

Abingdon Quaker Meeting Newsletter

March 2022

No. 390

Meetings for Worship

Important note: Although the Government is removing the Covid protection rules, we will continue to take precautions to keep everyone safe. Full details are on page 3.

In Person

Sundays 6th, 20th & 27th March 10:15am in the Northcourt Centre
Please remember your face covering.

Thursday 3rd March 7:30pm in the Garden Room, St Ethelwold's
*This is an **indoor**, blended meeting, so please remember your face covering.*

Sunday 13th March 10:30am in St Ethelwold's Garden (Garden Room if wet)
Note the start time. Please bring warm clothing and/or wet weather gear, depending on the forecast.

On Zoom

Thursdays 7:30pm (log in from 7:00pm)

Meeting ID: 899 4318 5568 Passcode: ALQME

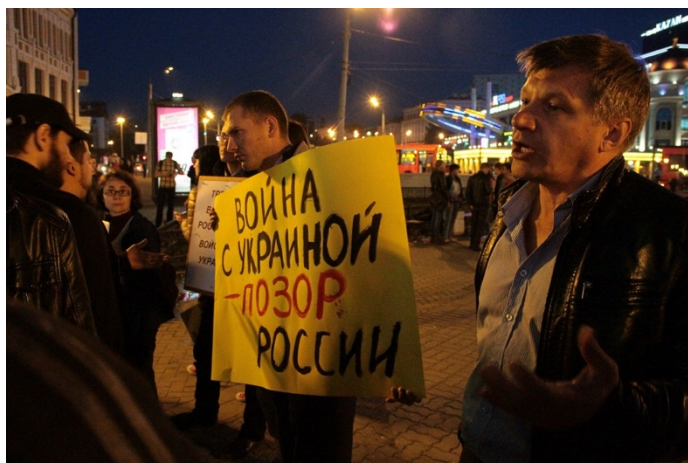
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89943185568?pwd=ZDhNWZlY0FZaXdCemdKdnd3MlWpHUT09>

This Morning...

Extracts from a post published on 24th February on the Russian-language website of the Religious Society of Friends in Moscow, <https://quakers.ru/>:

This morning President Putin declared war on Ukraine. Cities are being subjected to rocket attacks; people are being killed.

This morning I pray to God that he may protect as many people as possible in Ukraine, that he may save them, that he may shield them. While the forces of destruction rage I hope that the power of the Holy Spirit, which dwells in each of us, will give each person the strength and endurance to resist them. I believe that there is something of God in every person, and every person deserves to live. The people of Ukraine deserve life, peace and freedom. Reject war in your heart. [...]



Above and on page 2: Quakers at an anti-war vigil, Kazan, Russia, 2014.

...for each of us, the majority of Russian citizens, there must come an awareness of the perniciousness of the war, the perniciousness of the current situation. And God can give each of us the strength to act and speak; let us hear only the song of peace. [...]

Act according to your conscience, do not let what is happening destroy you.

Keep close [to your loved ones], help your neighbour, bear witness publicly to peace, do not heed the exhortations of the propagandists.

No to war.

Boris Fedyukin (translated largely by Google; checked and edited by Liz Matthews)

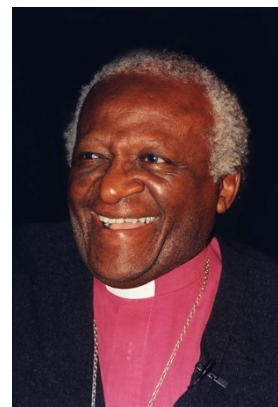


Two Reflections for Troubled Times

Chris Sewell brings to our attention these words by the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu:

We are made for goodness. We are made for love. We are made for friendliness. We are made for togetherness. We are made for all of the beautiful things that you and I know. We are made to tell the world that there are no outsiders. All are welcome: black, white, red, yellow, rich, poor, educated, not educated, male, female, gay, straight, all, all, all. We all belong to this family, this human family, God's family.

Desmond Tutu, God has a Dream



Readings in the recent Woodbrooke course 'Talking Philosophy' included the 'Peace Aria' from Benjamin Britten's opera Owen Wingrave, with a libretto by Myfanwy Piper:

...peace is not lazy but vigilant,
peace is not acquiescent but searching,
peace is not weak but strong like a bird's wing bearing its weight in the dazzling air.
Peace is not silent, it is the voice of love.

Oh you with your bugbears, your arrogance, your greed,
your intolerance, your selfish morals
and petty victories,
peace is not won by your wars.

Peace is not confused, not sentimental, not afraid.
Peace is positive, is passionate, committing...
more than war itself.

Abingdon Quaker Matters

Continuing Covid Precautions

From our Clerk, Alan Pearmain:

Although the Government is removing the Covid protection rules, we still need to take precautions to keep everyone safe.

- We recommend that everyone should continue to wear a face covering when moving around the building but can remove it when sitting in worship or ministering.
- We should continue to maintain a spacing of 1.5 metres between people whenever possible.
- Doors are opened before and after worship for extra ventilation but, at the request of the Northcourt Centre, the fire escape door is now closed during worship to retain heat.
- If possible, please take a lateral flow test before coming to meeting and do not attend if you have a positive result or if you have any Covid symptoms.

Spoken Ministry and Afterwords

The Spiritual and Pastoral Care Group has revised the advice on Afterwords. The new advice is below.

At Abingdon Meeting we have adopted the practice of setting aside a time for Afterwords. In order to define Afterwords, as distinct from Spoken Ministry, it may be helpful to attempt to define both.

Spoken Ministry may be given during the hour of Meeting for Worship. It arises from the gathered Meeting, is not usually prepared in advance and those who minister normally feel moved to speak.

Immediately after the end of Meeting for Worship, a period – often fairly short but of undefined duration – is set aside for Afterwords. Individual contributions during Afterwords may follow on from Ministry, may be prepared in advance or may be used to share a personal concern. Such contributions are a form of worship sharing and, just as during Meeting for Worship, we listen silently to one another; if we speak we do so only once and leave space after someone else's contribution; we do not normally comment on what a speaker has said, speaking only what is in our own hearts and minds.

Afterwords is not a time for discussion, debate or for giving notices. Afterwords may also help visitors or infrequent attenders to understand our Meeting better and to provide all with an additional opportunity of getting to know people on a spiritual level.

22nd February 2022

March Appeal: Money for Madagascar – Cyclone Emergency

World attention may currently be focused on Ukraine, but we must not forget about the hardship and wrongs suffered by other countries. Among these is Madagascar, as Chris Sewell writes:

This month's appeal is an emergency appeal from Money for Madagascar (MfM) to help the communities that have been devastated by a succession of deadly cyclones in the last two months in Madagascar.

In January, Tropical Storm Ana displaced 72,000 people in Madagascar. Floods in the capital and the east swept away roads, crops and buildings, destroying lives and livelihoods. Just two weeks later, the south of Madagascar was hit by Cyclone Batsirai, with 92,000 people made homeless

and over 100 deaths reported. Now a third cyclone has hit the south-eastern coast, causing more deaths and devastation.

MfM responded immediately with a recovery fund of £10,000 to assist the most vulnerable people in the communities with which they work. This rapid response is being managed by MfM's Malagasy Country Office team to ensure appropriate aid reaches its projects and communities without delay. Emergency help includes making collapsed buildings safe and emergency feeding where homes and crops have been flooded.

MfM also working with its partner agency, the Scottish charity Feedback Madagascar, to help communities in the Fianarantsoa area who are amongst the worst hit on the island. Here, dozens of schools and thousands of homes have been totally flattened.



Over recent years Abingdon Meeting has supported many appeals for both development work and disaster relief in

Madagascar. Only last year we contributed to MfM's famine appeal. As one of the poorest countries in the world, Madagascar has a fractured social and economic infrastructure and is unable to respond to these natural disasters without assistance from its friends abroad. You can help by paying online through one of these websites:

- <https://moneyformadagascar.org/>
- <https://www.feedbackmadagascar.net/>
- <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/cyclonebatsirai> (joint appeal by MfM and Feedback Madagascar)

For Friends who prefer to donate by cash, the collecting bowl will be placed on the table at Meeting on the days when the appeal is made.

Annual Appeal

Our annual appeal letter will be sent to members of the Meeting early in March. You have the option to give to Abingdon Local Meeting (and, indirectly, to Britain Yearly Meeting through a collective donation from our funds) and/or to Britain Yearly Meeting only. This may be a difficult year for many people, but if you feel able to make a contribution it will be gratefully received, however modest. Thank you!

Reading Group: Quaker Faith & Practice

For the past two years Olivia Wright, Philippa Killick and Liz Matthews have been meeting fortnightly over Zoom to discuss passages from *Quaker Faith & Practice*. We have recently changed our meeting times to the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month, from 4–5pm, and warmly welcome Friends who would like to join us, whether regularly or occasionally.



Our meeting on Wednesday 2nd March will discuss passages 24.21–24.26, *The dilemmas of the pacifist stand* – a subject that has acquired an unwelcome topicality in light of current events.

Please get in touch with Liz for the Zoom code if you would like to join us.

Would You Appreciate a Lift to Meeting?

Judy Goodall and Kate Sewell are each offering a ‘taxi’ service to Friends who would like transport to Meeting for Worship on Sunday mornings. If you would appreciate a lift, please get in touch with Judy or Kate. Their telephone numbers and email addresses are in the list of members.

Around Area and Regional Meetings

Area Meeting and Spiritual Nurture

Saturday 12th March 10:0am, Charlbury Meeting House and on Zoom

The afternoon Spiritual Nurture session has the theme *Quakers Creating Space for Listening: possible local actions in a time of transition*.

In response to requests from the OSAM survey, inspired by the Swarthmore Lecture (2021) and mindful of a history of Quakers providing safe spaces for people in conflict to listen to each other, we bring together two Friends who can help us find ways of making a positive Quakerly contribution to reducing local tensions arising from the urgency of climate change and social change.

Alistair Heslop will offer some insight into how Quakers can create safe spaces for listening so that people in potential or actual conflict can understand diverse and shared viewpoints through listening.

Ian Cave will report on attempts to bring different faith groups together to find common ground in ways of leading faith groups to action on climate and social issues.

Participants in person and on Zoom are asked to have pen and paper handy.

Berks & Oxon Regional Meeting

Saturday 23rd April 10:30am–3:30pm, Oxford Meeting House and on Zoom

The provisional theme of the meeting will be *Economic Inequality: a local and global perspective*.

Further details to follow; for now, please note the date in your diaries.

From the Wider Quaker Community...

Quaker Responses to the War in Ukraine

Britain Yearly Meeting has condemned Russia’s attack on Ukraine as ‘a grave development for humanity, and a violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations’:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/quakers-condemn-attack-on-ukraine>

Northern Friends Peace Board has published a page of resources from a number of perspectives: Quaker, peace and human rights, and general analysis and comment. It also includes a leaflet for use at Quaker peace vigils, produced by NFPB. Visit https://nfpb.org.uk/ukraine_2022/

American supporters of Friends House Moscow are organising a daily global Meeting for Worship on Zoom from 5–6pm GMT. You are welcome to participate as and when you are able:

- Web:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4165005614?pwd=NUtieEtqbDBYbjBrcGdMMzBKQ3drQT09>
- App: Meeting ID 416 500 5614; Passcode 182805

Please hold in the Light the Quakers in Moscow and all those in Russia who are brave enough to speak out for peace, risking arrest as they do so.

Jumping to Novosibirsk



Дом Друзей в Москве Friends House Moscow

In more peaceful times (how long ago they now seem!), we received an email from Mary Morris, Clerk at Friends' House in Moscow. Mary asked us to share their Winter 2021 newsletter, which you can find at <https://friendshousemoscow.org/> (scroll down to 'Publications' near the foot of the Home page).

'Jumping to Novosibirsk' refers to a project that supplies books, games and learning materials to the children of migrants in Novosibirsk, along the lines of a previous, successful initiative in the city of Kaluga.

Faith in Action

Abingdon Peace Group

Tuesday 15th March 7:0pm, Zoom

Peace Activism in a Time of War. We hope to have with us Virginia Moffatt, author of the novel *Echo Hall*, which follows two families, one a military family and one a Quaker family, through three major wars. Virginia will talk us through the similarities and differences between the current war in Ukraine and the starts of World Wars I and II, and how Quakers responded then and are responding now.

For the Zoom link, please email abingdonpeace@gmail.com

Abingdon Carbon Cutters

Wednesday 16th March 7:30pm, Zoom

Diets and Health. Catherine McNeill, a nutritionist member of Abingdon Carbon Cutters, will talk about eating for the planet: how to cut down your food miles and the carbon footprint of your food without compromising on nutrition. Catherine is calling for examples of dishes you would miss if you didn't eat meat, and has set herself the challenge of finding equally delicious and nutritious alternatives.

For the Zoom link, please email carbon.cutters@gmail.com

Other Events

River and Riverbank Clean-up

Saturday 12th March 10am, Abingdon Lock

To reserve a space, email Helen: Abibinit2018@gmail.com

Of Ordinary Things – Tea and Talk

Monday March 14th 2–4pm, Museum of Oxford

Of Ordinary Things is an exhibition created by members of the Iraqi Women Art and War (IWAW) group, which will open on 1st April. At this event project co-ordinator Rana Ibrahim will introduce the artwork, oral histories and the IWAW project. There will be informal small-group discussions and accessible, guided art activities to explore the themes of the project, such as home, journey, and healing.

Tea, coffee, cold drinks and light snacks will be served, prepared by IWAW members. There is no charge for the event, but you will need to book:

<https://museumofoxford.org/event/ofordinarythingsevent>



Around the Abingdon Churches

Lent Lectures Cancelled

The CiA's series of Lent lectures on the Chapel of the Rosary in Vence, has been cancelled because of continuing concerns about Covid.

Abingdon Street Pastors: Celebrating 10 Years

Friday 1st April 8pm, Salvation Army, 12 West St Helen Street

Since its launch in 2011 Abingdon Street Pastors have been out on the streets of Abingdon on Saturday nights to help, to listen and to care – in short, to make a difference. They work in close collaboration with Thames Valley Police, the local council, licensees, other community groups and the public, and hope to broaden this network in the coming years.

You are invited to join in the celebration and find out about our work and plans for the future. There will be a buffet as well as an opportunity to speak to the team.

If you plan to attend, please email abingdon@streetpastors.org.uk

Among Abingdon Friends

Poem of the Month

From the Poetry Group:

In a *volte-face* from January's humorous and nonsense verse, the Poetry Group chose 'gloom' (freely interpreted as usual!) for its February theme. Poem of the Month is by Shukria Rezaei, an 18-year-old pupil at Oxford Spires Academy. Shukria came to England at the age of 14 as a refugee from the Taliban persecution of her Hazara people in Afghanistan. It's a powerful expression of loss and displacement.

A Glass of Tea
(after Rumi)

Last year, I held a glass of tea to the light. This year,
I swirl like a tealeaf in the streets of Oxford.

Last year, I stared into navy blue sky. This year,
I am roaming under colourless clouds.

Last year, I watched the dazzling sun dance gracefully. This year,
the faint sun moves futurelessly.

Migration drove me down this bumpy road,
where I fell and smelt the soil, where I arose and sensed the cloud.

Now I am a bird, flying in the breeze,
lost over the alien earth.

Don't stop and ask me questions.
Look into my eyes and feel my heart.

It is bruised, aching and sore.
My eyes are veiled with onion skin.

I sit helplessly in an injured nest,
not knowing how to fix it.

And my heart, I'd say
is displaced

struggling to find its place.

Shukria Rezaei

News of Friends in Brief

Philippa Killick wrote to us on 21st February:

We are settling in well in our new home in Kirkcaldy, which is just across the Firth of Forth from Edinburgh. We are thoroughly enjoying being by the sea and reconnecting with our Scottish friends and family. Otto and Philippa have been checking out the library and the local parks – Otto particularly enjoys going on the swings. We have also been to a play group called 'Bairns, a blether and a brew.' Otto had a good long nap afterwards so we will definitely be going again! We are getting to know Central Fife Quaker Meeting, who have been incredibly welcoming. There is another family (including a baby) in the Meeting whom we are yet to meet. George is getting on well in his new job as theatre technician with the University of St Andrew's. He has a bit of a commute but the hours are more regular than at the Amey Theatre. So, all in all, we are a happy bunch! We send love and best wishes to Abingdon Friends and hope to continue to connect with you on Zoom!



Opening Up at the Northcourt Centre

The volunteers who have kindly offered to prepare the Northcourt Centre for Meetings for Worship in March are:

6 th	Kate Sewell	Richard Smart
20 th	Rosie Page	Liz Matthews
27 th	Chris Sewell	Judy Goodall

March Dates for Your Diary

This is a summary of the Quaker-related events announced on the preceding pages.

Date	Time	Event details
Thurs 3 rd	7:30pm	Outreach Meeting for Worship (blended) St Ethelwold's & Zoom
Fri 4 th	2:30pm	World Day of Prayer service (see our February newsletter) Salvation Army, West St Helen St
Sun 6 th	10:15am	Meeting for Worship Northcourt Centre
Thurs 10 th	7:30pm	Meeting for Worship on Zoom
Sat 12 th	10:30am	Area Meeting & Spiritual Nurture session Charlbury Meeting House & Zoom
Sun 13 th	10:30am	Meeting for Worship Garden or Garden room, St Ethelwold's
Tues 15 th	7:30pm	Abingdon Peace Group Zoom
Wed 16 th	7:30pm	Abingdon Carbon Cutters Zoom
Thurs 17 th	7:30pm	Meeting for Worship on Zoom
Sun 20 th	10:15am	Meeting for Worship Northcourt Centre
Thurs 24 th	7:30pm	Meeting for Worship on Zoom
Sun 27 th	10:15am	Meeting for Worship Northcourt Centre
Tues 29 th	7:30pm	Silent Reflections incl. optional labyrinth walk (see our November 2022 newsletter) St Michael & All Angels Church

Next Month...

The April issue will be published on **Sunday 27th March**. Please send your contributions (in words and/or pictures) to the editors by **Wednesday 23rd March**. Although we don't set a word limit, we may make judicious edits for length and/or readability.

And finally, on a more hopeful note...

Up in Kirkcaldy Otto finds the sea air bracing, while back in Oxfordshire Chris Sewell and Liz Matthews spot signs of spring.



Abingdon Local Quaker Meeting

www.abingdonquakers.org.uk

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