



# FORTY-THREE

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

## NEWSLETTER

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### Being Gloriously Positive

As a Quaker with a non-Quaker partner, early in our relationship I made sure to explain the testimony against the keeping of times and seasons. Fortunately, my partner quickly grasped that when Local Business Meeting, or a committee meeting, or yearly meeting is held on a birthday or anniversary, 'times and seasons' reminds us that since all times are holy, no day should be marked out as more special than any other, and our celebration can therefore rightly be held on any other convenient day.

Since Business Meeting in October, I've been thinking about the use of our Meeting House, and have been trying to uphold those Friends on Premises & Finance Committee, who are working on discerning a lettings policy for the hiring out of our rooms. We need a policy which will reflect our concerns and testimonies, ensure fair treatment for our employees, and reach out to the local community. It needs to provide both income and outreach.

I love the phrase in *Advices and Queries* 26 '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.' I hope we can achieve that in the Meeting House too. Ministry takes many forms and I'm very grateful to those Friends whose ministry is in maintaining and managing our Meeting House.

We know from the difficulty we have had in finding Friends to serve on our various committees and groups that we need to be more flexible and change the way some things work. It's right to keep questioning, just as it is right to make sure we

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### From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

To Fox and the early Friends the whole of life seemed sacramental, and they refused to mark off any one particular practice or observance as more sacred than others. They took the same stand with regard to Sunday, or First Day; it was not in itself more holy than Saturday or Monday; every week-day should be a Lord's Day. Their whole attitude was gloriously positive, not negative. They were 'alive unto God' and sensed him everywhere.

We do not say that to observe the sacraments is wrong, but that such observance is not essential to wholehearted Christian discipleship and the full Christian experience. We do not judge our fellow Christians to whom the outward sacraments mean so much. Rather do we wish, by prayerful fellowship with them, to be led unitedly with them to a deeper understanding of what underlies those sacraments, and so to share a richer experience of the mind of Christ.

**QF&P 27.39, Gerald K Hibbert, 1941**

**Deadline for contributions to the January 2015 issue: noon, Thursday 18 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 [oxfordpm@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:oxfordpm@yahoo.co.uk). Paper copy can be left in the pigeonhole of any Editor. For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit [www.oxfordquakers.org](http://www.oxfordquakers.org)*

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understand why things have been done in a particular way, before we set about changing them. Realistically, we can no longer assume that all those appointed to committees will be able to meet on Mondays, for example, and may need to accept that behaving with integrity to our employees and hirers will sometimes necessitate Quaker committees meeting at different times or places. I wonder if that may even have some benefits; it may help us get to know others in that which is eternal, if we have spent time meeting and working with them on a shared task in their or our own homes, for instance.

Hoping that we can find a positive policy for lettings, in this instance, has made me wonder why we often seem negative. We say we don't have sacraments, but what we mean is that all of life is sacramental. We say we don't have priests, but what we mean is that we are all called to the priesthood. We say that buildings are not holy, but we mean that all places and times are holy. We say we're not concerned with raising money, but there's so much that we feel called to do. Which brings me back to the testimony against the keeping of times and seasons. I'm feeling so inspired by the description of early Friends' understanding that each day is a 'Lord's day': 'Their whole attitude was gloriously positive, not negative. They were "alive unto God" and sensed him everywhere.' (QF&P 27.39)

Lis Burch

## Quaker Vigil at Atomic Weapons Establishment – Aldermaston

Now that the dark evenings are coming we will not be going to Aldermaston to have Quaker Vigils until next spring.

Sometimes we wonder why we go. But those of us who do go find it purposeful and, as Quakers, we believe it is worth witnessing against this very dreadful Weapons of Mass Destruction bomb factory. We put up peace flags in rainbow colours to show we are witnessing for peace, and hold banners so the people leaving work from the base can see why we are there. The stream of cars and vans leaving the base is continuous, and a few of them wave in a friendly way, but others show no interest.

At first, four years ago, it seemed as if none of the drivers dared to show they had even looked at us, but as time has gone on we can now see that some of them are trying to read the banners and even wave at us. The passing traffic is more strident – whether in favour or against us.

We usually have a visit from the Ministry of Defence Police and they are always happy for us to be there. Last month an officer we had not seen before came up and immediately said he was for us and agreed with our arguments. That was a nice change. After the Tsunami and the failure of Fukushima at least 12 drivers from the base waved at us, but by the next month this had dropped back. At about 4:30 pm, regular as clockwork, a postman drives past and shouts his support loudly.

What we are missing are larger banners that show more clearly that we are Quakers, and more people so that we can have two vigils to catch the eyes of those leaving via Tadley Gate as well as Home Office Gate (both of them lead from West Gate, the one most used by the workers). If you can help, please contact me.

Sarah Lasenby, 01865 725991



### Bread and Roses

We will be providing meals for Area Meeting (for about 45 people) at Oxford Meeting House on **Saturday 10 January**. Offers of dishes or cakes from Members and Attenders would be greatly appreciated by the committee. Please contact me.

**Ursula Kneisel**, 01865 744540,  
u\_kneisel@yahoo.co.uk

## Aram Rudenski

Some Friends will remember Aram, who was our assistant warden for a year or two about 20+ years ago, while Bob Elkington was the warden. Sadly Aram died earlier this year and his partner is in the process of putting together a record of remembrance. If you have memories, anecdotes or photographs of Aram's time at Friends Meeting House, and would be willing for them to be included, please send them to me at lis.burch@gmail.com or leave in the B pigeonhole. Please indicate if you would like your item returned after use. **Lis Burch**

## Introducing Members and Attenders of Oxford Meeting



**Monica Sheaf** talking to Tanya Garland

My family background has influenced me a lot. My parents were Catholic and unhappily married and I am the oldest of their eight children. During my childhood my mother was constantly pregnant. I have five sisters and two brothers all close together in ages. My sister Lucy is only a year younger than me. She is now doing a PhD at Kings College, on a German theologian called Gottfried Leibniz; Christy works in IT, Mary is a doctor living in Marsden, Clara works for the Catholic Church and Cathy is a maths teacher in Abingdon. Peter works in London and Michael in Japan. I've always been quite an anxious person and when we moved from London to Abingdon, I had to have professional help, as I was suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). The professionals said it was linked to anxiety. I was seven. My parents separated when I was fifteen and Mum was very depressed for a long time. Then she trained to be a psychotherapist which is now her profession – but to me she is just Mum.

I found the divorce quite stressful. Although my father was a born-again Christian, he hasn't really kept in touch with any of his eight children. As a child I was dragged to all the happy-clappy meetings with teachings of hell and damnation and lots of speaking in tongues. I think I was drawn to Quakers to get away from all of that. I wanted some common sense, some silence and simplicity.

I was sent to Our Lady's convent school in Abingdon, while all my friends went to the local comprehensive. But I did all right and after a year as a care assistant I went to Leeds University where I got a BSc in Social Sciences. I found studying stressful and the peer pressure hard to deal with. I don't drink alcohol. It doesn't agree with me or my medication. I spent eight months in Auckland, New Zealand teaching English to foreign students and travelling the two islands; but I didn't want to stay and returned to being a student once again – first for a Postgraduate Diploma in Psychology and then for my PGCE teachers' qualification from Nottingham Trent University.

Teaching in schools was stressful but I found the supply teaching in prison especially difficult. I needed the money desperately so I agreed to teach a general school syllabus to eleven- to eighteen-year-old young offenders at Oakhill prison in Milton Keynes. I didn't last long. Since then, my working life has been between care work, supply teaching (including teaching at Peers School, Littlemore) and voluntary work.

I was first sectioned in 2009 when I became very stressed about my housing situation. I was living with Peter, a disabled man with mental health problems. They sent me to Littlemore Hospital for a week, but I was sectioned again 18 months ago in 2013 and spent three months in the Warneford Hospital. All of my sisters and my mother visited me while I was there. I don't think it was helpful. There was very little to do other than meeting with the staff twice a week. I didn't receive any treatment – just given drugs, but they didn't ease my inner anxiety even if the outer symptoms of distress were reduced. I left feeling no-one could help me. I am still on medication. I'd like to stop but am not allowed to and I am afraid they will section me again if I do. I am now staying in accommodation run by Mind and not working, so life is easier now.

At school I learnt to play the piano and reached 8<sup>th</sup> Grade. I still play when I am at home and I sing in the All Saints' choir in Sutton Courtney. At the moment we're singing Handel's *Messiah*. My favourite song is 'I know that my redeemer liveth'. I believe this is true. I value having had Christian teaching, but as a teenager I didn't like the Charismatic church and am still suspicious of it. It is so black and white, everything is either good or evil; and very simplistic – thinking God can heal the body and mind. I do not believe in spiritual healing. I think you need humans to do it. I enjoy the Quaker poetry evenings too, but I look to the gospels for inspiration (my favourite teaching is 'Cast your cares upon Him for He cares for you'), and I often look through the bible in Meeting. It seems the only time I have to read it. I believe in a God who loves us and I've felt His love many times through other people. I think it is very important to respect other people, but I found it hard to respect the children in prison as they were so rude to me. I was quite out of my depth there.

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I haven't decided yet about life after death. My mother always says, 'You have suffered a lot, Monica.' It would seem a bit cruel if there were no life after death. We all suffer, but I believe that suffering must have a purpose. Maybe it is to make us stronger or prepares us for some work in the life to come. We don't know the future, do we?

## Commemorating the Peacemakers 'This is what remembrance should mean'

'Commemorating the Peacemakers' was an all-day event at the Meeting House on Saturday 15 November, put on by Oxford Quakers and three other local organisations. We were delighted with the attendance – more than 80 people at the daytime event with morning speakers and afternoon workshops. Another 80 came to the 'Peace Concert' in the evening. The Meeting House was full!

It was a thought-provoking day. One participant said afterwards: "It has completely changed my thinking about the lead up to WW1, and that's unsettling, but positive and stimulating." Another said: "my head is buzzing with so many ideas and information to absorb."

We aimed to tell the alternative history of events leading up to the outbreak of WW1 and the resistance movements that stood in its way. This was the people's history, not the version put about by politicians and governments. We heard about the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century roots of resistance, ably introduced by John Gittings, ex-Guardian journalist. Kate Connelly, historian and author, talked about the feminist movement that opposed the war. Tracy Walsh of Ruskin College talked about how the socialist and labour movement organised against the war. Emma Anthony explained the origins of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, started in 1914 and now based in Oxford and still campaigning for peace. All the speakers touched on the recurring theme that ordinary people in Britain felt more solidarity with working people in other countries than a commitment to their ruling elites.

Participants appreciated the opportunity for active participation in the afternoon workshops. These included a look at education materials for peace films from the Movement for the Abolition of War,



discussion about conscientious objectors and the militarisation of youth, and singing songs of peace.

The Peace Concert in the evening combined music and words about the pity of war, the desire for peace and the continuing responsibility we have to achieve it. It featured the Sea Green Singers, a men's choir, the story of the Christmas truce, and a group from the East Oxford Community Choir singing excerpts from 'The Armed Man, a Mass for Peace'.

We would like to thank everyone in the Meeting and wider who attended and contributed their time and energy to make this event inspiring and stimulating. We would especially like to thank the volunteers who helped with catering and the literature stall, coping with unexpected numbers of people! The event would not have been possible without the generosity of the Meeting in allowing us to use the Meeting House.

As Quakers we all contribute individually to the work of local organisations for peace, equality, and environmental and economic justice. As a Meeting, we collaborate less often in organising joint events. November 15 was also the day for a Quaker activist gathering at Friends House, and it seemed appropriate to be working together as a group of local organisations at this time. Oxford Quakers, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Movement for the Abolition of War, and Oxford singers and choirs were able to use our joint strength and energy in pulling in a wide audience. We were building jointly for a future of peace and justice. As one participant said in their feedback, "very pleased to be here and determined to build on what I've learned – no thought without action!"

**Sue Smith, Sally Reynolds, Emma Anthony,  
and Sarah Westcott**



## Tell me what your faith means to you...

On a cold November evening about 30 people from different religious traditions came to Oxford Synagogue for a faith

'speed dating' event. Before the business of the evening we met in a separate room and shared healthy nibbles of fruit, nuts and assorted dips and started introducing ourselves and talking to each other. Perhaps that would have been sufficient for a satisfying evening but there was more, and better, to come.

After the food we moved into another room where chairs were set out in pairs. We were urged to sit with someone we didn't know and then the fun began. "Tell me what your faith means to you" was the question one of each pair had five minutes to respond to. At the end of the five minutes we changed over and the listener became the speaker. When the ten minutes were up we moved on and it was quite difficult to leave the interesting exchanges we were having.

In all we had four 'goes' each, which was enough as listening closely to another person for five minutes is quite exhausting and trying to express your own faith in just five minutes even more so. I was paired with a Baha'i, an Evangelical Christian, a Mormon and a Muslim and found them and their faith journey fascinating.

It was such a good evening that we (the Oxford Council of Faiths whose project it was) are thinking of making it an annual event. Next time I hope to persuade more members of Oxford Meeting to come along to what was a most fascinating and satisfying event.

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### Interfaith Service for Peace

**30 November** at Spires Academy, Glanville Road, OX4 2AU. 2 pm followed by refreshments.

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**The Oxford Foundation** was established in 2009 by Monawar Hussain to challenge violent extremism and to deepen the understanding between people of different faiths and cultures. They have published an open letter to the fighters and followers of the 'Islamic State'. I'm putting a copy in the library, and it's downloadable here: <http://lettertobaghdadi.com> **Elisabeth Salisbury**

## Too much money? Not enough?

If you are among Friends worried that they have received a winter fuel allowance which they don't need, look no further. You can send a cheque to Quaker Housing Trust, which will turn your money to good account, through grants, interest free loans and projects to create affordable homes. The Trust is based at Friends House, 173-177 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ.

Nearer to home, Alison Webster is organising a series of forums on social action for the Oxford diocese. The latest, held on Tuesday 18 November was called 'Eat or heat?' and was hosted by Wesley Memorial Church, Oxford. The presentations were not just about the problems of making a meagre budget pay for both food and heating. We also had good news on the way, of churches and organisations that offer support. The next forum is on loneliness, something that affects people in a range of income brackets. To register, contact [alison.webster@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:alison.webster@oxford.anglican.org).

**Peggy Heeks**

The Archway Foundation (01865 790552) has designated **28 December** as **Loneliness Sunday**  
<http://tinyurl.com/loneSun>

### Lunch on 25 December

On Thursday **25 December**, we'll hold Meeting for Worship from 10:45 to 11:30 am. This will be followed by hot non-alcoholic punch provided by Anne H. Watson, and then by a bring-and-share lunch at about 12:15 pm. This will be a celebratory lunch, so Friends may like to bring a special dish.

**Peggy Heeks**

### Meetings for Worship during Christmas to New Year

Tuesday **23 December**: breakfast MfW (7:30 – 8 am as usual)

Wednesday **24 December**: no lunchtime MfW

Thursday **25 December**: no breakfast MfW. MfW from 10:45 – 11:30 am, followed by hot punch and bring-and-share meal

Tuesday **30 December**: breakfast MfW

Wednesday **31 December**: lunchtime MfW (12:15 – 12:45 pm as usual)

Thursday **1 January**: breakfast MfW

**Glen Williams**

# CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER 2014

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Monday 1	7 pm	Young Adult Friends	Monday 15	7 pm	Young Adult Friends
Monday 8	7 pm	Young Adult Friends	Wednesday 17	2 pm	Fellowship of Healing
Wednesday 10	7 pm	Nominations	Thursday 25	10:45 – 11:30 pm, 12:15 pm	Meeting for Worship, Shared Lunch
Friday 12	7 pm	Elders	Monday 29	7 pm	Young Adult Friends
Monday 15	6:30 pm	Premises and Finance	<b>1 December</b> is International Prisoners for Peace Day and World Aids Day		

**2 December is the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery.** The focus is on eradicating contemporary forms of slavery, including trafficking, forced marriage, and the forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.  
[www.un.org/en/events/slaveryabolitionday](http://www.un.org/en/events/slaveryabolitionday)

## Fridays with Friends

**16 and 30 January, 7:30 pm**  
 Details to follow

**3 December** is the International Day of Disabled Persons

**10 December** is Human Rights Day

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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); ANBARA KHALIDI and DEB ARROWSMITH (Distributor and Subscriptions)*