of *Forty-Three* included an article about Gwithian Doswell's three months' experience as an Ecumenical Accompanier. The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) does not take sides but is not neutral on principles of human rights and international humanitarian law. Its code of conduct says: "we stand faithfully with the poor, the oppressed and the marginalised. We want to serve all parties in this conflict in a fair and unbiased manner in word and action."

An email group will be set up to keep in touch with Quaker actions (e.g. requested by Britain Yearly Meeting and Quaker Council for European Affairs), such as the BYM ban on goods manufactured on Israeli settlement lands, which are illegal under international law. We hope to request the Local Business Meeting for noticeboard space to share information about this. A follow-on meeting will be held in January. *If you would like to be part of the cluster group and/or receive these emails, please let Gwithian know (gwithian@btinternet.com).*

You can make a difference! Progress on the settlements issue is slow but encouraging. In December the British Government issued guidance to businesses, saying "we do not encourage" firms to trade with illegal settlements and "we do not offer support to firms that do". The guidance restates the Foreign Office view that settlements are "illegal under international law, an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible".

For more information about...

- the Quaker boycott: [www.quaker.org.uk/quakers-boycott-products-israeli-settlements](http://www.quaker.org.uk/quakers-boycott-products-israeli-settlements)
- EAPPI's experience of the situation in Israel and Palestine: <http://eappi.org/en/resources/factsheets.html>
- Quaker work in Europe on Israel and Palestine: [www.qcea.org/work/palestine-israel/work](http://www.qcea.org/work/palestine-israel/work)

**New Book of Members & Attenders**  
 The latest contact list for our LM and AM (dated November 2013, replacing the 2010 version) is now available in the Warden's office.

**15 JANUARY IS WORLD RELIGION DAY**

Sue Smith

## What is 'Success'?

Meeting Collections and the plant sale organised by the children's group have provided funds for an initiative in Zimbabwe, which tries to meet some of the needs of extremely marginalised children.

As we left the edge of Harare and drove through the baking hot, dry landscape, Mr Marisa, headmaster of the Success Academy, slowed down to wave and greet children along the way, though we were still several kilometres from the peri-urban settlement where the school is located.

"These are some of our primary children walking home," he explained. The school has about 950 children enrolled, with around 700 primary pupils attending in the morning and secondary students 'hot seating' in the afternoon. Mr Marisa explained that, while most children live close to the school, some are walking fifteen kilometres each way to reach it. They are the children of farm workers, left on farms which have been taken over and are no longer productive, one of the groups worst hit by the political events of the last decades.

The Success Academy attracts such students as no child is turned away because of inability to pay. Zimbabwe has always prided itself on its education system but recent years have seen a sharp decline in provision. Fees are payable at all state and private schools, which means that many children are effectively excluded from school because their parents cannot afford to send them. A large number of children live with relatives or in child-headed households (often because of the death of parents through AIDS), where their access to education is not a priority.

Day-to-day conditions have clearly improved at the Academy since it first started over two years ago, showing what can be achieved with determination and small amounts of money.

As I entered each classroom on this visit, I was no longer greeted by a mass of children sitting cross-legged on the dusty floor. Everyone had a bench or

chair and some had desks as well. Each class now has a blackboard, and the teachers – mostly educated young people who cannot find paid jobs – have copies of the textbooks required to cover the Zimbabwean curriculum. Students are able to sit their Grade 7 (end of primary) and O-level exams at neighbouring schools and, against what might seem overwhelming odds, some do succeed.

A water tank has been set up, toilets have been improved and a solar panel bought. In this area, where electricity supply is erratic and many houses have no supply, this is a very valuable resource and it sits in state, closely guarded, in the small yard of a neighbouring house, as it would not stay long on the school roof. It will enable students to study after darkness falls and evening classes to be offered as well.

Because the school is open to the most marginalised children, many will be living in households where basic needs are not met. When funds are available, resources in the form of bags of maize, sugar and beans are channelled towards those most in need.

In a country rich with minerals, talent and potential for

development, it is hard not to feel angry and despairing at the situation people face for another five years after the recent elections. But in every situation such as this, there are always, in our experience, some determined people who manage to keep hope alive and to continue to struggle towards a better future. Small amounts of funding make an enormous difference to their work and ensure that they feel a wider web of support behind them.

**Jane Fisher**



### Area Meeting

This will be held in Burford MH on Saturday 11 January, at 10:30 am and 2 pm. In the afternoon session, Seren Wildwood will talk on 'The balance between activism and the spiritual life of the Meeting'.

## Woodbrooke Gathering for Action: welfare cuts and inequality

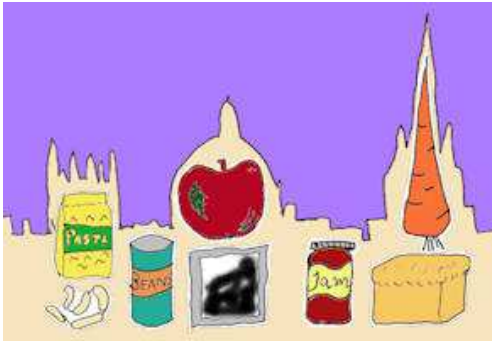


Image from [www.oxfordfoodbank.org.uk](http://www.oxfordfoodbank.org.uk)

Oxford Friends Action on Poverty (OxFAP) has been trying to relieve some of the effects of poverty in Oxford for 25 years. We are only applying sticking plasters to the problem. In this time, the gap between the poor and others has increased. At Woodbrooke in October, I joined representatives of at least 30 Meetings to learn more and talk about what we could do to tackle some of the causes of inequality and poverty.

Friends are not inactive, but initiatives such as foodbanks are not addressing the cause of the problem. Many Friends work with other agencies, for example the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), churches and the Red Cross. Many tales were told of the effects of funding being withdrawn, such as CABs and children's centres closing; and of bureaucracy which assumes everyone is literate and has a phone, car and internet access. Benefit cuts, tightening of eligibility, zero-hour contracts, the 'bedroom tax', and the growth of industries employing fewer people (e.g. finance) all contribute to the problem. One speaker told us that "the economy should serve the people, but now the people are serving the economy."

Imagine a village by a river: one day a baby floats by so the village rescue it, feed and look after it. The next day another baby floats by, again it is rescued and looked after. This continues, but eventually the villagers wonder how they can cope and go up river to try and find out why babies are coming down river. Does the village upstream need a fence along the bank? Are they unable to cope with the birth rate? And what would happen if the babies were allowed to float on past?

The final session on the Sunday was spent drawing up a minute stating our deep concern and asking for immediate action – such as an activist network, a march in London (with other faith groups) or a selective boycott of tax-avoiding corporations. The text can be seen at [www.quaker.org.uk/cuts-oct-2013](http://www.quaker.org.uk/cuts-oct-2013) where you may also read summaries of the talks and workshops. We asked Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) Central Committee to consider this at their November meeting.

**Ros Weatherall**

### Party Time!

**On Saturday 1 February, 6-9 pm, there will be a joyful gathering at FMH to celebrate our newly reopened Meeting House and our shared witness to sustainability. Alan Allport & Val Ferguson**

### Annual Event for Over-70s

For F/friends aged 70-plus, this will be held from 3 pm on Sunday **15 June**, with tea served at 4 pm. This year the venue will be our sustainably refurbished Meeting House.

If you haven't yet been to one of these events and would like to receive an invitation, please contact any overseer. We also arrange lifts by car for those who would like them.

**Overseers** (Dinah Lintott, Donna Dickenson, Hoonie Feltham, Kath Wilson, Madeleine Forey, Mark Ebdon, Matthew Gee, Peggy Heeks, Pól O'Ceallaigh, and Sally Wilkins)

### One Heart

Look at the birds. Even flying  
is born

out of nothing. The first sky  
is inside you, open

at either end of day.  
The work of wings

was always freedom, fastening  
one heart to every falling thing.

**Li-Young Lee**  
Chosen by **Yvonne Dixon**

# CALENDAR FOR JANUARY 2014

*All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated*

Friday 10 - Sunday 12	Planning Meeting for YFGM (Young Friends General Meeting)		Monday 20	4 - 6 pm	Poems in the Library — see page 2
Saturday 11	10:30 am & 2 pm	Area Meeting ( <i>in Burford</i> ) — see page 4	Wednesday 22	7 for 7:30 pm	Enquirers' Evening: 'Simplicity and Sustainability' — see November issue, page 1
Tuesday 14	7 for 7:30 pm	Environment & Economic Justice Group — see page 2	Saturday 25	10 am to 4 pm	Spiritual Gifts workshop — see page 2
Wednesday 15	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing	Sunday 26	12:30 pm	Bring-and-share lunch
Wednesday 15	7 for 7:30 pm	Enquirers' Evening: 'Peace' — see November issue, page 1	Wednesday 29	7 for 7:30 pm	Enquirers' Evening: 'Spiritual Journeys and Membership' — see November issue, page 1

Plus: **Friendly Bible Study** on Sundays at 11 am, and **Young Adult Friends** on Mondays at 7:30 pm



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### MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

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

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

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

**Headington LM worships on Sundays** at 10 am  
at The Priory, 85 Old High Street, OX3 9HT

### OPENING TIMES (43 ST GILES)

Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday, 9:30 am - 1:30 pm

*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); LUKE MARTIN (Distributor and Subscriptions)*