

Forty-Three newsletter

Number 504 April 2021

Oxford Friends Meeting 43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW



Don Mason, In Memoriam Ruth Mason

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I was really appreciative of *The Guardian's* recognition of the contribution my dad made in his

life, in their Other Lives section on 15 March 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/mar/15/don-mason-obituary.

As well as focusing on his career as an Immunologist, the article mentions his early years growing up in the Medway towns, where the Chatham docks and the aircraft factory his father worked in were key targets for WW2 bombing raids. It was always something he thought about in relation to his peace activism.

The obituary flags his contribution to the Upper Heyford peace protests and —

importantly in these times where the right to protest is under threat – positions his resulting time in prison for civil disobedience as part of the contribution made in this struggle. Ironically, the charge was for 'breaching the peace', which Dad always found highly amusing.

I've always been proud of Dad's work in immunology, knowing that his foundational work on T cells enabled immunotherapy approaches now widely used in the clinic. The Medical Research Council have more details on this in their 'Insight blog' (https://mrc.ukri.org/news/blog/behind-the-

picture-don-mason-and-his-t-cell-legacy), and flagged in their tweet how the painstaking accumulation of knowledge through research in this area over many years underpins the response it has been possible to make today to COVID-19.

The Guardian article omitted a section from the original submission (contributed by colleagues) which also mentioned the nurturing research environment that Dad cultivated, where his approach of unshowy, collaborative rigour, empathy and kindness positively impacted both colleagues and

empathy and kindness positive impacted both colleagues and students, and had a particularly positive impact on supporting the early careers of his female doctoral students and postdocs.

The thing that stands out most for me from my dad's life, and which I find both deeply touching and



Don Mason. Provided by Ruth Mason

Please send newsletter contributions well in advance of the intended publication date.

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, can be emailed to newsletter@oxfordquakers.org, or a paper copy can be left in the pigeonhole of any editor. Items for the calendar (on the last page) can be emailed to office@oxfordquakers.org.

inspiring, is how he reflected on the meaning of his life's experiences and used those reflections to inform the action he chose to take, in light of the gifts and opportunities he possessed, with compassion as his touchstone. From experience of war to peace activism; from loss of a child from untreatable disease to immunology; from experience of incarceration to years of prison visiting, correspondence with death-row inmates, support of probationers and campaign against detention of immigrants.

It's important to note that no life is free of conflicts or compromises: Dad always accepted that his role as a vivisectionist could be seen as a contradiction to his veganism – he didn't shrink from this, but saw it as the balance of benefits and accepted others would take a different view. Implacable in his opposition to nuclear weapons (see postscript), he nonetheless struggled with pacifism, believing that he would be unable to resist violence in the face of a direct threat of violence to his family. What I know is that his perspective was always informed, to the utmost that he was able to bring to it, by his understanding and experience of love. As for us all – if we are lucky – his life was an unfolding into a deeper experience and knowledge of that. As for many others, my life will always be blessed by his legacy.

Postscript:

Dad's opposition to weapons of mass destruction, and concepts of deterrence such as Mutually Assured Destruction, arose from his conviction of their utter incompatibility with the unity of all creation – the fundamental nature of the cosmos, he believed. He chose to close his book, 'Science, Mystical Experience and Religious Belief' with a poem of the Sufi mystics (below), expressing this underlying character of the Universe. It was his own personal sense of this, tempered through experiences of both joy and sorrow, which underpinned his profound reverence for life and humility of approach in carrying through life's activities.

The Vision of God in Everything

In the market, in the cloister – only God I saw, In the valley and on the mountain – only God I saw, Him I have seen beside me oft in tribulation; In favour and in fortune – only God I saw. In prayer and fasting, in praise and contemplation, In the religion of the Prophet – only God I saw. Neither soul nor body, accident nor substance, Qualities nor causes – only God I saw. I op'ed mine eyes and by the light of His face around me In all the eye discovered – only God I saw. Like a candle I was melted with His fire; Amidst the flames outflanking – only God I saw. Myself with mine own eyes I saw most clearly, But when I looked with God's eyes – only God I saw. I passed away into nothingness, I vanished, And lo, I was the All-living – only God I saw.

Baba Kuhi of Shiraz



Photo by S.L. Granum



In the garden at 43. Photo by S.L. Granum

A Blind Person's COVID

Ellen Bassani

It's been hard for all of us, this lock down, social distancing and fumbling for hand sanitizers. Suddenly, life as we knew it had changed for us all, and quickly. At the same time as acknowledging these wide-ranging effects of the virus in general, I'm here to ask that society might spare a particular thought or two for the visually impaired citizens whose everyday lives especially depend on reliable order and infrastructure. Trust in strangers has taken years to hone. Now strangers pose a death threat through illness. Routes to work and shops, once familiar, now seem too daunting.

I'm a nearly blind, nearly seventy, high risk woman who's not been out by myself, excluding walks in the park, since 10 March 2020. This pandemic has managed to shake my confidence, while lone-travelling to other countries failed to do so. Risk-assessing every visit or trip out exhausts even the hardiest spirit. A walk in the park is part of my bid to stay healthy. Since lock down, I bother less about staying fit. Why?

If sight is limited, such a walk requires endless concentration. Every second the tactile and auditory cues are being sifted for information. Am I going in the right direction? Has my cane hit an obstacle or a land mark? Any false decision and I'm over the bank and rolling towards the lake. Since COVID, another layer is added to the effort of concentrating. Where are my fellow park users? The paths are soft underfoot so the approaching foot steps can be missed. Many walkers, thoughtfully call from three metres distance, "coming on your left." It feels uncivil to turn my face away as they pass. A light hearted quip about the awfulness of the current situation, banishes offence. Though I recently thumped a four-year-old on the head with my stick arm. Social distancing was not quite grasped by the youngster. It was the shout of pain that registered my bull's eye.

Government guidance encourages us to cough or sneeze into our elbow. Guess where I hold when guided? On future outings, the shoulder might be the place to grab, or here's a novel idea. Ask the guide to take the end of your cane and lead you. The cane would be parallel to the ground. This gives reasonable distancing. I'm sure it looks silly. But hey, these are outrageous times.

A friend shops for me. I've been spared the stress of abiding with the distancing rules. The shop may be located, but how, if visually impaired, is the queue of customers identified? It's embarrassing to unknowingly walk up against the back of the person in front. Blind friends have experienced abuse for overstepping the two metre mark.

Inside the store, what happens then? A severe visual impairment makes it impossible to shop unassisted. Not everyone can shop online. The stores have made provision, but the job of connecting with the helper both physically and humanly is clumsy when conducted through a mask, shields and gloves. The trolley, like the cane could be the vehicle for distancing. Thus guidance without touching is achieved.

Navigating footpaths if sight is limited continues to be stressful, COVID or non-COVID. Planners who've encouraged bars and restaurants to provide outdoor seating, fail to consider the impact this will pose for a long-cane user. Street furniture, signs, and bollards are always challenging. Imagine trying to navigate through a cluttered space that was once open. Tables, sharp sided seats, and sprawling feet offer yet more bruising encounters. Where's the social distancing here? Drunk people will find it hard to remember this precaution.

Despite these pitfalls, isolation is the biggest threat to the wellbeing of any of us — especially those with a disability. Not all elderly or visually impaired users can manage Zoom. There is the telephone. Yet it's not enough to remind me that I still have a place in my community. Comfort is gained in the sighted world from seeing faces. For a blind person, comfort comes through touch. It's a blind person's form of eye contact. Take it away and I, like others, slide too deeply into myself.

We know this will pass. Yet the day-to-day grind can wear away even the most positive soul. We're in it together and together we'll find solutions to the challenges. When the whole shut-down business becomes too much, I remind myself of the real disasters that many people have had to face and endure. Good luck to all of you out there who continue to struggle and yet survive

Bonn Square Installation

Jill Green

Artist friends Jill Green and Nimmi Naidoo have created a temporary installation that can be visited in Bonn Square, Oxford, 8-16 May 2021.

They felt a strong leading to honour and create a visible tribute to all the keyworkers who have kept us going by simply going to their work during the COVID pandemic. The list would include care staff everywhere, bin collectors, doctors, cleaners, pharmacists, bus drivers, nurses, shop workers, and delivery drivers who have died of COVID-19 as a result of just doing their jobs. We could name many more ...

The Office for National Statistics reports that between 9 March and 28 December 2020, a total of 883 health and social care workers, 213 taxi cab



Jill Green and Nimmi Naidoo Installation

drivers, 157 nurses, and 180 sales assistants died of COVID-19 in England and Wales. These people alone are equivalent to 4 plane crashes with no survivors.

With these shocking figures of deaths of people faithfully working to serve the public, we have been enraged about NHS underfunding over the last 10 years and have felt oceans of sadness. We felt strongly that these people should be publicly recognised. We both worked in the NHS and we created this tangible tribute because we felt we owed it to our colleagues and all those who have worked in close contact with the public during this highly dangerous time. We hope people will reflect on the many lives prematurely terminated; the never-ending grief of their children, families, and friends; and the years unlived by so many who were just doing their job.



Truth and Integrity in Public Affairs Richard Seebohm

Friends,

I have asked our Business Meeting to ask Area Meeting to ask Sufferings to get Friends House to reinstate the Quaker Committee on Truth and Integrity in Public Affairs (TIPA). TIPA was laid down in 2004 because scandals seemed to have subsided, and running committees was a drain on our resources. Now our testimonies are being tested to the limit. I hardly need to rehearse the revelations that have NOT led to ministerial resignations and NOT silenced subversive messaging.

If you want to see some of the false news stories, read Peter Oborne's *The Assault on Truth*, reviewed in the *Friend* of 19 March by John Hall of Clacton Meeting. If you want to savour the sleaze read the newspapers every day, or the article by Matthew Parris in the 26 October 2020 issue of The Times (https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/smirking-ministers-dont-care-what-we-think-sklkklfjm).

This is how he ends his article. "It is the populist right's refrain that all politics is corrupt, in that they're 'all in it for themselves' and that 'they're all the same'. Once this becomes embedded in the public imagination, the consequence is perverse. People stop trying to to distinguish between honourable and dishonourable politics, between the more honest and less honest politicians. Universal resentment turns into generalised indifference. We lose the ability to be shocked.'

My key point is that in the ways of today, the committee can work by zoom and has no need to be housed in a hotel for meetings. It may not even need a staff secretary. It could feed into our Parliamentary Liaison and Communications people. The Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) in Brussels would be a useful counterparty, and there are many other likeminded groups. And it's not just a British domestic problem. If this country can't set an example, what's the point of trying to be an independent nation state that calls the dictatorships into account?

Please help!

Tony Crofts and Housing

Fran Ryan

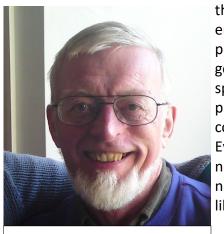
fran@oclt.org.uk

Many Friends will remember Tony Crofts who was a member at Oxford Meeting for many years from the 80s to the 00s. We are publishing this tribute from Fran Ryan about Tony's innovative and inspirational work in housing in Oxfordshire and Bristol – work that has been supported by many Quakers and continues locally in the Oxfordshire Community Land Trust (OCLT):

I am sorry to say that my friend and OCLT founder member Tony Crofts died in Bristol on 3 February 2021. Tony leaves behind an impressive legacy of projects that show what can be done with determination and a good smattering of audacity.

Tony's greatest achievement was probably setting up one of the first community land trusts in the

country in 1983 by gifting a small piece of land to his local community in Stonesfield for affordable housing. This developed into Stonesfield Community Land Trust which (with further input from Tony, his Quaker connections, and very many other local committed people such as Libby Hartwell and Bernard Youngs and others too numerous to mention) has now grown to own 15 permanently affordable homes, a small office building, and a preschool. It has clearly contributed to the well-being of



Tony Crofts, submitted by Fran Ryan

the village in ensuring that some people can afford to go on living there in spite of escalating prices across the county and country. Every village and neighbourhood needs a land trust like that.

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The simple idea behind a land trust was this: houses are not (that) expensive to build, the problem is the cost of the land. Remove the land cost and homes are more affordable. Tony understood this at a visceral level which is why he started Stonesfield CLT. He was also a founder member with me and Jock Coats, of the Oxfordshire Community Land Trust (OCLT,) prior to its registration in 2006. He also found its first (and to date, only) piece of land through his Quaker connections. Tony retired from OCLT in 2011 when he moved to Bristol.

Having returned to Bristol where he was born and had grown up, Tony went on to do two more interesting and radical projects. The first, with his wife Randi, was to set up their home at 3 Windsor Terrace as a housing co-op with 4 flats where rents were affordable for local people. This became Windsor Terrace Housing Society which has an asset lock so that it can't be sold off by members for personal profit; they are tenants in common. When both Tony and Randi have passed away (and Randi is still very much alive!), the property can be transferred to the cooperative at an affordable price thus ensuring another piece of land (and in this case the house that is built on it) will remain permanently affordable.

Having got Windsor Terrace set up, Tony then turned his attention to addressing what he saw as another scandalous waste of space: the many empty commercial properties in and around Bristol. He set up Abolish Empty Office Blocks (AEOB) and again, drawing heavily on his Quaker and other local connections such as Chris Askew, they managed to raise the funds to buy and convert a vacant commercial property in St George. AEOB now owns this building which provides affordable homes for 6 households. We need more of this sort of thing as well.

I will miss him in spite of the fact that his risk-taking sometimes left those close to him stressed and ready to pounce to extinguish some of the unwanted fires that occasionally ensued. He was one of the pioneers of the growing movement to create an alternative and parallel system of land ownership, where land is held by communities in trust for local benefit, out of the speculative market. The movement will miss him and so will I.

If you are interested in supporting Tony's legacy locally please join OCLT or contact Fran directly. Because of funding delays, OCLT is launching a supporter membership scheme to raise £12,000 to cover essential costs including insurance and book-keeping.

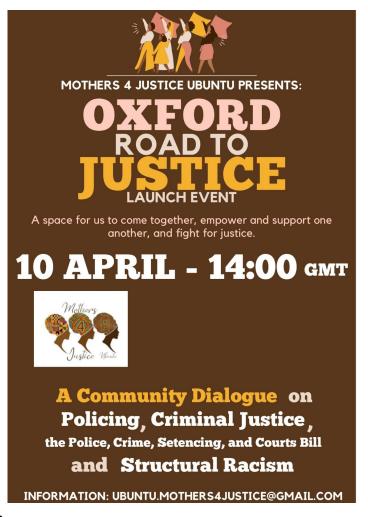
Donations are welcome via:

https://app.donorfy.com/form/J7EEWBHW62/FDOB4

Mothers 4 Justice Ubuntu

Anne Watson

Local Meeting has agreed to support the Mothers4justice project to disrupt the pipeline between the street and prison for young BAME people in our city. The project, which will involve volunteer advocates, will be launched at an event on Saturday 10 April.





Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? Deb Arrowsmith

As I write this we are coming up to Easter – as you read this it may well be past. As a 'birthright' Anglican, convinced Quaker, I still have a hankering to observe Lent – or at least have a go! I don't mean preparing for the gigantic festival of Chocolate that many confectioners would have you believe Easter is. I mean putting yourself in another's shoes, walking with Jesus to think through the experience of his stumbling journey and imagine carrying that through our lives today. Many of us value seeking a closer influence of the divine in our lives now. Lent is that period of 40 days before Easter replicating Jesus' wanderings in the wilderness when I, at least, imagine him to be questioning, agonising, fasting, seeking both the way ahead and literally what, on earth, to do. To others it's about abstinence, reliance, seeking guidance, a different perspective, getting clean, prepared, and so much more.

My most successful Lent (if that's how you would put it) was aged 8 when I gave up sugar in tea. Haven't touched it since – result! These days the fashion is not so much to give things up but to take things on. In my time I have tried all sorts in an attempt to internalise the 'holy'; focus on the spiritual nature of life; breathe in a bit more goodness, compassion, humility hope – all the values Jesus encouraged us to adopt. Mostly, my efforts fall far short of the anticipated revelatory experience I would be happy to share.

This year a Friend suggested Lent was really all about making the presence of God real in our lives. This seemed to me like Quakers seeking that of God in each one of us. Do we really believe that? And, if so, how does that make us feel, behave? In lockdown – only two people in the house with microscopic bits of God in them – that presence needed a bit of external reinforcement this Lent.

So, I thought, let's invite God around, and if God were coming we'd better lay a place for Him/Her/ They/It at our table. And so we did: placemat, napkin, knife, fork, spoon, glass for water, and glass for wine (obviously). Side plate in case we had bread...or olives? All laid out ready. A third chair with a nice cushion...

Did God come? Well, thankfully, we didn't get to the spooky level of putting out food and wondering if God preferred spaghetti to linguine but there were more conversations with God. A quiet gentle reminder of 'the other'. A shifting of perspective. As if, from the corner of your eye, you almost see someone. Know they are near about. That alone stetches our inner world to take in that presence. Makes the creative pause which I believe is God with us. In an effort to shed the lockdown pounds chocolate is banned in our house this Easter. God, however, is very much with us to celebrate.

Final Enquirer Meeting Thursday 1 April, 19:00 for 19:30

Anne Watson

The zoom room will be open from 19:00 for informal chat. These meetings are open to all, whether new to Friends or not, whether attending Oxford or another Meeting.

Web address:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87383304611? pwd=Vkkya2ZweVVRZjRmOE1JVDBFdTdwUT09

> Meeting ID: 873 8330 4611 Passcode: oxford



Birds on flooded Port Meadow, Oxford. Telephoto view from Burgess Field Nature Park. Photo by Jonathan Bowen.

Carbon Cutters or Climate Marchers?

Working Towards the UN Climate Change Conference, COP26, Glasgow, November 2021

Virginia Allport

During this last year, I have hugely valued the green spaces nearby: the flooded Port Meadow with the honk and whistle of geese and waders, and the wild flowers in the Trap Grounds nature reserve. They have given me, and so many people, a chance to breathe and escape from the restrictions and loneliness of lockdown.

But the anxiety over the climate and ecological emergency has grown continuously, despite the brief exhilaration ten years ago of BYM Canterbury, 2011, when Quakers in Britain made a commitment to act collectively to build a low carbon, sustainable community.

S.E.E. Justice is an Oxford-based Quaker group, concerned with Social, Economic and Environmental

Justice. At our meeting on Wednesday 17 March we discussed carbon cutting or climate marching, and how we should prepare for COP26, the UN Climate Change Conference in November.

Charles Worth began with a reading of John Woolman (1777) from QFP 25.01:

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 our succeeding age.

In a nutshell, that is why we are bringing three proposals to our local business meeting on April 4:

- to work with area, national, and international Quakers in preparing for COP26;
- 2. to join local organisations like the Oxfordshire COP26 Climate Alliance, (OCCA), and
- to discuss a series of banners for the outside of 43, addressing the climate and ecological emergency.

Our S.E.E. Justice group commends the Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) programme of action 'Six

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Birds on flooded Port Meadow, Oxford. Telephoto view from Burgess Field Nature Park. Photo by Jonathan Bowen.
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ways for Quakers to secure our Climate future': https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/un-climate-talks-6-ways-for-quakers-to-secure-our-climate-future

We also commend Friends of the Earth, www.oxfoe.co.uk/cop26/.

They tell us that:

"True leadership means doing five things. Britain must:

- Use its diplomatic influence to close the gap between existing Paris Agreement pledges for 2030, and those needed to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 °C.
- Champion increasing financial support to help poorer countries adapt to climate change and manage loss and damage, ensuring this support reaches those who need it most.
- Support and fund nature-based solutions which can help to achieve net-zero emissions globally, whilst restoring the Earth's precious ecosystems and biodiversity.
- Stop all new support for fossil fuels (coal, oil, and gas) overseas, phase-out existing investments, increase support for clean energy systems, and help deliver universal access to energy.
- Get our own house in order enact new policies, laws and investment to put us unmistakably on the path to eliminating our carbon emissions as soon as possible."



In the Garden at 43. Photo by S.L. Granum



Photo by M. Hughey

Lockdown Blues

Charles Worth February 2021

A theatre with no play A will but not a way A potter without clay

Silver that's lost its shine A weekend with no red wine An empire in decline

A china shop with a bull A glass that's not half full A push instead of a pull

A car with a tyre that's flat A mouse that's just met a cat The Queen not wearing a hat

A picnic in the rain No seats free on the train A backside with a pain

Hot chocolate without mugs A lettuce full of slugs Grandchildren with no hugs

Charity Appeal April 2021

The Hope Institute, Uganda

Glen Williams

In the mid-1990s, Gideon Byamugisha's life was in turmoil. His wife had recently died, leaving him with their infant daughter. Gideon was then diagnosed HIV-positive. As a young priest in the Church of Uganda, he could have tried to keep his HIV-positive status secret. Instead, he embarked upon a remarkable HIV ministry.



Photo of Gideon Byamugisha by Marc Darchinger

One of the many fruits of Gideon's ministry is the Friends of Canon Gideon Foundation (FOCAGIFO) and its subsidiary, the Focagifo Hope Institute in Kampala (http://www.focagifo.net/). Since it began in 2003, the Institute has trained over 3,000 young people in practical vocational skills and HIV/AIDS awareness. Graduates of the Institute are now earning livings as chefs, hair stylists, clothing designers, electricians and motor mechanics. They have also acquired the knowledge and life-skills that help them to avoid becoming infected with HIV or to live positively with the virus.

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed an existential crisis for the Hope Institute. It was closed for 11 months, and re-opened only recently. In a major new development, however, the Government of Uganda is now funding places for 30 students on short courses. Ruth Ninsiima, Principal of the Hope Institute, is optimistic about the future: "Keep holding us in the Light. The future looks bright!"

Photo of Gideon Byamugisha by Marc Darchinger is licensed under the <u>Creative Commons</u>

<u>Attribution 2.0 Generic</u> license.



Motor mechanics class. Photo by Glen Williams.

Donations to the Hope Institute can be made in two ways, via a special account managed by Glen & Alison Williams:

- Online bank transfer: G and A Williams Partners, a/c 50323628, Sort Code 607003, Natwest Bank
- Cheque: payable to G&A Williams Partners,
 c/- Glen and Alison Williams, 93 Divinity Road,
 Oxford OX4 1LN.



Cookery class: many students find employment as chefs. Photo by Glen Williams



43 St Giles Community Noticeboard online

Each month we feature items from our noticeboard so you don't miss out.



6 Rules – outside!

Have you thought of booking our lovely gardens for a socially distanced get together for 6?



Now Spring is underway they are calling you!

Contact the office to book time and day and simply give us a donation.

Snapshot Survey meetings

In person meeting—in Meeting House Wednesday 7th April 12.30-1.30pm.

Zoom Meeting Wednesday 7th April 4-5pm.

Zoom Meeting Thursday 8th April 6.30-7.30pm.

Zoom Meeting—Weekend date April 10th or 11th to be arranged.

All on the Afterword link.

Our Garage being well used!



Food stored for distribution for Ramadan, part of our collaboration with Oxford Mutual Aid.

They need volunteers

www.oxfordmutualaid.org/volunteer

Mark Burrows:

Saving Beauty

Saturday May 1st Save the dates! Details to follow



Online Zoom retreat

Don't sTOP collecting tops!
They are still needed!

Bring in to 43 kitchen when you are passing and we will do the rest.

If you are interested in renting our top flat...

Please contact Deb or Jacqui in the office.

Details can be sent out to you.

Item for the board? Send into the office team— office@oxfordquakers.org

CALENDAR FOR APRIL 2021

During the SARS-Cov-2 pandemic, many meetings and events are being held via Zoom-Rooms. Some meetings are also held on the premises, properly socially distanced.

Please contact the office for more details.

Email: oxford@oxfordquakers.org Telephone: +44 (0)1865 557373

From Quaker Faith and Practice

Compassion, to be effective, requires detailed knowledge and understanding of how society works. Any social system in turn requires men and women in it of imagination and good-will.

Grigor McClelland, 1976 QF&P 23.47



In the Garden at 43. Photo by S.L. Granum

MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

For more information, please contact the office. office@oxfordquakers.org +44 (0)1865 557373

1st Sunday of each month 10:30 Followed by Meeting for Worship for Business 12:30

2nd, 3rd, & 4th Sunday each month 09:30 & 11:00

Monday: Young Adult Friends 20:00

Tuesday & Thursday: Meeting for Worship

Wednesday: Meeting for Worship 12:15

Forty-Three is available online, at 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. The same applies to calendar items.

We are very pleased to welcome Michael Hughey onto the Newsletter Editorial Team.

The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the editors.

Editorial Team:
SHERRY GRANUM, JULIET HENDERSON,
MICHAEL HUGHEY, and ALEX SMITH
(Joint Editing and Production);

DEB ARROWSMITH, JACQUI MANSFIELD, and MAX HOWELLS (Calendar and Distribution)