

Forty-Three newsletter

Number 443
March 2016



Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

Lent – an ordinary event with huge significance

Shedding tears on the first day in school is very ordinary...The two sons of one of the Syrian families recently arrived in Oxford had their first day in school in the New Year. They weren't in tears...but their mother was, overwhelmed at the welcome her boys were given, and seeing them go to school for the first time in four years.



Going to school is an ordinary thing for most of us, but with huge significance for this mother and her boys.

Asylum Welcome is working with the families newly arrived in Oxford under the government's resettlement scheme for Syrian refugees. We are also helping refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Eritrea and other countries, who have made their own way here, and face challenges of all sorts.

Giving up something for Lent is a fairly ordinary thing for us, it reminds us how lucky we are. Sending what you save to Asylum Welcome will enable us to help refugees with various ordinary

things, of huge significance to those who have been forced to give up almost everything.

Please send what you save to Asylum Welcome. By cheque payable to Asylum Welcome (with your name and address on the back) at Unit 7, Newtec Place, Magdalen Rd, Oxford OX4 1RE or make an online donation via justgiving.com/asylumwelcome. Thank you.

Beverly Sharma

Vigil for Peace

The Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS) in partnership with St. Michael at the North Gate Church is hosting an Interfaith and International Vigil for Peace on **Friday 10 June** at OCMS. The event includes eight religious communities who in turn will lead the prayers and are encouraged to use the unique aspects of their rituals and music. *Continued on page 2, column 1*

From Quaker Faith and Practice

...We are ordinary people, with the shortcomings of ordinary people, and there is laid upon us the necessity of patience with one another in all our gatherings, and especially in Yearly Meeting, and the willingness to accept the imperfect arising from our human limitations...

QF&P 6.09

Deadline for contributions to the April 2016 issue: noon, Wednesday 16 March

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated to newsletter@oxfordquakers.org, and items for the calendar on page 4 can be emailed to office@oxfordquakers.org. Paper copy can be left in the pigeonhole of any Editor.
For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit www.oxfordquakers.org

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The vigil aims to generate spiritual resources and awareness of the scale of worldwide conflict, promote human unity and solidarity as well as space, respect and trust between the communities.

It also aims to strengthen existing relationships and build new ones with other faith communities, the public and the media. This is a prayerful celebration, which recognizes our differences in the way we reach out to the ground of our being and an observation of how the faith traditions inspire and reactivate the sense of fundamental connectedness among human beings. There will be live reports and prayer from seven parts of the world in conflict zones. These parts will hopefully be an illustration of reaching out across the lines of enmity, the push and pull of ferocity and division. Short clips of war and peace will also be screened.

The event is open to the public as it aims to be not only diverse in its structure but also to engage diverse audiences too. It is based on the belief that the interfaith engagement is a diverse integration of individuals; believers and humanists, and belief systems, which merits dignity and respect.

Hopefully this diversity invites us to start reimagining the boundaries of engagement moving beyond acceptance and tolerance, taking one step further, seeing diversity as a condition for self-enrichment. Under God, we hope that it will play a small part in the creation of a culture of peace.

*The beauty and the suffering of the world
Call us to Christ's path of peace
So may the peace of God be with us all evermore*

Elisabeth Salisbury

Glenthorne

Terry Winterton, Friend in Residence at Glenthorne Quaker Guest House in Grasmere, has sent news. The flooding affected Glenthorne a little, as water trickled in under the doors and spoilt carpets. However, Glenthorne is now open for guests. As well as just having a holiday, you can go to engage with special interest holidays.

More details are available
at www.glenthorne.org.

Entering into Ministry

This article is an edited version from Meeting Points, the newsletter of Milton Keynes Local Meeting. It is published here as a follow-up to our joint Meeting for Worship held on 22 November 2015, where our focus in worship-sharing was on 'ministry'. I am not saying that all of it is relevant for our Oxford Meetings for Worship as they are now, but it summarises some key aspects of ministry that can also be found in Chapter 2 of Quaker Faith and Practice.

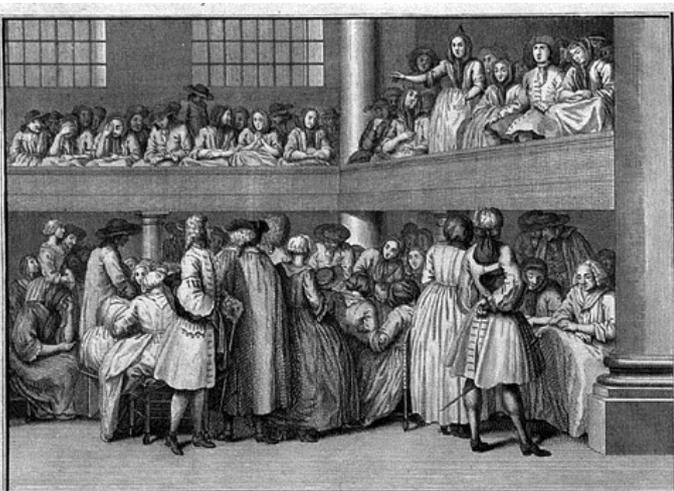
"Worship is our response to an awareness of God. We can worship alone, but when we join with others the expectant waiting we may discover a deeper sense of God's presence. We seek a gathered stillness in our meetings for worship so that all may feel the power of God's love drawing us together and leading us."
(Advices and Queries 8).

Everyone's experience of faith, and of spiritual seeking, will be different because we are each unique. We no doubt all experience very similar emotions and have values and beliefs which are culturally shaped and influenced, so that we have a lot in common and there is much to talk about and share by way of exploring how we each understand the key issues of life, death, love, good and evil as well as keywords such as God, Spirit, Jesus, or Christ.

Some of the traditional language of spirituality and religion draws on ideas and beliefs which some no longer find helpful or relevant and ask when some people (and it's not just Quakers who do this) speak of God in the traditional sense, others will understand this term to mean the sacred, the holy, the most sacramental elements of our being. In Meeting for Worship, the silence and the lack of being led in prayer or hymn to express 'truths' in jarring or empty words are precious and have a great deal to offer many people seeking spiritual nurture in the secular times. But the openness of Quaker worship also means that it is vulnerable and everyone in Meeting needs to take a share of responsibility for it. And for all its capacity to offer a quiet space to absolutely anyone wishing to make use of it, Quakerism is deeply rooted in Christianity and Quaker values as practised today have been shaped by the teachings and the life example of Jesus.

In his recent book, *Being a Quaker*, Geoffrey Durham describes how when he had been attending Quaker Meetings for a while he wondered if he should offer ministry that had been forming in his mind. He describes how, as he settled into the Meeting and the silence deepened “I asked myself if I should perhaps stand and say what was on my mind [...] I knew that Quakers went through a brief mental process to ascertain whether or not the message they had was just for themselves or for the Meeting as a whole and I asked myself that question. I decided this was for the Meeting. After all, it was helping me, so logically it might be of interest to them. I decided to stand. And as I prepared to rise to my feet, a woman on the other side of the room got up, paused and delivered a helpful piece of ministry.” He waited and when about to stand again, the same thing happened and, remarkably it occurred a third time. He realised that “No more needed to be said. I had been silenced but nobody had known. And at last I got the message. In my head, I had been holding one meeting; the Quakers have been holding another.” (p.34ff)

The biggest challenge we all feel is in the timing. Friends have always felt that there should be ample time for worshippers to digest what has been said. In the nineteenth century, one comes across disapproving references to the 'fast' or over busy Meeting. There is no advice that can be offered here; we are on our own but the needs of the Meeting come first. So we should be patient, we should be concise, and as *Advices and Queries* say, be wary of repeating what others have already said, and leave a suitable period of time for reflections towards the close of the Meeting.



ASSEMBLÉE des QUAQUERS à Londres
A. Quakeresse qui prêche

When such a space has not been left, elders may well feel it important to extend the meeting to allow sufficient prayerful reflection on what has been said.

It occurs to me that nothing in this article from Milton Keynes addresses the opposite of Geoffrey Durham's experience, namely being enabled to give ministry after a process of discernment. Whereas the outcome of discernment for those of us who find speaking easy may often be a blessed silence, the outcome of discernment for another might be to speak for the first time.

Anne Watson

SEE Justice

The Social, Environment and Economic Justice group meets at 7:30 pm in the library on Tuesday, 15 March to discuss further action on lobbying of MPs about climate change, fossil fuel divestment, and efforts to prevent the privatisation of the NHS. Do come and join us.

Janet Toye

Quaker Burial Plots at Wolvercote Cemetery

Oxford Local Quaker Meeting currently has six burial plots reserved at Wolvercote cemetery on behalf of members of the Meeting. Any member of the Meeting who would like to reserve a plot should contact the Meeting Clerk and the Council's solicitor, Lindsay Cain (01865 252570).

The solicitor will send a form to be completed and signed by the Clerk and the member's family. After receiving the completed form, the solicitor will inform the Cemeteries Officer, and the deeds will be transferred for a fee, which is currently £80. The plots are paid for at the time of burial.

Val Ferguson

Restorative Justice and Empathy

The Oxford Restorative Justice Network is presenting a lunchtime talk *Restorative Justice and Empathy – Cultivating the World's Most Precious Resource*, on **Tuesday, 15 March**. The talk, which starts at 12:45 pm, will be take place at The Mint House, adjacent to New Road Baptist Church, Bonn Square. The speaker is Pete Wallis of Oxford Youth Justice Service. Bring your own sandwiches!

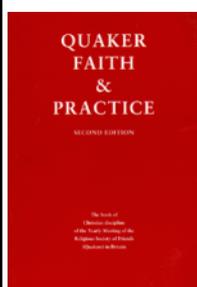
Elisabeth Salisbury

CALENDAR FOR MARCH 2016

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Sunday 6	12:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business	Tuesday 15	7:30 pm	SEE Justice (see page 3)
Wednesday 9	11:00 am	Reading <i>Quaker Faith and Practice</i> (see below)	Wednesday 16	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Sunday 13	12:00 pm	Area Meeting in Abingdon	Saturday 19 March	All day	Reading <i>Quaker Faith and Practice</i> (see below)
Monday 14	4:00 pm	Poems in the Library on the theme of 'Earth'	Sunday 27	12:30 pm	Bring-and-share Lunch
Tuesday 15	12:45 pm	Restorative Justice and Empathy (see page 3)			

Reading *Quaker Faith & Practice*



All Friends are asked by the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group to join in reading the current Quaker Faith and Practice.

Suggested chapter for March:
Chapter 5: Other Quaker groupings
and Chapter 6: Yearly Meeting and
Chapter 10: Belonging to a Quaker meeting

Further information and support can be found at
<http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/reading/>

Anne Watson

Reading *Quaker Faith and Practice* Chapters 2, 19 and 26

**Saturday 19 March, 10:15 am to 3:30 pm
in the Meeting House**

We have been asked by Oxford Meeting Elders to facilitate reflection on three chapters of *Quaker Faith and Practice*. We shall spend the morning considering Chapter 2 in depth – Approaches to God – Worship and Prayer.

We shall then use insights from this exercise to inform consideration of Chapter 19 – Openings, and Chapter 26 – Reflections, in the afternoon session.

Please could Friends who wish to attend this workshop let Tina know of their interest to help us in planning the day (tina.leonard3@gmail.com or via a note in her pigeon hole).

Prior preparation will help to make the day more meaningful. If you are able to attend, please try to read Chapter 2 beforehand and come prepared to talk about any extract(s) that speak to you. Even if you are not able to do this, please come anyway!

Judith Atkinson, Tina Leonard, Steve Brooke

Don't Forget!

**Yearly Meeting is Friday 27 May to
Monday 30 May** at Friends House, London.

Remember to register at
<https://forms.quaker.org.uk/bym/>

MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

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

Mondays at 7:00 pm Young Adult Friends
(followed by baked potato supper)

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

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