

Forty-Three newsletter

Number 502
February 2021



Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LW

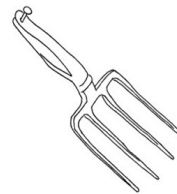
Cultivating Thoughts

Dusk is a special time at the allotment, and yesterday as silver blended with charcoal the stream presented itself also in a new light – trickling out of the past to treat our industrial sores with something enduring, like a re-discovered children’s story.

In Plato’s dialogue *Theaetetus*, Socrates compares the mind to ‘an aviary of all kinds of birds; some in flocks separate from the others, some in small groups, and others flying singly here and there among all the rest’ (197, d). It is a compelling analogy – and no doubt many of us can relate to this sense of internal cacophony. But for me the allotment offers a better one. We have our share of birds of course, and it is always so charming when the robins come to visit, seeking out a morsel from the disturbed soil. The plants, though, are surely more akin to thoughts. Some grow just as we expect, just what we have sown, just where we wanted them.

"And now I saw that, although I had been in a great degree preserved from the common immorality... I found there were many plants growing in me which were not of the Heavenly Father's planting, and that all these, of whatever sort or kind they were or how specious soever they might appear, must be plucked up."

—Thomas Ellwood (1639-1713)
Quaker Faith & Practice, 19.15



But these often feel like the minority. More common, it seems, are the weeds, sprouting up here and there, intruding upon us, crowding out their more nutritious neighbours.

The art of the allotmenteer is akin to the art of reflection – both are practices of cultivation. Just as the fruits on the allotment require care and attention, so our thoughts do likewise. As we meditate, we allow our eye to wander across the soil of the mind. We notice the connections, and recognise the interwoven web of living thoughts, sprouting up here and there. We consider slowly, and make choices – which to keep and give our energy to, and which to weed out with care and compassion.

And, in stillness, we may often notice an underlying source, flowing into our minds and treating them, teaching us about that which does endure, which does nourish, and which is ever-present beneath and within the flurry of daily life.

Alexander Westmacott
www.philosophersallotment.com

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

Articles, 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

For more information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit www.oxfordquakers.org

The Light Within and Without

Perhaps strangely – as a person who loves words, beautiful turns of phrase and the light of understanding that well-crafted writing brings – I am quickly exhausted by talking and often by reading and listening, too.

I have a wonderful camera on my phone. When the mood takes me, or when I need a rest from work or 'being me', it gives me an easy way to capture things I see. With a bit of – to be honest I am not sure whether to call it 'effort' or 'grace' – I can start the process of forgetting what I think I know about trees, leaves, sky, water, or bicycles (my current favourite things to look at) and instead be alert to colour, shape, texture, pattern, and rhythm and the relationships and conjunctions between things. It is hugely freeing, and very joyful.



In the picture of **the bicycle wheel above**, I was drawn first by the vivid colours of the leaves, then by the unusual patterns of decay on them. Next I noticed the contrast between the wheel – and its shiny human-made 'wheeli-ness' and its lovely shape. I took

a number of pictures before I chose this one – with its satisfying juxtaposition of curve (not too much, just enough to suggest 'bicycle') and the patterns made by the leaves.

The slanty tree with its magnificent trunk is in Christ Church meadow. I have walked past it dozens of times, but on this particular day the light was striking it in such a beautiful way, highlighting the undulations in its trunk and a strangely human - like figure at its base.



Looking down, or up can be a wonderful rest from 'straight ahead' but as an adult I seldom have an excuse to do it. In the view of the luminous blue **sky framed by lacy branches**, I was struck by the orderly disorderliness of the row of broken clouds, and the feeling of infinity broken only by the cheeky lamppost trying to masquerade as a tree.

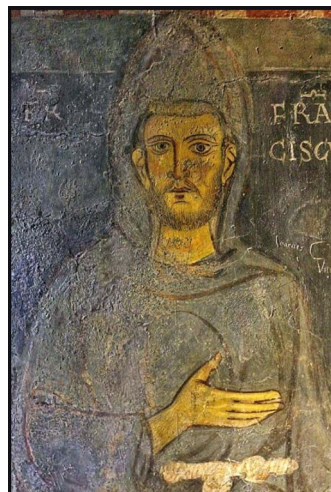


Giving myself permission during lockdown to spend time taking photographs has been hugely healing and encouraging to me. It's a way of developing a relationship with myself, exploring what interests and delights my eye. But maybe more than anything it reminds me to look beyond the obvious and be alert to everyday magic.

A Free-Range Franciscan

Friends may remember me making an incomprehensible announcement after Meeting at the end of September. For anyone who might still be wondering what the heck it was all about, here is an explanation.

On 3 October 2020, I made my Life Profession in the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis. This is a 'dispersed order' within the Church of England, which contains a mixture of genders, ages, married and single people, ordained and lay people. (The First and Second Orders are for full-time brothers and sisters in communities; people might know the Sisters at Freeland, who are a Second Order house.) A friend described the Third Order as the 'Free-Range Franciscans', a description I like very much and which Quakers would find less objectionable than the analogy I had previously used, which was the Territorials.



You might ask at this point 'Yes, OK, but what do you actually *do*?' The answer to this is that that it depends to a large extent on the individual Tertiary and their circumstances. We all make an individual Rule of Life which we review annually and adjust if necessary. The Rule has sections such as Retreats, Personal Prayer and Study, and everyone works out what they will commit to under each heading. We aim to lead lives characterised by humility, love, and joy, which are qualities that prompt us to live simply, loving all and attempting to share Christ's

love. Quakers will probably find these aims familiar as there is plenty of common ground between the Franciscan Principles and the Quaker Testimonies.

Tertiaries are organised into small groups, and in normal times, everyone in an area meets up two or three times a year for a day of worship, talks, and general mingling. This is a joyful occasion and I am looking forward to a time when such events are allowed again. Small groups meet monthly for prayer and discussion in each other's homes.

Life Profession is when a Novice becomes a fully-fledged Tertiary, after two to three years of preparation. It is a dedication of one's life to trying to follow Jesus's teachings as exemplified by St. Francis, though we don't necessarily subject ourselves to the same level of self-denial. (At the end of his life, Francis apologised to his body, which he called 'Brother Ass', for some of his more severe practices.)

There is no requirement to call a Tertiary 'Sister' or 'Brother'. Please keep calling me Rebecca, as you usually would. I do have a friend who calls me 'Sister Rebecca' to wind me up; the first time he did this, I was quite taken aback!

If anyone wants to know any more about the Third Order, do feel free to speak to me about it – I am not an expert yet, but I know some people who are. My email is: bexadella@gmail.com

Enquirer Meetings February to April

date	time	topic	presenter
Thu 4 Feb	19:00 for 19:30	Care in the Quaker Community	Carol Saker
Thu 18 Feb	19:00 for 19:30	Quaker Testimonies	Elisabeth Salisbury
Thu 4 Mar	19:00 for 19:30	History and World Quakers	Matthew Gee
Thu 18 Mar	19:00 for 19:30	Structures and Membership	Tas Cooper
Thu 1 Apr	19:00 for 19:30	Panel	

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

Charity Appeal February 2021 The Parasol Project

The Parasol Project offers inclusive activities to children and young people in Oxford who are disabled and/or disadvantaged. This group tends to be excluded from mainstream schemes, and Parasol aims to redress the imbalance of opportunities.

The Parasol Project is unique because it provides trained Enablers who offer the additional support that some of their target group require, so no one is excluded. Equally important, this also means that families and carers get a break.

My youngest son has additional needs and has benefited from Parasol. The project also has given me a break from my caring role.

More information can be found on Parasol's website: <http://w.w.w.parasolproject.org>

Donations can be made in three ways:

website donation:

<http://w.w.w.parasolproject.org>
click on the Donate button

online bank transfer:

Lloyds Bank,
bank code 30 96 35,
a/c 00059041
ref Oxford Quakers

cheque:

payable to Parasol Project
send to Dan Norey, The Parasol Project,
Tower Playbase, Maltfield Road,
Northway, Oxford OX3 9RG

Mena Remedios



Richard Seebohm Tells This Tale

In our 17 January Zoom Meeting, a Friend quoted from the first Epistle of John the words "perfect love casteth out fear". Now I've been reading *Nine Lives* by William Dalrymple, in which he describes the worlds of Indians he has met who practice a startling range of religious faiths. One of these, a Buddhist monk exiled to Pakistan, told him a very relevant story.

The monk had, with permission, laid aside his vows to fight the Chinese invasion and annexation of Tibet. His mother was tortured and killed but he escaped. He found it uncomfortable, as a Buddhist, to be consumed with hate for the Chinese. He resolved never to eat in a Chinese restaurant. Visiting India, however, he found himself with only a Chinese restaurant within reach. He admitted enjoying his meal, and afterwards talked to the owners. They were a mother and daughter. It turned out that they were refugees too. The owner's father had been killed during Chairman Mao's Cultural Revolution. They hugged and comforted each other, and he now understood that he had no need to hate the Chinese but only their political system.

Richard Seebohm

Must Do Better!

One of the many things that attracted me to Quakers was the Quaker commitment to equality. I like to see myself as a passionate believer in equality, but I was recently challenged to consider whether I translate this supposed passion into reality. Sadly, the answer was that I must do better. However, the challenge came with a suggestion for at least making a start along that route. Let me tell you my tale.

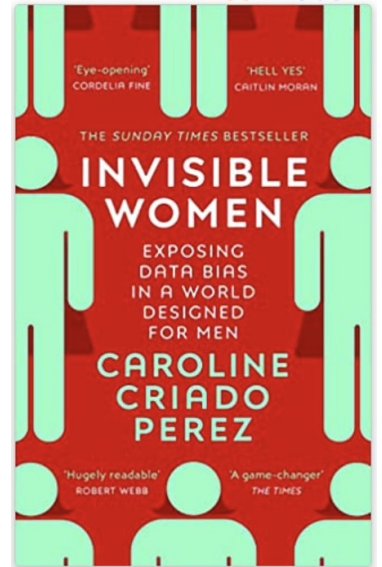
I had a spare copy of a fascinating little book called *Crowther's Encyclopaedia of Phrases and Origins*, published in 1945. Its entries are intriguing and idiosyncratic. I offered my spare copy to a university colleague and, by way of illustration, I sent her the text of the entry for 'ill-starred'. This concludes "Among the credulous, the belief [that the stars influence the fate of humans] still exists ... providing a good living for alleged horoscope preparers, whose victims are mostly stupid women."

I chose this entry because I saw it as illustrative of the author's idiosyncratic style, because I thought it somewhat amusing, and because I thought it showed in some small way how attitudes to women have moved on since 1945. My colleague saw it differently and asked me whether I would have been comfortable passing on a similar quote had it been racist rather than misogynistic.



I wriggled (metaphorically and literally) but in truth the answer was no.

I was upset – I had never intended to cause offence or to promote misogyny, yet it seemed I had done both. However, my colleague suggested that the way forward was to make myself better informed. She also suggested that a good starting point would be to read *Invisible Women: exposing data bias in a world designed for men* by Caroline Criado Perez. I read it and, as I did, I ran through a range of emotions that included shock, anger, sadness, and frustration.



As the title suggests, the theme of the book is that women miss out in almost every aspect of life simply because few people bother to collect data that represents their needs or their points of view. This is why, for example, car seat belts are less effective for women than for men, heart attacks frequently go undiagnosed in women (which is how my own mother died), transport systems don't meet the needs of women, drugs are not properly tested on women, working environments favour men over women, unpaid work carried out by women is routinely ignored – and much, much more. These are not unsupported claims – they are backed by 70 pages of references.

For me, the book was a real eye-opener. I like women, most of my close friends are women and I thought I respected the equality of women. Now I know that I must do better. Might that also apply to you? If so, I urge you to read the book – especially if you're of the male gender! It's currently out of stock at the Quaker Bookshop, but Blackwell's has it and is offering free UK delivery.

Keith Wilson

Growing: All-Age Meeting for Worship 7 March 2021

Growing is the theme for our meeting's next all-age meeting for worship on 7 March 2021. This will be part of the 11:00 meeting for worship. Children from both the Sunflowers and Beansprouts children's meetings will share, via Zoom, pictures, photographs, poems, and other things they have created for this special meeting for worship. Here is a preview of a snowdrop, drawn by one of the children from Sunflowers. Everyone is very welcome.

Matthew Gee
on behalf of Children & Young People's Committee



International World Day of Prayer Friday, 5 March 2021

(formerly Women's World
Day of Prayer)

This year the service has been composed by the women of Vanuatu. Understandably, the COVID situation is affecting all usual local celebrations of the service. The group to which we are affiliated is Oxford City Churches and North Oxford.

Please look out in the March issue of 43 for alternative ways of joining in. Contact me via the Office if you don't have online access to watching the events and would like a paper copy of the service. I will endeavour to get a copy to you safely via the post.

Below is a link to a 7-minute film about Vanuatu in general, and the women there who participate in this annual service. I highly recommend it for all ages to get a flavour of life in Vanuatu.

www.wwdp.org.uk/2021/01/13/introducing-vanuatu/

Elaine Parry

January Meeting of the Oxford Council of Faiths

As a new recruit to the Meeting's Ecumenical and Interfaith Team, I went along to the January Zoom meeting of the Oxford Council of Faiths.

We talked about the March 2021 Census and how to get isolated minorities into it – it is of course compulsory, and necessary for securing Local Authority funding. We noted that Holocaust Memorial Day is/was 27 January. We hoped that the Ashmolean would go ahead with faith-based displays.



Our keynote speaker was Meryem Kalayci, the newly appointed Chaplain at St Hilda's College. She is a Quaker, now in our Meeting. Her father comes from a city on the Turkish-Syrian border where there was a strong Quaker presence before and during the First World War. Her appointment, she says, is owed to the Quaker testimonies. She will not be conducting services, but her watchword is service. The College has lost its chapel to redevelopment, and instead has a multi-faith sanctuary space. Meryem still has a History Faculty post researching the Armenian genocide – with a focus on silence as a vehicle for remembrance as well as forgetting. Before being exiled from Turkey she was a resource for Syrian refugees. She has been appointed a chaplain at Bullingdon Prison. Her College web photo is by Trio Watson.

Richard Seebohm



Urumuri Women Say 'Thanks' to Friends in U.K.

The Urumuri women's group is composed of 20 members and is located in Karongi District, Western Province, Rwanda. The members of the group carry out the following activities:

- Small-scale savings-and-credit schemes
- Sharing and helping one another to solve family problems and to heal the inner pain that they face
- Carrying out income-generating activities
- Mutual support through praying together

The Quaker project, Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC), provides the Urumuri group with training and administrative support, and also acts as the link between the group and Oxford Friends.

In 2019 Friends in Oxford and Colthouse (Lake District) raised £736 from the sale of Christmas and greeting cards made by the members of the group. In 2020, because of the restrictions imposed by the coronavirus, it was not possible for us to sell cards. However, several members of Oxford and Colthouse Friends Meetings made personal donations amounting to £700 to help the 20 members of the group meet some of their most urgent needs. Seven members of Urumuri wrote to tell us how they have used this financial support.

Continued next page ...

Josephine: “At my age of 56, I am most grateful for the support that I have been given as a member of the group. I used to borrow money from our savings-and-loan group to support my small business. I sell fruits, especially bananas, which I sell to different food shops. But now that I have some extra money I am going to buy some avocados for sale. This will help my children and my husband, who is 78 and unable to work.”

Françoise: “I’m a woman of 36, with two children. My husband left me in a rented house, for which I have to pay rent. He doesn’t help me financially. This money will help me to pay the rent on the house. The members of Urumuri keep encouraging me and caring for me through praying together. Because of COVID it’s very difficult to meet our daily needs. Being in this group, I can meet other people and I feel supported. We are very grateful to the people in the UK who are helping us and our children to survive this epidemic.”

Marie: “I am 49. I have a husband, and our five children are all at school. I am very happy for this support, which will help me to pay school fees and to buy school materials for my children. We thank you, dear Oxford Friends, and wish you blessings from God our Father.”

Esperance: “I’m 40 years of age and have four children who are all living with me. My husband left

us and married another woman. The Friends Church [i.e. Quakers] encouraged me to join this women’s group, which aims to help all its members. They help me whenever I’m sick. They visit me and we pray together. With the money from Oxford Friends I will buy food for our children and I’ll also rent land where I can grow crops to help me feed my family.”

Thacienne: “I am 39 years old and I live with my mother, my husband, and our five children, who are all at school. This support will help me to increase my capital in my small business of selling bananas and potatoes. We thank God for the people who have helped our group.”

Angélique: “I am 36 years old and I have a family of five. Being a member of the Friends Church helps me to share ideas with others. Some of us want to learn how to make small baskets for sale, so this support will help me to buy raw materials for making baskets.”

Yvonne (group leader): “We thank our Oxford Friends for their support in selling the cards we made in 2019, and for supporting us financially in 2020, when there was no market for the cards that we make. As the members of the Urumuri group, we love you and we will stay united, helping each other and welcoming new members to our group.”

Glen Williams



No Holidays and the Gig Economy

During the Christmas holiday I heard a Radio 4 programme in which the well-heeled were discussing what they had missed because of lockdown. They spoke longingly of the long-haul vacations they had not had (several each year), and then discussed the delights of places they had visited in Britain.

I thought of those who never have holidays except possibly days out or a week in a caravan on a site not quite near the sea. But even this has been getting less and less possible every year.

Far fewer people now than formerly can buy and run a car or pay for a holiday. A number of things have caused this: the terrible increase in rents, increases in all essentials including food, the significantly lower level of benefits that are paid, and very low wages. Worse still, some rents and wages are subsidised by the Government while the landlords and employers have an absolute right to have all their profits.

The Gig Economy (with zero hours and no sickness benefit or paid holidays) is also part of the problem. All this makes for a grossly and increasingly unequal society.

The first word that comes to my mind is tax. When I started work in 1963 I paid 30% tax on what was not a large wage. There are solutions and we need to strive for them to make our society into a more equal one. Some Scandinavian countries do and they are happier for it.

Sarah Lasenby



An Inspirational Voice

The amazing Amanda Gorman, youth poet laureate in the US, stunned the audience at the recent inauguration of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris as President and Vice President of the United States, with the beauty and power of ‘The Hill We Climb’ – the poem she'd written for the occasion.

Her presentation is well worth multiple viewings: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wz4YuEvJ3y4>

The poem ends with six lines Friends might find particularly resonant:

*When day comes we step out of the shade,
afire and unafraid
The new dawn blooms as we free it
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it
If only we're brave enough to be it.*

Amanda Gorman
from ‘The Hill We Climb’
2021

Sherry Granum



Membership of Oxford Meeting Committees 2021-2023 (as at January 2021)

Though this is not a comprehensive list of all our local meeting roles and committees, these are the main ones. Friends are appointed for a triennium (3 years) to these committees.

Oxford Local Meeting Clerks

For more details of role of clerks see Chapter 3 in Quaker Faith and Practice.

Judith Atkinson
Sue Smith

Elders *For more details of role of Elders see Chapter 12 in Quaker Faith and Practice.*

Chris White
Tany Alexander
Judith Atkinson
Ellen Bassani
Hoonie Feltham
Val Ferguson
Sandra Figgess
Rebecca Howard
Laurie Michaelis
Eric Roberts

Premises and Finance Committee

Lis Burch (Clerk)
Alan Allport
Iain McLean
Sarah Lasenby (*ex-officio* as Collector)
Katherine Nicholas, (*ex-officio* as line manager of the Meeting House Manager)
Sue Smith / Judith Atkinson (*ex-officio* as Clerks)
Richard Stamper (*ex-officio* as Treasurer)
Stephen Yeo / Katherine Gee (*ex-officio* as Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting Trustees)

Pastoral Care Group

Anthea Clarke (joint clerk)
Caroline Worth (joint clerk)
Kath Wilson (joint clerk)
Roy Bateman
Jacqui Ferguson
Sherry Granum
Elizabeth Johnston
Penny Ormerod
Mena Remedios
Anne Watson
Glen Williams

Nominations Committee

Ursula Howard (contact person)
Linnet Arthur
Ruth Kim
Becky Riddell
Anthea Richards
Elisabeth Salisbury
Robert Spencer

Children and Young People's Committee

Matthew Gee (Clerk)
Katherine Gee
Anita Ghosh
Peg Katritsky
Didi Spencer



Joining a Meeting for Worship with Oxford Quakers

1. You can attend meetings via Zoom or in person at 43 St Giles. To attend in person you must book via **Oxford Quakers Eventbrite** page <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/oxford-quakers-30657885404>
You can book up to the day of the meeting.
2. You can join all our **Zoom Meetings for Worship using the same Meeting Identity** for all meetings throughout the week.
To Join any Zoom Meeting for Worship click on this link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87383304611?pwd=Vkkya2ZweVVRZjRmOE1JVDBFdTdwUT09>
The Meeting ID: 873 8330 4611
You may need to enter a passcode (again the same for any meeting). **The Passcode is: oxford** (all lower case)
If you are **dialling in on the phone:** +44 203 901 7895 United Kingdom or +44 131 460 1196 United Kingdom
The telephone passcode is: 525212
3. You can uphold the meeting quietly in your own home at these times.
4. You can join the unconnected but simultaneous meetings.

From Quaker Faith and Practice

Do you cherish your friendships, so that they grow in depth and understanding and mutual respect?

Advices and Queries 21



MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

All meetings for worship are now blended.
For more information, contact the office at
office@oxfordquakers.org
+44 (0)1865 557373

Sunday: Meetings for Worship
9:30 & 11:00

**First Sunday of each month:
Meeting for Worship for Business**
12:15

Monday: Young Adult Friends
20:00

Tuesday & Thursday: Meeting for Worship
7:30

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.

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

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