



Forty-Three newsletter

Number 449

September 2016



Oxford Friends Meeting

43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

Sustainability and Justice

An invitation and a challenge for Oxford Meeting

Our Quaker testimony to Equality is challenged head-on by the many forms of injustice in our world: by gross disparities between rich and poor – tax havens and food banks; by the plight of refugees; prisoners; the housing crisis... The list goes on and on. And climate change compounds all these others, with colossal injustice towards future generations and to all the rest of the natural world.

What can we do? Over the past few years a group of us from Oxford and Headington Meetings has been searching for ways forward. We called ourselves the SEE Justice group (S.E.E.: *Social, Economic and Environmental Justice*). Early on we felt a need to become better informed about the economic and political forces involved. So we began by reading, and discussing together, books about the global financial system, the fossil fuel industry, tax avoidance, how corporations undermine the NHS, the huge social costs of inequality, etc. For most of us, a big eye-opener! And we saw the interconnections among all these enormous problems and the biggest problem of all: climate change.

We have found the mutual support and companionship of the group invaluable, learning from each other's knowledge and campaigning experience, sharing information and ideas. We felt

better able to take part in campaigning from a well-informed base: meeting MPs, writing letters to MPs and Ministers, participating in conferences and workshops. Last year, among other things we organised a Quaker vigil against economic inequality, in which around 50 Quakers from our Area Meeting took part in central Oxford; and we helped to run stalls and workshops at the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility conference organised by our Headington Friend Bridget Walker. We have active links with other campaigning groups such as Fossil Free Oxfordshire, Keep-Our-NHS-Public and others.

However, we are a very small group. The departure of Janet and John Toye from Oxford is a big loss. And no new or younger Friends have joined us.

Continued on page 2, column 1

From Quaker Faith and Practice

'Have you anything to declare?' is a vital challenge to which every one of us is personally called to respond and is also a challenge that every meeting should consider of primary importance. It should lead us to define, with such clarity as we can reach, precisely what it is that Friends of this generation have to say that is not, as we believe, being said effectively by others.

Edgar G Dunstan, 1956

QF&P 28.07

Deadline for contributions to the October 2016 issue: noon, Wednesday 21 September

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

Continued from page 1, column 2

We need *you*! The problems of Justice and Sustainability confront us all.

What can and should our Meeting be doing – *together* – to further our testimonies to Equality and Simplicity and our 2011 commitment to sustainability? This is the question we hope to discuss at the next meeting of S.E.E. Justice: at **7:30 pm on Tuesday 20 September.**

We warmly invite *everyone* concerned with this question to join us on 20 September! We hope to record a Minute to go to our Business Meeting for further action.

Alan Allport

Visit of Sahar Vardi



Israeli peace activist, Sahar Vardi, is visiting the UK in September. Based in Jerusalem, Sahar coordinates the Israel programme for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), focusing on countering the militarisation of Israeli society.

Sahar started protesting against Israel's treatment of the Palestinian people at a very young age, joining her father doing agricultural work with Palestinian villagers, mainly planting trees. She was conscripted to the Israeli Defence Forces at age 18 but refused to serve and spent several months in military prison for conscientious objection.

Sahar is active with several Israeli peace and human rights organisations and has participated in non-violent resistance to Israel's military occupation of Palestinian land. Come and hear Sahar Vardi speak at the Meeting House on **Tuesday 27 September at 7:30 pm**. It promises to be a stimulating and inspiring evening.

What we do to help refugees and asylum seekers

Earlier this summer, the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN) decided to compile a national survey of what Quaker Meetings were doing to help and support refugees and asylum seekers.

At the July Local Business Meeting we decided it would be helpful in pooling information if members and attenders were asked to tell the newsletter team what they were doing. We received two pieces, which we print below. There were probably more submissions to QARN itself that didn't find their way to us, but this gives a flavour of which organisations are supporting refugees and asylum seekers in Oxford, and the range of inspiring and sometimes very simple things that can be done to help.

Currently, I am Chair of Trustees of the Oxford based charity Refugee Resource. Trustees aim to provide good governance and create the supportive and secure environment necessary to enable the director and the staff team to undertake activities that are predicated on the principles of healing, empowerment and integration.

Refugee Resource provides a range of holistic services to relieve mental and emotional distress, improve wellbeing and facilitate the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the community. We have a team of specialist staff, some of whom are refugees themselves. The team also includes qualified, experienced counsellors, who work together to provide specialist post-trauma counselling and therapeutic activities, mentoring services, a women's group, and men's advice and advocacy. We work cross culturally and through interpreters where necessary. Our services are designed to work together to provide people with the level of support that they require, and include professional one-to-one counselling to deal with severe trauma to therapeutic group counselling, support from a Refugee Resource trained mentor to help people find their feet over a 12-month period, and ongoing support from our women's and men's support services. The women's group and men's service provide safe and supportive

settings where people can come together to undertake training, English lessons, discussion groups, sports and activities to provide them with a sense of community and belonging.

We provide support for people trying to find employment, education, training and/or re-training by providing practical advice and guidance, and by using our bursary fund to provide financial support for job-hunting, course fees, books and equipment. We work in partnership with local colleges to run courses and provide training, including our accredited mentor training scheme run in conjunction with Abingdon and Witney College.

We also work closely with local authorities such as the County Council, the Police and Crime Commission and local GPs to deliver training for staff who work out in the community to help them understand the needs of refugees and asylum seekers and many of our counselling clients come from referrals by GPs as the NHS is unable to meet their needs.

Ray Fishbourne

Here's what I've recently been doing to support refugees:

I hosted a young couple of refugees in our home from the end of December to mid-June, through Host Oxford/City of Sanctuary. If you want to do the same, apply through Wyon Stansfeld: 07783 858958 wyonstansfeld@gmail.com.

I gave my bike to a young asylum-seeker who was temporarily housed in a village outside Oxford and had no money for bus fares – contact any of the local refugee organizations if you have a bike to spare and/or can teach bike repair and maintenance skills.

I'm also a mentor for the Interpret for Refugee Resource (www.refugeerresource.org.uk, 01865 403280) – contact Ruth if you would like more information.

I gave a lump-sum to Convoy2Calais, but I couldn't go personally as it was the same weekend as the conference organised by Oxford University Refugee Studies Centre/Red Cross/City of Sanctuary.

Once a month, I give surplus non-perishable food to Oxford Food Bank, who pass on some of their food to Asylum Welcome.

I regularly sign petitions and share them on Facebook. See Change.org and Oxfordshire Refugee Action Network Facebook group (this is *not* a public group – you need to ask to join). This network also tells you about aid to Calais, volunteering opportunities and fund-raising events.

I contact my MP when asked to do so on refugee and immigration issues. My MP is Nicola Blackwood and this has been effective, e.g. her opposition to the expansion of Campsfield Detention Centre, which came about through her constituents contacting her.

I am painting about the crisis in the Mediterranean and writing about the process of producing these images. I'm also participating in a joint artists' and refugee poets' event as well as planning an exhibition of art about and by refugees for June 2017 (see the Leaveners at www.leaveners.org).

I'm making art about the exile experience; translating and promoting poetry by exile poets (see Modern Poetry in Translation, special edition on refugee poets www.mptmagazine.com).

I've given my old smart phones to refugees – these are very welcome as you can not only email and WhatsApp but even Skype on them!

Last, but by no means least, I'm talking to people – family, friends, acquaintances, complete strangers – about refugees, immigrants and related topics and trying to dispel the myths. **Karima Brooke**

France Yearly Meeting 2016



In July John Gould and I had the great pleasure of once again joining French Quakers at their Assemblée Annuelle (Yearly Meeting) which for the second year took place in Nantes.

French Quakers are a small but enthusiastic group spread throughout the country, meeting when possible and using social media to keep in touch when not. They may drive to two to three hours once a month to join two or three others for Meeting for Worship and a shared meal. Their dedication is inspiring. As well as maintaining a peaceful presence at the Eurosatory arms fair in Paris they keep open house for passing Friends

Continued on back page

CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER 2016

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Saturday 3	10:30 am	Art in Oxford	Tuesday 20	7:30 pm	SEE Justice (see pages 1-2)
Sunday 4	12:30 pm	Local Meeting for Worship for Business	Wednesday 21	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Tuesday 6	7:00 pm	Reading <i>Quaker Faith and Practice</i>	Friday 23	7:00 pm	Friday with Friends: Garden Room Development (TBC)
Saturday 10	10:00 am	Open Doors Oxford	Saturday 24	10:00 am - 4:00 pm	Reading <i>Quaker Faith and Practice</i> (below)
Sunday 11	1:00 pm		Sunday 25	12:30 pm	Bring-and-share Lunch
Monday 12	4:00 pm - 6:00 pm	Poems in the Library	Tuesday 27	7:30 pm	Sahar Vardi Talk (see page 2)
Wednesday 14	11:00 am	Reading <i>Quaker Faith and Practice</i>	<p style="text-align: center;">Reading <i>Quaker Faith & Practice</i></p> <p>All Friends are asked by the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group to join in reading the current Quaker Faith and Practice.</p> <p>Suggested chapter for September: Chapter 8: The central managed work and Chapter 28: Sharing the Quaker experience</p> <p>See: http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/reading/</p> <p>The next event is to be led by Val Ferguson and Jenny Buffery. They will focus on Chapters 14 and 25 and there will be a mixture of discussion, Worship and worship-sharing. It will be on Saturday 24 September, 10:00 am until 4:00 pm (bring your own lunch) and all are welcome, whether you have been reading the book regularly or not.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Anne Watson</p>		

Continued from page 3, column 2

from round the world at the Quaker Centres in Paris and Congénies (in the Languedoc).

Outreach is high on the agenda at any French Quaker gathering – how to make Quakerism known to the wider French public is a matter of great concern if Quakers are to continue and thrive in France.

The historic prosperity of Nantes was partly founded on the existence of slavery. Thousands of slave ships came in and out of the port of Nantes. The city has built a moving memorial to the victims of slavery and it was here on the Friday afternoon of YM that we gathered in silence to lay flowers and to remember past and modern

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Anne Watson

victims of slavery. The local press had printed an article about Quakers and our intention to hold this meeting and members of the public joined us while the clerk of YM spoke movingly about slavery in the 21st century. As outreach it could hardly be bettered.

Other visitors to YM included representatives from QUNO (Quaker United Nations Organisation), EMES (European and Middle East Section of the Friends World Committee for Consultation) and QCEA (Quaker Council for European Affairs), who all took part in a panel outlining the work of Quakers internationally. There were groups, physical exercises (our friend Richard Thompson responsible for these), reports, Meetings for Worship and of course the wonderful conversations you have with F/friends you haven't seen for some time and are so happy to meet again.

Elisabeth Salisbury

Collection appeals for 2017 Please send suggestions for appeals in 2017 to the Collections Committee by **Friday 30 September**. They can be Quaker causes, or causes sponsored by an Oxford Friend or Attender. They can be new proposals or continuations of existing collections. Ask for an electronic proposal form from Ray Fishbourne, Collections Committee Convenor, (rayfishbourne@hotmail.com) or pick up a paper copy from the pigeonhole cupboard. **4**
For more information please talk to Ray Fishbourne, Karima Brooke or John Gould.