

Abingdon Quaker Meeting Newsletter

May 2022

No. 392

Meetings for Worship

In Person

Sundays 1st, 15th, 22nd & 29th May 10:15am in the Northcourt Centre

Please remember your face covering and take a lateral flow test before coming.

Thursday 5th May 7:30pm in the Garden Room, St Ethelwold's

Please remember your face covering.

Sunday 8th May 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

See notice on page 2.

Thursday 19th May 7:30pm (log in from 7:00pm)

Meeting ID: 899 4318 5568 Passcode: ALQME

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89943185568?pwd=ZDhNWEZlY0FZaXdCemdKdnd3MlWpHUT09>

Forgiveness, Morality and Maturity

In Radio 4's 'Thought for the Day' slot on 22nd February, Revd Dr Sam Wells, Vicar of St Martin in the Fields, recounted the experiences of Dr Adam Towler, who was stabbed by a stranger in 2019. In court Dr Towler told the defendant: 'I'm not upset or angry with you.' He later explained on Radio 4: 'Neither of us can unwind the clocks on these events. I have the rest of my life before me, and he does too.'

In many cases, people are able to forgive their assailant. However, as Sam Wells pointed out, for others 'forgiveness can seem impossible, agonising or plain wrong. Some people feel forgiving is their moral duty, yet the guilt people feel at not being able to [forgive] can compound the hurt of the original trauma.'

Adam Towler had simply described his personal reaction, making no reference to either 'forgiveness' or 'morality'. Sam Wells suggested that, in doing so, Adam Towler was actually modelling *maturity*, and went on to explain:

'Maturity is the moment we stop letting our actions be determined by others' hostility and start to resource them from a better place. ... Maturity isn't simply following a moral code, but asking oneself "What kind of a person do I want to be?"'

He positioned this conceptualisation of maturity as an alternative to morality:

'Maturity involves a series of sober calculations: "This wasn't the best expression of my assailant's character. He and I were thrown together randomly by this moment. If we allow anger to take hold it will destroy us both. We each have many years ahead of us.'

We'll diminish our lives if we allow this event to dominate all our perceptions and relationships. We can't change the shadow of the past, but we can enjoy the promise of the future."

This response to the assault had nothing to do with pride, hypocrisy or self-righteousness; it was simply something that worked for Adam Towler as a particular individual. Sam Wells concluded: 'Maybe maturity is what morality ought always to have been all along.'

Liz Matthews adds:

I don't think that Sam Wells is implying that forgiveness is not mature behaviour: indeed, far from it. From personal experience I think it's also true that where an action causes hurt, but is not 'bad' or 'wrong' (indeed, it can even have been the 'right' or 'honest' thing to do), forgiveness doesn't necessarily enter the equation. So, the 'sober calculations' approach seems a viable one in that context too.

When summarising the talk for this newsletter I realised that it had been given two days before Russia invaded Ukraine. The question of future relations between the two nations – and whether forgiveness can enter into it – looms almost as large as the war. The Quakers of Kyiv recently re-posted on their Facebook page an Instagram post from a resident in Kharkiv that included the words 'We will never forget this and we will never be able to forgive ... but the wounds will heal and life will win!' Is there an echo of Adam Towler's perspective in these words?



Abingdon Quaker Matters

Change to Meetings for Worship on Zoom

The numbers taking part in our Thursday evening Zoom meetings have diminished, and so at May's Business Meeting we agreed to hold Zoom meetings on **the third Thursday** of the month only. We will review the situation at the next Business Meeting on 3rd July.

Bring & Share Lunch: Sunday 15th May

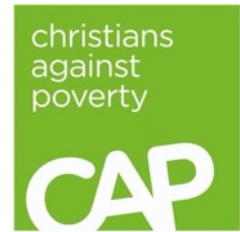
To help Roger Baker mark a significant birthday (see page 8) we are holding a bring and share lunch on 15th May. Make your way after Meeting to Roger's house (address in our list of members). Parking is limited outside the house but should be possible in nearby Larkhill Road.

Not only will be we celebrating Roger's birthday, but we'll also be enjoying our first bring and share meal since before the pandemic.

May Appeal: Christians Against Poverty

From Chris Sewell

Christians Against Poverty (CAP) is a Christian charitable company in the UK founded in Bradford by John Kirkby in 1996. It is a national organisation specialising in debt counselling for people in financial difficulty, including those in need of bankruptcy or insolvency.



The CAP Money Course is a free course that teaches budgeting skills and a simple, cash-based system that works. In just a few weeks, those taking part get to grips with their finances so they can budget, save and prevent debt.

Since its formation CAP has expanded its services to tackle the causes of debt and poverty too. As well as offering CAP Debt Help, it now helps people to step into employment through CAP Job Clubs and helps equip people to live well on a low income through CAP Life Skills groups. As one beneficiary has said:

‘CAP has given me back my husband, my family, my life and my faith, which debt had taken hostage.’

Every CAP service is free to attend and is run through a local church, which provides practical and emotional support. There are currently two Debt Centres in Oxford and two Life Skills Centres, in Witney and Oxford. Some churches within the Abingdon Area provide support services such as debt counselling and money management, delivered by trained church members.

To find out more about Christians Against Poverty and/or to make an online donation, visit <https://capuk.org/>

Around the Area and Region

Minute: Regional Meeting, Saturday 23rd April

About 40 Friends representing all our constituent Area Meetings gathered, online and in person at Oxford Friends Meeting House, for Berks and Oxon Regional Meeting on the theme of *Economic Inequality – a local and a global challenge*.

To begin we heard an extract from Advices and Queries number 33: ‘Seek to understand the causes of injustice, social unrest and fear. Are you working to bring about a just and compassionate society which allows everyone to develop their capacities and fosters the desire to serve?’

In the morning Steve Mandel spoke on the effects and causes of economic inequality in the UK. Then Karima Brooke (Headington Meeting) and Steve Russell (Swindon Meeting) described their local work with Oxford Friends Action on Poverty and Swindon Hardship Fund respectively.

In the afternoon Olivia Hanks, Climate Justice Lead with Quakers in Britain, told us about the work of QPSW with particular reference to building a movement for compensation for climate loss and damage and divestment from fossil fuels.

We had the opportunity to reflect on these talks in small groups. We came away stimulated and challenged.

We thank our speakers and the planning group for the day, and Oxford Meeting for hosting us.

Area Meeting

Area Meeting is being held this month on a different day and time from usual: Thursday 19th May, from 3–5pm at Charney Manor.

Oxford Friends Respond to Suspension of Twinning with Perm

In early March, responding to public pressure following the invasion of Ukraine, Oxford City Council suspended its twinning arrangement with the Russian city of Perm. The Co-Clerks of Oxford Quaker Meeting subsequently wrote to the Lord Mayor to express regret at this decision. They pointed out that twinning is important in supporting relationships between people and communities, which is a key peace-building activity in itself. Happily, another Oxford Friend has been in communication with the chair of the Oxford-Perm Association, who informed her that peaceful links between individuals in the two cities are being maintained.



These forget-me-nots and primroses seem to have arranged themselves to show solidarity with Ukraine.

Kindness Café at 43 St Giles'

If you are in Oxford on the last Tuesday of each month, you are invited to drop into Oxford Friends' Kindness Café. It's open from 10:30am until 2:30am and offers coffee, tea, treats, soup and bread, and friendly conversation. Oxford Friends have re-established their link with Oxford Food Hub, collecting all the ingredients for the soups and snacks for worshippers and volunteers who come in through the week. To draw attention to food waste, they will be offering either fair-traded products or those that otherwise would end up in landfill.

Children and Young People's Development Worker

At its November meeting OSAM agreed to co-fund a Children and Young People's Development Worker with Mid-Thames Area Meeting. The post-holder will initiate, facilitate and deliver a range of opportunities for children, young people and families in the Thames Valley. AM Trustees agreed to this funding in early 2022, and the post has now been advertised.

If you know of a potentially suitable candidate, please encourage them to find out more at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/jobs/jobs>

From the Wider Quaker Community...

Yearly Meeting 2022: 27th–30th May

From The Friend, 29th April 2022

Yearly Meeting is an opportunity for learning, inspiration and strength for our witness. It searches our spiritual depths and refreshes our spiritual lives. This year, the focus is on

- **Faith:** How do we experience worship, community and witness?
- **Community:** How can we build Quaker communities that respond to challenges and put faith into action?
- **Action:** How can we transform thinking and action in Quaker communities and wider society?

Yearly Meeting 2022 will take place between 27th and 30th May with online preparation events from 21st May. Yearly Meeting in Session will be a blended event, meaning some Friends will participate online, while others will be physically present at Friends House in London.

Registration closes on Friday 6th May, so act now and book your place at www.quaker.org.uk/ym

All-Together Worship at Yearly Meeting: 29th May

Yearly Meeting has formed an ambitious aim: to unite Quakers across the whole of Britain in a ‘monumental’ Meeting for Worship on Sunday 29th May, from 10:30–11:30am. Friends will be taking part in person at Friends’ House, online (individually at home or collectively in Meeting Houses) or ‘in spirit.’ The organising team writes:

‘We want to make this the biggest meeting for worship ever. We want to reach out to other Quakers, wherever they are in Britain, and demonstrate that meeting is more than simply sitting in the same room. It’s about worshipping and being together, united in the spirit.’

We discussed our possible participation in All-Together Worship at our Business Meeting on 1st May and reached the discernment that we would participate ‘in spirit.’ To avoid confusion we will start at our normal time (10:15) and end at 11:30 (after Afterwords).

For further information about All-Together Worship, visit <https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/all-together-now-meeting-for-worship-at-yearly-meeting> (shortlink to the same web page: <https://bit.ly/bym-atw>).

Supporting Quaker Faith in Action – A Survey by Quakers in Britain

The staff team at Quakers in Britain would like to know more about how Quakers are putting their faith into action. One way they are listening and learning is through an online survey. It is intended to improve how staff support Quakers to build a more peaceful, just and sustainable world.

Oonagh Ryder writes: ‘We’d like to hear from “active” Quakers, but it would also be great to get some responses from people who perhaps are more sceptical about action for social justice and/or don’t consider themselves activists.’ If you’d like to know more, please email Oonagh: oonaghr@quaker.org.uk

The survey should take 10–20 minutes to complete: <https://forms.office.com/r/2zt91YEywD> (shortlink to the same web page: <https://bit.ly/fia-survey>). It will close on Monday 16th May.

Friends Way: Following the Steps of George Fox

Friends Way is a new long-distance walking route through north-west England that takes in the famous places associated with George Fox's 1652 journey. It has been developed by the publisher Rucksack Readers in conjunction with Quaker experts. The guide to the first part of the walk, *Friends Way 1*, covers the 62 miles from Barley (near Pendle Hill) to Sedbergh and will be published later in May.

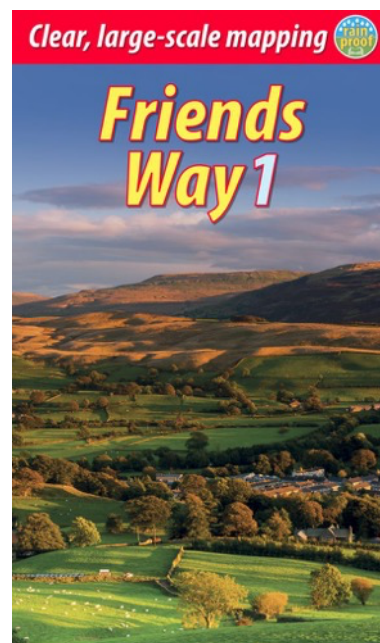
The publisher explains: '[George Fox] preferred to deliver his sermons outdoors, dismissing churches as "steeple-houses". His long walk and discussions with Seekers and other dissidents led to the creation of the Society of Friends, first known as Quakers.' However, the walk doesn't only focus on Quaker history; it passes through stunning upland landscapes with their varied wildlife and striking geology.

The publisher assures that the 62-mile route can be completed 'comfortably' in less than a week. And thoughtful design of each day's segment ensures that walkers can stay in comfortable accommodation!

Friends Way 2 is due for publication in 2023 and will complete the journey from Sedbergh to Swarthmoor Hall. It will celebrate the role of Margaret Fell in early Quakerism.

Even if you don't intend to walk the route, the guide promises to be packed with fascinating details. It could also make an excellent gift for the walker(s) among your friends and relations, whether they are Quakers or not. A discount of £3 on the cover price is available until 30th June if you purchase the guide online from Rucksack Readers; use the code Quaker22 at check-out.

For more information visit <https://www.rucsacs.com/book/friends-way-1/>



Faith in Action

Weekly Vigil against the War in Ukraine

Every Monday 8.15–8.45am, Abingdon War Memorial

Vigil with banners 'No More War' and 'No to Putin's War, No to NATO expansion'.

Abingdon Peace Group

Tuesday 17th May 8pm, online

'The Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCOMS).' The speaker will be Colin Archer, former secretary of the International Peace Bureau (IPB), currently on the board of GCOMS.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/91315134101?pwd=RmxHLzBQaXlHYjFSRm5nREVzYjdSdz09>

Meeting ID: 913 1513 4101 Passcode: 015836

Abingdon Carbon Cutters

Wednesday 18th May 7.30pm, outdoor meeting in either Albert Park or St Ethelwold's garden

'Biodiversity'— topic of the second Green Forum. Led by John Killick, local botanist.

Email carbon.cutters@gmail.com or ask Sally for details nearer the time.

Preventing Climate Disaster: Two Events

'I believe that what we do in the next 3 to 4 years will determine the future of humanity' – Sir David King, former Chief Scientific Advisor to the UK Government (2021).

Just Stop Oil invites you to hear a prominent climate crisis speaker explain how we can prevent the breakdown of the climate from causing 'the biggest disaster in history.' Two events are being held:

- 'Our Responsibilities at This Time': Friday 20th May 7pm, Oxford Meeting House.
To register, visit <https://bit.ly/399eVFz>
- 'Our Responsibilities as Christians at This Time': Thursday 26th May 7pm, via Zoom.
To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3EtjDJM>

Around the Abingdon Churches

Richard Smart is involved in the church twinning activities of the Church in Abingdon. On the CiA's behalf he has invited representatives from Argentan (France), one of Abingdon's twin towns, to the Eco weekend on 28th October. Please let Richard know if you wish to join the event.

Among Abingdon Friends

Poem of the Month

From the Poetry Group

This month we read poems on the theme of 'flight': avian and human, actual and metaphorical. Our gathering on Zoom was more geographically dispersed than usual, with Wendy in Edinburgh (where she was visiting her family), and Lorna Watson joining us for the first time from Vancouver. Welcome, Lorna!

The poem we chose to share with you was read by Roger Baker. It has an added resonance in light of current events in Eastern Europe:

Refugee

We think of him as safe beneath the steeple,
Or cosy in a crib beside the font.
But he is with a million displaced people
On the long road of weariness and want.
For even as we sing our final carol
His family is up and on the road,
Fleeing the wrath of someone else's quarrel,
Glancing behind and shouldering their load.
Whilst Herod rages still from his dark tower
Christ clings to Mary, fingers tightly curled,
The lambs are slaughtered by the men of power,
And death squads spread their curse across the world.
But Herod dies, and comes alone
To stand before the Lamb upon the throne.

Malcolm Guite



Malcolm Guite is a poet-priest, and chaplain of Girton College, Cambridge. He also plays in a local rock band! You can read – and listen to – some of his other poems at <https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/>

Saffron Walden School Reunion

Richard Smart is hosting a reunion of alumni of Saffron Walden School on the weekend of 24th June and hopes that some of the participants will come to our Meeting for Worship on the Sunday.

News of Friends in Brief

Belated congratulations to Chris and Kate Sewell, who celebrated their Golden Wedding on Thursday 1st April.

Happy 60th Birthday to Karen Saxl for 28th April.

Birthday greetings to our newsletter editor, Roger Baker, who turns 90 on Saturday 14th May. Roger is pictured here at last summer’s picnic in Waterperry Gardens.

We send love to Roger and Helen Bush as Helen recovers from a recent stay in hospital.



Opening Up at the Northcourt Centre

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

1 st	Rosie Page	Judy Goodall
15 th	Rosie Page	Liz Matthews
22 nd	Richard Smart	Auriel Lancashire
29 th	Chris Sewell	Sally Reynolds

May Dates for Your Diary

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

Date	Time	Event details
Sun 1 st	10:15am	Meeting for Worship followed by Business Meeting Northcourt Centre
Thurs 5 th	7:30pm	Outreach Meeting for Worship St Ethelwold’s
Sun 8 th	10:30am	Meeting for Worship St Ethelwold’s garden (Garden Room if wet)
Sun 15 th	10:15am	Meeting for Worship Northcourt Centre
	After Meeting	Bring & Share Lunch Roger Baker’s home
Thurs 19 th	3pm	Area Meeting Charney Manor
	7:30pm	Meeting for Worship on Zoom

Date	Time	Event details
Sun 22 nd	10:15am	Meeting for Worship Northcourt Centre
Sun 29 th	10:15am	Meeting for Worship, joining YM in spirit (see page 5) Northcourt Centre

Next Month...

The June issue will be published on **Sunday 29th May**. Please send your contributions (in words and/or pictures) to the editors by **Wednesday 25th May**. Although we don't set a word limit, we may make judicious edits for length and/or readability.

Abingdon Local Quaker Meeting

<https://abingdonquakers.org/>

Clerk: Alan Pearmain – abingdonquakers@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor: Roger Baker | Assistant Editor: Liz Matthews

newsletter@abingdonquakers.org.uk



Vivid hues in a garden at the Casa de Pilatos, Seville, Spain.

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