

Forty-Three newsletter

Number 452
December 2016



Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

Homelessness on Our Patch

Several Friends have regular contact with homeless people, or with projects about homelessness (such as through our own charity Oxford Friends Action on Poverty (OxFAP), and have been shocked by recent news about the closure of hostel beds.

Last year 63 beds were taken out of use when Lucy Faithfull House was closed. Now Oxfordshire County Council has announced the intended closure of nearly 200 beds in Simon Housing and Julian Housing by April 2018. This comes on top of other closures in the county. Simon Housing is for vulnerable and homeless people, and Julian Housing is for those who are ready to move on to independent living, with support.

Recent 'counts' of rough sleepers in Oxford estimate over 100 people, including those we see in the doorways in town and others living under canvas, sometimes in small tented communities, outside the city centre.

Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire District Councils are trying to pull together a plan to make up some of the places, but it is unlikely that all the beds will be saved.



Understandably, Friends are wondering what to do. As we write, there are no organised campaigns that we know of, but by the time this is published that may have changed. Other churches are similarly distressed by this news. Letters of support to your local city and district councillors might be helpful, as well as letters to county councillors expressing concern.

This matter will be discussed at Meeting for Worship for Business on Sunday 4 December, and if you would like to be involved in any corporate response Friends might make to this crisis, or have suggestions of suitable action and ways forward, or merely want to be kept informed, please contact Anne who is the current convenor of Oxford Friends Action on Poverty:

annewatson1089@gmail.com

Anne Watson

From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.

John Woolman, 1772

QF&P 25.01

Deadline for contributions to the January 2017 issue: noon, Friday 24 December

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 office@oxfordquakers.org. Paper copy can be left in the pigeonhole of any Editor.
For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit www.oxfordquakers.org

Time to Meet New Friends at Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting?

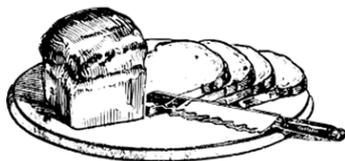
Our Area Meeting meets six times a year and the meetings rotate around the nine constituent Local Meetings: Abingdon, Burford, Charlbury, Faringdon, Headington, Marlborough, Oxford, and Swindon.

The January meeting will be held in Oxford on Saturday 7 January 2017, so if you have never been to an Area Meeting, this would be a good time to come when the meeting is on "home ground." It is a great opportunity to meet Quakers from other meetings. The day starts at 10:00 am with coffee before a 10:30 am Meeting for Worship for Business. This is followed by a shared lunch prepared by Oxford Meeting. Ursula Kneisel is co-ordinating this and will be pleased to hear from Friends who can provide contributions.

The afternoon session begins at 2:00 pm. Rhonda Riachi will facilitate a discussion on **Spirituality in later life: a quiet strength**. Rhonda is a Member of Headington Meeting. She has lived in Oxford since 1983, and has worked as a City Councillor, as director of an educational charity, and now as a freelance educational consultant. Rhonda has developed an interest in the health of older people, choosing dementia care for the topic of her MSc dissertation in 2013. She seeks to integrate spiritual experience and wisdom into daily life and to help others to do so.

Sandra Figgess

Clerk to Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting 2015-16



Please help us host

On Saturday 7 January Area Meeting which is attended by 40-45 members will be in Oxford Meeting House. At lunchtime the Bread and Roses Committee like to provide a good variety of mainly warm savoury dishes, tasty desserts, and cakes for afternoon tea. I should be grateful if you would please contact me re- the choice of food you wish to contribute for this occasion.

Ursula Kneisel

u_kneisel@yahoo.co.uk)

Loneliness

Recently, Peggy Heeks and I attended a morning workshop on loneliness run by the Archway foundation. They encouraged us to examine how as members of a church community we could respond most helpfully to loneliness experienced by any of those among us. You don't have to be part of the pastoral care team to have an interest in this issue. If our wish for meaningful relationships and connections with others is greater than the connection we currently have, that's loneliness.

The first thing I noticed was that the seven person strong group we were in had no problem filling an entire flipchart page (small writing) with examples from our own lives where we had been lonely, and how that had felt. As we cruised onto our second sheet, we were just getting into our flow and the deeper experience. Experiences of loneliness bubbled up from everyone: "I felt like I was on the outside looking in", "I just didn't know what to do." Resentful, isolated, emotional...we were not short on adjectives about this emotional and physical experience.

The workshop then focussed on what our church communities can actually do within our own walls, and I'll admit to a little pride that Quakers do attend to the question of welcome, and our efforts at engaging with social needs of our members, attenders and visitors aren't at all bad. Pat on the back for us! And then...there are places where we could improve our game. Although we run a number of regular groups for things, and have a leaflet about that to encourage everyone to feel they can join in, we can always do more. One Quaker pointed out that a direct, personal invitation from one person to another to, say, a bring-and-share lunch, could be a giant step forward in helping that person move towards a feeling of belonging and genuine welcome amongst us. We may get so caught up in campaigns in the wider world that we skimp on the spiritual nurturing of our lives and others' and discernment of our personal life ministry, something made worse by the internal paralysis that loneliness brings, to the detriment of our outer witness. We hang out and chat with our mates because it's less of an effort than talking to a stranger (I'm guilty as hell). Loneliness can lurk here! God doesn't want loneliness for us.

We need to notice absences. We need to listen with our eyes as well as our ears. We need to offer time out for parents and carers. We need to listen with an eye on the right to confidentiality of the speaker (where appropriate, of course). We need to be aware that we are part of a bigger picture of interaction and make wider information available through publicity. We may not be the first port of call or the last. We are not different.

An aspect of loneliness is the sense of being unloveable. Maybe even that loneliness makes it harder for us to reach in to our own loveableness. Loneliness is the last taboo, some say. One person at the workshop mentioned that a rupture in our spiritual connection with God after crisis is perhaps the most painful loneliness of all. There were a lot of nodding heads at that comment. He also noticed that it's a different thing to be alone in a garden to being alone in a crowd. How lucky we are to have a garden at St Giles, where our loneliness becomes a different experience.



I attended the workshop initially to look into issues that my decluttering clients might want to engage with, but I came away so grateful

to have had an opportunity to look lovingly at my own story of loneliness. I saw with others that with surprising events, our ordinary life can suddenly be turned on its head, bringing loneliness. As members of this Meeting we can look to our own loneliness with love. We can also notice an unspoken loneliness in the person next to us and share a little attention, make a little offering, be there.

I really enjoyed the workshop and I'd encourage others to attend the next one Archway runs, whenever that is. By all means ask Peggy or me about it over coffee. You might want to speak to a member of our Pastoral Care team or you might prefer to DIY: look at the events page on our website www.oxfordquakers.org/events or investigate an Archway group in Oxford www.archwayfoundation.org.uk.

Relaunch of Friendly 8s

'Friendly 8s' are an arrangement whereby eight people meet in eight homes on successive weeks and then disband. The purpose is to meet new people within the Meeting and discuss any topic the group wishes.

The groups, once formed, are autonomous, choosing their own schedules, discussion topics and format (e.g. tea and coffee, or a pot-luck meal). The groups are also closed for their duration, i.e. no members would join part-way through, or share discussions outside the group.

If you would like to participate, please could you let me know on qfriendly8@gmail.com, indicating the days on which you would prefer to meet (or days on which you cannot meet). There will then be a match-making exercise to set up groups with as close to eight members as possible. The groups are expected to kick-off in mid-January.

Rupert Booth

Charney Manor or Woodbrooke?

Elders and the Pastoral Care Group manage a fund designed to help local Friends attend a course at Charney Manor or Woodbrooke. The usual offer is 50% off the fee. It is expected that participants will cover the travel costs themselves, unless this presents a difficulty.

Many of us have had experience of attending courses at one of these Quaker study centres and know how valuable they can be.

We are currently accepting applications for January to March 2017 on a first-come, first-served basis. Applications should be sent by post to Peggy Heeks, 80 Pegasus Grange, Whitehouse Road, OX21 4QQ or by email to peggy.heels@regents.ox.ac.uk.

In the lobby at 43 St Giles there are reference copies of Woodbrooke's brochure, September 2016 to March 2017 and of Charney's 2016 brochure, with its 2017 brochure due to arrive soon. Further information is available from 01235 868206 (Charney) and 0121 472 5171 (Woodbrooke).

CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER 2016

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Friday 2	7:30 pm	Maria Huff, EAPPI, update from Israel/ Palestine	Monday 12	4:00 pm-6:00 pm	Poems in the Library
Sunday 4	12:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business / Fair Trade Stall	Sunday 25	10:30-11:15	Meeting for Worship
Saturday 10	10:30-12:30	OX4 Coffee Morning		11:30-2.00 pm	Fruit punch followed by shared lunch

Signing Off: I have been fortunate enough to serve as an editor on this newsletter for six years now. I can safely say that it has been one of my favourite Quaker committees. It is so satisfying to finish an editing session with the team and have a completed newsletter full of exciting articles and events that our Meeting is involved with.

I might be finishing as an editor, but I have already jumped into a new role in Oxford Meeting as a member of the Nominations Committee and the Regional Meeting Support Committee, as well as in January, being a member of the Quaker Life Mental Health Cluster Group. So lots to be getting on with! I am still of course at Blackwell's Bookshop in my "other" life, so always there to say hi to whoever pops in.

Every month brings a fascinating mix of articles, but we could always do with more! Please do send your contributions to newsletter@oxfordquakers.org, or to Sue Smith and Sherry Granum, current members of the newsletter committee.

Becky Riddell, bexriddell@gmail.com

Office News: As we come to the end of 2016 we wanted to say a huge thank you to the Meeting for all the support we have had over the last year. We have appreciated all the smiles, chats, coffees, advice, practical help, cake and all the other things that have helped us do our job and enriched our working days! Thank you regular and occasional visitors, Friends, Friends on Duty, friends in general, those who use the building and garden and everyone else! We look forward to seeing more of you all in 2017



Helen Osborn: Helen provides occasional cover particularly at weekends. She also hires the retreat room on a regular basis for her holistic



Max Howells: Max is on duty on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. He looks after Sunday notices

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

Reading Quaker Faith and 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 December: Chapter 27: **Unity and diversity**
Further information and support can be found at <http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/reading/>

Editorial Team: BECKY RIDDELL, KEITH WILSON and SUE SMITH (Joint Editing and Production); DEB ARROWSMITH, JACQUI MANSFIELD and MAX HOWELLS (Calendar and Distribution)