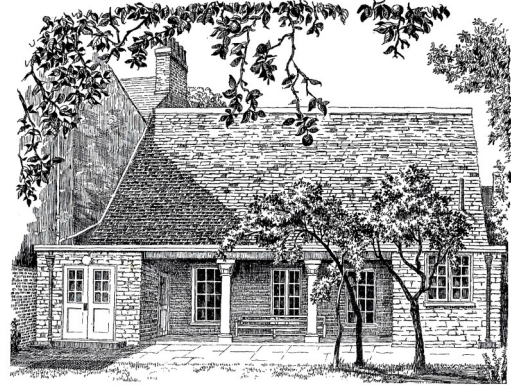


# Forty-Three newsletter

Number 519  
July 2022



## Oxford Friends Meeting

43 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LW  
+44 (0)1865 557373  
office@oxfordquakers.org

### Listening to Unheard Voices in Occupied Palestine

#SaveMasaferYatta

**Gwithian Doswell**

Ecumenical Accompanier 2013 and 2015

As Quakers, we have longstanding testimonies to peace and equality. We understand that all human beings are equal before God. If we do not treat each other as equals, there can be no true peace in the world.

For many decades now, this understanding of the testimonies has translated into Quaker support for the United Nations organisation and for international law. Both provide frameworks and methods for resolving conflicts between peoples which do not rely on the use of armed force.

'Quakers in Britain' support and manage the UK and Ireland section of the **Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)** as part of our peace witness. A commitment to

international humanitarian law and human rights law as well as non-violence is central to the programme.

With recent reports from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch highlighting the huge disparity in terms of basic rights afforded to Palestinians and to Jewish Israelis in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, it is clear that the two populations are not being treated as people of equal worth by the Israeli authorities. Neither is there peace.



*Basma Yasafer Yatta*

*Photo by EA Lena*

The little girl in the photo is a child of Masafer Yatta, a semi-desert area in the south of the Israeli-occupied West Bank. I met her in 2013 as I accompanied her and her friends to school. Their parents and a local UN official, worried about harassment from the Israeli military and armed settlers, called on the local Ecumenical Accompaniers to help.

Families have lived in Masafer Yatta for generations and generations, continuing a long

**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](mailto:newsletter@oxfordquakers.org) or a paper copy can be left in the pigeonhole of any editor. Items for the calendar or community noticeboard can be emailed to [office@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:office@oxfordquakers.org).

For information: tel. +44 (0)1865 557373 or visit [www.oxfordquakers.org](http://www.oxfordquakers.org)

tradition of combining drylands agriculture with sheep and goat herding. The land where they grow their wheat, and the expanse of grazing land adjacent, are both vital for the continued existence of this unique farming lifestyle and these communities. Water is scarce. The animals need a lot of space to roam and find grass to eat. They are sustained by intermittent rain-water cisterns which provide drinking water for the herds and the shepherds themselves.

These are Palestinians living under a harsh Israeli military occupation. I was told by their schoolteacher that almost all the children's homes – tents or simple breeze block structures – had demolition orders issued against them. The latrines were also condemned, as were the animal pens, solar panels, and the all-important water cisterns. Only some of the caves, converted into homes, were safe from the threat of demolition.

The Israeli military authorities do not issue building permits for Palestinians in Masafer Yatta. They have zoned it for another use: Firing Zone 918, a military training area. They don't want Palestinians to live here. The grazing and agricultural land used by these shepherds before the creation of the State of Israel is now beyond the border. It is zoned as a nature reserve.



*Sun dried sheep's cheese, Masafer Yatta* photo by Gwithian Doswell

International aid organisations have tried to bring a water supply to Masafer Yatta. The occupation bulldozers destroyed the pipes. Each time the villagers repair the roads between the communities, the Israeli authorities dig them up again. It makes access to health facilities, markets for their sheep and goats, and the transportation of expensive tankered water extremely difficult. For the last ten years, EAPPI observers have continued to witness the demolitions, the restrictions on land use, the violence, and the Palestinians' steadfastness and determination to stay.

<https://eyewitnessblogs.com>

*Continued next page ...*



*One of the shepherding villages of Masafer Yatta*

The schoolteacher says he encourages his pupils to be proud shepherds and proud farmers. Palestine needs shepherds and farmers as well as doctors and lawyers, he says.

In May 2022, after more than 22 years of legal challenges and appeals, **the Supreme Court of Israel made a final ruling. The Palestinians living in 'Firing Zone 918' can now be forcibly expelled from their homes whenever the occupation authorities decide.**

Contrary to international law, the land will not be used for the benefit of the local civilian population. Around 18% of the West Bank is currently zoned for Israeli military exercises and hundreds of Palestinian shepherds and their families are at risk of displacement.

Ma'on, the nearby illegal Israeli settlement and outpost, comprises solid brick houses with red tiled roofs and smart cars in the drives. It is built on Palestinian land and heavily subsidised by the Israeli state. Its existence contravenes international law. According to the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention, occupying powers must not settle their own citizens on occupied land. Ma'on is connected to water and electricity supplies. It looks like it will remain, and it is growing.

The residents of Masafer Yatta are very frightened. Settler violence is on the increase, live-fire exercises began last week and the villagers know they can be forcibly expelled from their homes at any time. Israeli human rights and peace activists are standing by them but all say that only international pressure can stop this expulsion. It is very important not to lose hope.

Action can be taken to stop Israel further violating international law. EAPPI UK and Ireland is part of the **#SaveMasaferYatta** campaign. Go to the website to find out more <https://www.eyewitnessblogs.com/take-action/>

**EAPPI** shares eyewitness stories and raises the voices of Palestinians and Israelis working non-violently for peace. Without equality and fairness and an adherence to international law, a just peace for both Palestinians and Israelis cannot be achieved.

## Monthly Appeal - July 2022 Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel

Gwithian Doswell

The **Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel** (EAPPI) supports ordinary people to live for three months as human rights monitors in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) witness life under military occupation and share the real-life stories of the Palestinians and Israelis they meet. See <https://eyewitnessblogs.com>

EAs provide a **protective presence**, deterring soldier and armed settler violence towards civilians. They share human rights reports with the UN and other agencies. They engage with and support Palestinian and Israeli peace groups. On their return, EAs share their experiences and advocate for change – an end to the Israeli military occupation and a just and peaceful resolution based on international law.

**EAPPI UK & Ireland** is managed by Quakers in Britain, and is part of the World Council of Churches international EAPPI programme. For more information, visit the website <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/eappi>

**Please donate generously via:**

### The website

<https://www.eyewitnessblogs.com/donate/>

### Bank transfer

Britain Yearly Meeting,  
Coop Bank,  
1 Islington High St,  
London N1 9TR  
Account number – 50234651  
Sort Code 08-90-61

### Cheque

Payable to Britain Yearly Meeting  
(write EAPPI on the back) and  
send to FREEPOST EAPPI

## Beware Adders

Anne Watson

Keith Wilson's article in the June issue of *Forty-Three* made me chuckle. For a couple of years my laptop has opened to a photograph of this sign 'Beware Adders' found on the Isle of Mull next to a remote honesty shop.



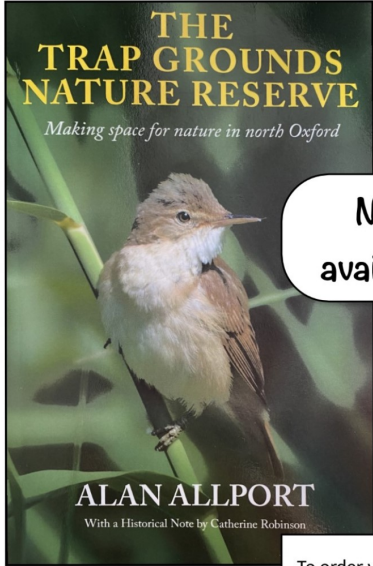
Photo by Anne Watson

I use this because I am someone who thinks mathematically, and adding is a very unimaginative way of proceeding in a calculation and might not get you very far, or even be the sensible thing to do. It is a human tendency because even very young infants seem to understand the ideas of 'more', and counting on fingers is physically easier than subtracting on fingers. Think about how we recite the words for numbers: we encourage children to recite them in ascending order. Rarely, apart from 'countdowns', do we recite them backwards. Keith contrasts adding with reducing: reducing clutter; reducing overload; simplifying; maybe reducing consumption; identifying what can be removed – all valuable perspectives.

But as a mathematician I contrast adding with multiplying, which has more power than adding – power that can be beneficial or can be dangerous. Yes, multiplying can lead to rapid exponential growth that can be worrying, but it can also spread good things faster. Thinking about multiplying can give a better understanding of what is going right or what is going wrong. In Danny Dorling's book *Slowdown* he looks at some statistics that we all worry about: more pollution, more disease, more population, more weapons. But he then turns us away from these worrying 'mores' to look at how

fast they are growing, and sees some hopeful signs of slowdown by looking at the hidden multiplication rates. Thinking about multiplying can help us be more effective; if I spread a good message to five people, and they each spread it to another five, we have multiplication to multitudes. If instead we only tell one person, and they only tell one person, it will take a long time to reach multitudes, even if the chain is unbroken. In the Bible the number 'seven' is often used to indicate fullness or completion. Jesus is famously reported as thinking of goodness in a multiplicative way, endlessly in Matthew 18 verses 21, 22. Peter asks how many times he should forgive someone who repeatedly 'sins' against him – seven times maybe? In the King James version Jesus says "Until seventy times seven."

These are some of the reasons why I kept the 'beware adders' sign, but I liked Keith's slightly different point. He gave me a vivid image of how I might say '... and another thing' to someone, while knowing from my own experience that the 'another thing' is likely to obscure whatever has gone before.



**Now available!**



To order your copy(ies) via PayPal @ £5 each (Plus £2 p&p if not near the Trap Grounds)

**Payments via PayPal to**  
**alan.allport@st-annes.ox.ac.uk**

Or scan QR code above

NB Please include your NAME and postal ADDRESS in PayPal message

To join Friends of the Trap Grounds, visit <https://trap-grounds.org.uk/about/the-friends/> to download a membership form and post to 12 Hayfield Road, OX2 6TT

## A Rant: What Do Love and Truth Require of Us?

Nicole Gilroy

I do not identify as a Ranter, though I am certainly guilty of ranting. This piece is not a review of Britain Yearly Meeting 2022, nor will it summarise the proceedings – you can read the Epistle and minutes at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/ym>. But at BYM certain words and phrases seem to emerge and recur. This year, these words included ‘accompaniment’, ‘deep listening’, and over and over again ‘what do love and truth require of us?’.

Going to any big gathering fires up one’s energy and resolve. I first went to BYM in 2019, with two small children in tow. It wasn’t easy and it wasn’t cheap. But I remember the deep resolve at that yearly meeting to challenge privilege, to examine our own comfort and what that comfort costs others. Jo Luehmann reminded us that *“You either make privileged people uncomfortable, or marginalized people unsafe. You can’t have the comfort of the privileged and the safety of the marginalized at the same time”*.

The work done at that meeting, and as a result of it, firmly underpinned the Quaker response to the appalling events surrounding the murder of George Floyd. I believe that without the ongoing deep searching and questioning over the intervening years, as the clerks to this year’s meeting said, we would not have been able to get to the stage we did this year in discerning and resolving to make reparation for what Quakers have gained at the expense of exploitation.

It wasn’t just about racism though. We heard deep, powerful prepared ministry from a Young Adult Friend who cried out for accompaniment. Their peers gave spontaneous ministry echoing a feeling of being unattached, a lack of home within area and

local meetings, a feeling that the Quaker roots and soil in which they should be growing are absent. They invited everyone of all ages to eat lunch with them after this ministry – only a handful turned up. We failed to heed Advices and Queries 19:

*“Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognise the gifts they bring. Remember that the meeting as a whole shares a responsibility for every child in its care. Seek for them as for yourself a full development of God’s gifts and the abundant life Jesus tells us can be ours. How do you share your deepest beliefs with them, while leaving them free to develop as the spirit of God may lead them? Do you invite them to share their insights with you? Are you ready both to learn from them and to accept your responsibilities towards them?”*

Coming back from BYM full of fire and energy, I attended local meeting and the Epistle was read out in full. Friends commented negatively on the Epistle without having either attended the sessions, read any minutes, or discussed the meeting with anyone who had done so. Again we seem to have forgotten our own guidance. Quaker Faith and Practice 8.01 asks us:

*“... how often do we stop and hold in the Light the people who are acting on our behalf? How often do we stop to think how much research and information gathering is behind their actions? Too often I fear we jump to judgement.”*

A discussion on racism followed, going back over issues of unrecognised privilege. A Young Adult Friend attempted to refer to the need for accompaniment and was not heard. There was no discussion on what our meeting can do for Young Adult and Young Friends. There has been, to my knowledge, no discussion nor any plans for discussion on this, though the Meeting for Business which immediately followed spent significant time discussing the Garden Room. We are indeed called to be good stewards of our resources.



Photo by SL Granum

But is the Garden Room more important than the precious resource of our Young Friends whose cry for support was not even noticed by most of the meeting?

Advices and Queries 18 asks us "*How can we make the meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured, and strangers are welcome?*" What do love and truth require of us, Friends? At the very least, to listen, listen deeply, and try to hear what is being said. Not to simply wait for our turn to give our opinion, but listen actively to the ministry of others. Especially when those voices are new, or rarely heard.

I have witnessed ministry in meeting that is raw, personal, traumatic. I have given such ministry. I have witnessed and experienced such ministry being followed by Friends swiftly returning to a previous 'thread'. I know we are not supposed to comment on ministry. But I frequently hear weighty Friends commenting on one another's ministry without challenge. Can we not then react to a piece of ministry from a new Friend or one who rarely speaks in a way that makes them feel heard?

Quaker Faith and Practice 12.03 further reminds us "*With our structure, we risk failures ... in pastoral care. We do not always adequately support one another.*" My motivation in writing this piece, which I consider to be ministry and which I have discerned as carefully as I discern before standing up to minister in Meeting, is not to assert my views, but to amplify the voices I have seen and heard and that have not been widely seen and heard. I hope Friends will read this rant in the spirit of Quaker Faith and Practice 12.16:

*"... local meetings should regularly review their spiritual life and its expression in caring. ... Special attention might need to be given to involving those associated with the meeting who take little part in its regular life because of youth, age, disability or disaffection."*

Let us not lose our meeting's most precious resources to disaffection.



Flag of Ukraine

Wikimedia Commons

**Friday with Friends  
Ukraine and Beyond:  
an Oxford Quaker's Activism  
about the Role of the UN.  
43 St Giles (in person)  
15 July, 19:00 for a 19:30 start**

Jane Mactaggart, of Oxford Meeting, has been regularly attending international Meetings for Worship organised by Friends House Moscow (United States branch) six days a week since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Through this worship she became involved with detailed scrutiny and advocacy about the role of the UN in and beyond the situation in Ukraine. This work has been sustained in a group using the Quaker methods of worship and business, eldership, and Meetings for Clearness. They have sought truth scrupulously.

In this Friday with Friends Jane will describe how this work started, how it is done, and how it is sustained. It will be a meeting for learning, and also a meeting that will support Jane's work.



# The Interfaith Friendship Walk

## 19 May 2022

### Organised by Oxford Council of Faiths

Juliet Henderson

This annual event has no doubt been attended by many Friends over the years. It is one of many organised by Oxford Council of Faiths (OxCoF) to create deeper understanding and mutual respect between diverse communities and encourage interfaith social and cultural activities in Oxford.

The Oxford Synagogue and Jewish centre is where participants congregate before walking together to St Giles', then to the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin, and finally to the Islamic Cultural Centre next to the Oxford Central Mosque.



Photo by Richard Seeborn

At each stop there are reflections and song. At the Jewish Synagogue this year we joined in singing *Olam Chesed Yibaneh*, inspired by part of Psalm 89. At St Giles we listened to a Latin chant from the choir and a reflection from the Methodists. At the University Church we heard reflections from the Hindu and Sikh community before joining in the Taizé chant, *Where there is love and charity, there is God*. At the Islamic Cultural Centre children from the mosque gave a Nasheed recital.

Then before the shared supper donated by the

mosque and the Oxford Jewish congregation, there was an honouring of all the interfaith work Elisabeth Salisbury has done, and a message from her saying she was fully present in spirit. To conclude, Sahibzada Jamil Khan al-Azhari gave this blessing:

*O Merciful and Loving God, thank you for giving us the opportunity to stand together to affirm Your greatness. We have harmed the environment so forgive our violation of your Earth. We have started wars against one another so forgive our violence towards each other. We thank you for Your mercy and patience for all of Your servants. Grant us all the qualities of kindness, justice and mutual respect. Help us to tread the path of Your favoured servants. O Lord, forgive us, guide us, provide us what we need, protect us and always be merciful to us. Ameen/Amen*

It was my first time at an interfaith activity. As such, it was a powerful and embodied experience of the porous relations of faith converging: a live connection with the faith ecosystems around me that felt like a sacred moment of collective encounter and worship. A brief but almost timeless journey, or perhaps a mini pilgrimage with others of faith.

I felt blessed to have attended this event where caring, sharing, laughter, and encounters along the way were vitalizing, producing a deep sense of wholeness.

This sense of joyful unity in diversity was symbolised by the multi-coloured, biodegradable balloons on sticks distributed at the synagogue that we all carried as we walked. The possible traces to follow have led to two follow-up discussions with friends from the Baha'i faith and a vicar who has supported the cause of non-stipendiary ministers for decades.

I'll conclude with these words from Judith Atkinson and Sarah Lasenby, two of the many Friends also on the walk:

Judith Atkinson:

*As always, the faith walk this summer was a profoundly moving experience, beautifully planned and coordinated and with a very clear programme on the handout. I make a point of introducing myself to people I don't know and always have fascinating*



conversations. Although I hadn't (alas) the energy to go beyond the University Church this year, I thoroughly enjoyed the music and the conviviality at both the synagogue and St Giles Church ..... and what nice weather we had!

Sarah Lasenby:

*This was not the first Interfaith Walk I had been on and it was a little smaller, but I found it as usual a remarkable opportunity to meet people I might never have done otherwise. Knowing they were all of a faith made a feeling of unity.*

*I specially talked with a woman from Jeune Street Methodist Church and I hope we meet again in Cowley Rd. Then I went to speak to the very new Suffragan Bishop of Dorchester, Gavin Collin, who replaces Colin Fletcher.*

*I wanted to know what Gavin thought about nuclear weapons. Colin believed they were a good thing. As I said this, I saw the new Bishop's face and he then confirmed he thought they were horrendous.*

*Finally, I found myself talking to Kunle 'but call me Steve' who worships in St Andrews. He was fascinated to hear how much I remember of working in Ibadan and Port Harcourt 50 years ago. He asked questions about Quakerism and thought he may even come to worship with us.*

*What fruitful meetings in the spirit!*



Photos by Richard Seebom



Photo by SL Granum

## The Spirituality of Quaker Meeting for Business

Sarah Lasenby

How is Quaker business spiritual? I have been attending British Yearly Meeting for many years, but hardly ever for all the formal business days. So this time using Zoom I managed to. On 27 to 30 May I joined Yearly Meeting by Zoom. I suddenly realised that by using Quaker methods for the main sessions it was possible for anyone to contribute by ministry, guided by the spirit. This made it possible for things to be shared by the people in a way I don't find in other non-Quaker meetings. It inspired me and reminded me how privileged I feel to belong to Quakers with their business meetings.

Of course, we have Local Meetings for Business here in Oxford and they work in similar ways. At the start of the meeting we have a deep silence. Then those who feel called to speak about agenda items wait to be called. It is customary not to speak twice. At the end we are silent for as long as it takes to write the minute. This is then placed before the meeting for agreement or changes. Once you get the hang of it, you will probably realise how much better is to agree the minute at the time it is written.

**'...the dearest freshness  
deep down things.'**

**(*God's Grandeur*, Gerard Manley Hopkins)**

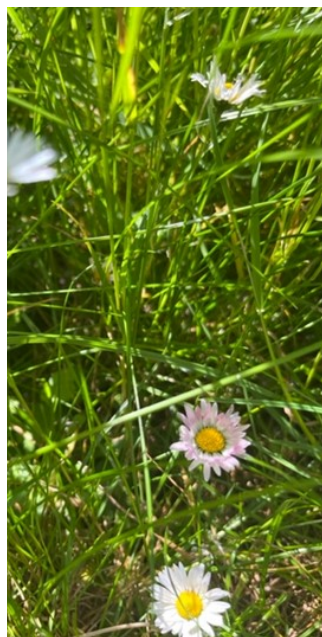
**Sally Bayley**

From the age of four, when I acquired words, I knew there was the visible world, the printed word on the page, and the invisible, the world beyond. Actual things existed and then the things beyond my seeing: '*... the dearest freshness deep down things*' says Gerard Manley Hopkins.

He meant the patterns within leaves that hold them together; the architecture of the atomic and subatomic world; those infinitesimal fractions of the material world that remain invisible to us, but we know are there because we firmly believe in a deep material existence.

Needs must. What else is there? In order to live in the material world, we must take certain things for granted; we have no choice. We must believe those invisible structures are there if we are to continue to participate in being. Belief in a deep reality is the root of the verb to be.

Metaphysical reality has always been a given. I was handed that view as a child from poetry and song, from hymns, and all those old Biblical stories about preposterous overreaching patriarchs, those tragi-comic myths. Humans meddling with the divine and wishing for more of that sort of thing. Absurd stories for an absurd condition: the human desire to see and know.



*Photo by Sally Bayley*

I look from the bus window on this beautiful afternoon in May and I am reminded of those Tintoretto paintings of impossibly soft clouds on church ceilings. Paintings meant for cricked necks to look up and sway at the sight of cherubs peering down at them. It's partly the angle, acute and vertiginous, but it's also that sixteenth century Italian blue — the undaunted Mannerist way of seeing too much all at once — that heavenly ceiling,



*Allegory of music, by Tintoretto (public domain)*

ceiling marked out as heaven. It's a given that a domed vault can yield that much, a blue heaven, revelation. Why not? My bus window doesn't expect as much, but I suppose I do. I expect to see something beyond the tufty white clouds — and I do — I see my painting, the one I'm making in my head, no doubt baroque. And I feel the urge of natural beauty pointing towards the rest — the invisible world — what my humble imagination, which turns out to be not so humble after all, anticipates. Which is beauty and the rest of her captives: the lime green of the lime trees over the churchyard wall and the silvery birch of the bark running like a clear brook in the sharp afternoon light. *Ah! bright wings*, extolled the poet, singing his hymn of praise to the made world. Because what else is there but praise? That is all we can bring to the occasion, and it is all I bring to my friend as I step off the bus with my tiny crushed tulips — a paltry offering in the face of that hymn. Today, the world is so beautiful it hurts, I say, and she agrees, because we learnt those old hymns a long time ago and we haven't forgotten them; and I know we are both glad it was so.

## Ministry at Oxford Meeting: What it Means for Me

Marieke Faber Clarke

I am a third-generation Christian pacifist as my Dutch grandfather, a Unitarian parson in the Netherlands, was an active pacifist. My parents met through the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). (See the booklet published by Oxford Meeting about Conscientious Objectors and Oxford Meeting). My mother died in childbirth four days after I was born on 30 November 1940.

My father's sister Phyllis, another active Christian pacifist, and my father together with their mother, my Granny, brought me up from the age of one year. We all regularly attended the Congregational Church in Bishop's Stortford. I became a church member shortly before I went to Oxford University.

When I was about fifteen, my father arranged for me to attend a FOR youth conference. My father had had very difficult experiences during the War because he was a Christian pacifist and he had lost his job when my mother was pregnant. He could not find suitable work near our home for some time, so he lost his job, his wife, and access to his daughter in the crucial early years.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation was absolutely crucial to my father and his CO Friends. One of my earliest memories is that I was told we could always trust fellow FOR members: they were our real friends. In the youth conferences we were taught that Christian pacifists must stay within their church, whichever that might be, and bear witness to Christian pacifism. We should not join Quakers as it was 'too easy' to be a pacifist there.

I continued as an active Congregationalist till I returned to Oxford having been deported from my job teaching at a brilliant Congregational Mission School in what white settlers then called Rhodesia. That regime could not tolerate a politically aware history and current affairs teacher in an all-black school. I had for some years been deeply involved with the anti-apartheid movement and anti-racist activities. Many of my close friends (including former students at the school) were striving to bring

about democracy in Southern African countries.

In Oxford I started to attend St Columba's Church, as there was no city centre Congregational Church. The ministry was limited to biblical stories, so far as I remember, and my beloved Aunt Phyllis remarked on how conventional it was. My father had remarried and become a Quaker. This shocked me because of what the FOR had taught me.

But I found settling into Oxford the second time very difficult and was spiritually very lonely. Finally in 1966 I thought "Well, my father seems to be happy with the Quakers so let me go to 43 St Giles." I did so and during the second meeting I attended, someone ministered and prayed for Botswana, which was shortly going to become (very successfully) independent. I had found a place of worship where people were saying things that were of burning concern to me!

I immediately began to meet Quakers who shared my views, were pacifists and social activists. In addition to Southern African issues, I became involved with peace demonstrations. I found that Quakers could at that time be called 'Oxfam at prayer', and as I worked for Oxfam for 35 years my work and my religious life became happily entwined. When I married a man born into a Hindu family, my commitment to Quakers strengthened as he also loved the meeting.



Photo by SL Granum



## At Home with the Quakers

Beth Edwards

I found a diary entry the other day. It records my first attendance at a Meeting for Worship as 28 April 2019. Since then, I have attended sporadically, and now more regularly (interrupted, of course, by lockdown in 2020/21). Being on the Welcoming and Coffee Rota has helped me get to know more people. I still feel like a novice – but that’s no bad thing as I shall never stop learning. One of the *Forty-Three* newsletter editors asked me to write something about what the Society of Friends means to me and why I attend Meeting for Worship.

It all begins and ends with God. I’m not sure it was a choice at all that I’ve landed up seeking out the Quakers. It was kind of inevitable. After meandering through many varieties of Christian expression, I do at last feel ‘at home’.

The nature of my ‘voice within’ has metamorphosed over many decades. Currently I am more comfortable with not grasping at any image, for perhaps all images are only my own projection. There is one thing I am sure of: that I could not live, breathe, survive, without the constant sense of the Other, Love, Truth, always Spirit abiding within.

During childhood I attended a Baptist Sunday School. The distinctive thing about the Baptists was the mysterious baptismal pool, hidden under the floor in front of the central pulpit. It did seem totally right and logical to me, as an adolescent, that since Christ himself was baptized in the river Jordan, as

were many disciples, I should follow His example. Consequently, at the age of fifteen I was baptized by complete immersion.

At University I continued my deeply committed, protestant trajectory, ultimately becoming Secretary of the Christian Union. It was in this group that I met my husband, a Calvinist and avid reader of books by the *Banner of Truth Trust* publishing house. We had many interesting discussions. Here it becomes complicated. I bounced between attending a rally for the Nationwide Festival of Light, organized by Mary Whitehouse, and an inner development of a more ‘liberal’ me. Add to this an ambiguous sexuality, my love of pubs with cask ale, and regular cinema and theatre trips – I really didn’t fit the fundamentalist Christian Union mould.

After marriage I worked and lived in France, where our first child was born. Church did not feature in my life, though I still prayed, developing a more United Universalist theology than previously.

Later, we settled in Norwich and worshipped at a city-centre Anglican church. The curate introduced me to the Myers Briggs personality indicators, Spiritual Direction, and the writing of Anthony de Mello. It made sense; there was a pathway that connected the heart of the individual, their personality, and a loving God, all based around meditation and quiet reflection. I stopped trying to solve everything ‘in my head’ and paid attention to my heart and the still small voice within. I also accepted there was no need to struggle for perfection. God’s unconditional love was enough.

A full-time job and being a mum of three meant there was little time for quiet and reflection. One Saturday I booked myself into a Retreat House next to the church where Julian of Norwich had been an anchorite. The space, peace, and sense of calm in the little cell-like bedroom I was allocated reduced me to tears as at last I could ‘let go’.

Following a move to Oxford I attended the local Anglican church in the parish in which we lived. I became accustomed to ‘The Eucharist’, instead of ‘The Lord’s Supper’ or ‘Holy Communion’ and even took on board the inclusion of Mary and innumerable Saints as VIPs.

One Sunday an Anglican nun, professed as a Solitary, preached the sermon. Her message seemed very pertinent. It had a distinct ecological bent and talked of the world and the Church's lack of stillness and silence. It was important for Christians to spend more time listening and being still instead of rushing around swamped by hierarchies, countless meetings, cluttered Liturgy and noise.

We struck up a friendship. This theologian, scholar, writer, and professed religious was based in Oxford and had written many books about the need to return to a simple devotion and listening to the silence within. In one of her books (*Pillars of Flame*) there is an interesting critique of Ordination, arguing for the priesthood of all people. It attuned with my belief that we each take personal responsibility before God without the need for a priest.

In addition to attending Meeting, I join with friends to reflect on the sermons of Meister Eckhart, a fourteenth-century German mystic and theologian. His writings remind me that in *not* striving, *not* overthinking things, and *not* constructing any image of God at all, we can let go and make space for the birth of God 'in the ground of our Being'.

How do I define God? All I know is that it is, for me, only within the context of Eternity, of a belief in a Spiritual Being that words such as Truth, Love, Peace, and Holiness have any meaning. I could not imagine being alive without this belief as it envelopes with Love every cell, every living thing, and I have faith this Spirit loves each of us as their 'Beloved'.

Within the Quaker Meeting for Worship I have been able to find a home amongst others who in glorious silence wait and trust in this inward Light, which I believe will never be extinguished.

#### **Book references:**

- Anthony de Mello, *Sadhana: A Way to God* (1978)
- Burrows and Sweeney, *Meister Eckhart's Book of Secrets* (2019)
- Davies, O., *Meister Eckhart: Mystical Theologian* (2011)
- Maggie Ross, *Pillars of Flame* (2007)
- Maggie Ross, *Silence: A User's Guide* Volumes 1 (2014) and 2 (2018)



## **One Tap for Yes, Two Taps for No ...**

**Deb Arrowsmith**

From cave paintings to WhatsApp groups, via town criers, semaphore, morse code – ways of communicating have evolved as we all do. Quill pens, steel nibs, biros all have had their day. Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp are simply the latest in a long line of our trying to get a message across.

Oxford Meeting does this in weekly notices emailed out and read out in Meeting, *Forty-Three* newsletter, General Circulation emails. Other meetings have telephone circles.

I'd like to tell you – yes, you (because it will affect everyone) – about changes to the roles of Oxford staff team. It's been a tough few years we all know. We kept things going and came up with some 'unleashed ideas' – trying something different. We need to keep trying! The Snapshot survey of 2021, open to all Friends in the Area, showed us that each local meeting felt a need to work together, speak out more clearly to our wider communities about our Quaker witness, and try to be more cost effective and efficient with our time and resources. All this to lift burdens off Friends and release them to explore what they really want to say/do.

Staff in Oxford office are employed by Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting (OSAM), which is the Charity and Area Quaker meeting to which we all belong. From 1 June 2022 Jacqui and I have signed new contracts of employment and agreed new areas of responsibility. Jacqui will continue to work 20 hours per week. I now work 4 days per week, with the aim of reducing that further when our new way of working shows clear progress – hopefully by the end of 2022. We cover hours we need to work in the Meeting House looking after the Meeting and our partner groups, supported in this by Georgia and Elliot our part time staff. We can also work remotely now from home (or any other meeting house that has Wi-Fi!). Because we do the same job I am pleased to say Jacqui's and my pay rates are now the same.

So what are other changes? From September we will be using a new booking and invoicing system – Hallmaster – which can handle bookings for all Meeting Houses if needed. Anyone will be able to view room availability on our website and request a booking. We will be more visible – and not just for room hire.

I want to develop more video work for outreach and publicity, getting you (yes you again) involved. Jacqui is building links with City Council business mentoring and Independent Oxford to raise our profile and professionalism. We are encouraging everyone to come up with good ideas for us to develop. We all need to be clear, to be simple, to be efficient, and to be effective in our work – and work together for our Meetings.

We want to create a Google form for all members and regular attenders who give their permission to hold personal data; and we'll establish exactly what data each person wishes to appear in a new digital and physical Book of Members and Attenders (BOMA). We will assist anyone who would rather fill in a form on the phone or by post. Don't do email? What about an Area-wide text message service

giving event reminders, notices, links to wider Quaker activities? What else can we do to make life easier?

Over the next few month we need to make rapid progress. I will be working with Burford and Charlbury Meetings, in the first instance, to simplify and consolidate their finances as a potential model for other Meetings to join in with in time. Staff will also be providing admin support to Area Clerks and Trustees, to make the work of the Area easier and more efficient.

Many of our concerns of Meetings across the Area large or small are the same; we need to work together sharing good ideas and supporting each other better. Now paid staff will work in support of Meetings. We are here to help. We can do a lot, but each one of you who is part of our community can maybe also take on something more? Come up with a good idea we can try? So get tapping on that computer to [office@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:office@oxfordquakers.org) or call us on 01865 557373 or even clean up the quill pen and get ink dipping – you know the address.



## Quaker Videos in this Month's *Forty-Three*

In the first video, Hozier reflects on his Quaker upbringing. In the second, PBS describes a Quaker migration to Costa Rica and the 60-year consequences. In the third video, children attending Bootham School in York explain their connections to their Quaker environment.



**Hozier**

### [Hozier Shares Thoughts on his Quaker Upbringing](#)

*Irish artist Hozier talks about his religious upbringing in this 2019 interview with Scandinavian talk show Skavlan. .*

**SVT/TV 2/Skavlan**

10 Minutes

<https://youtu.be/qtn-gAQX2z4>



**Lucille Guindon**

### [Quakers in Costa Rica](#)

*In the 1950s, when there was still a draft forcing many young men into military service, a group of Quakers, mostly from Alabama, decided their religious commitment to nonviolence forced them to leave the US rather than bear arms. They moved to Costa Rica in Central America, and helped that country preserve and develop its forests—so much so it is now among the world's most popular destinations for eco-tourists.*

**Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly**  
<http://www.pbs.org/religionethics>

7 Minutes

<https://youtu.be/-MNKBTIKkNw>



**Pupil of Bootham School  
York**

### [Quaker Beliefs](#)

*The essence of the beliefs of the Society of Friends, also known as Quakers, featuring the pupils of Bootham School, York, previously known as the Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting Boy's School; founded in 1823 and where as many as 45 members of the Rowntree family were educated. With hymns from Winchester Cathedral and Beverley Minster. 'Songs of Praise', 12th August 2012.*

**Ronald Ellis**

6 Minutes

<https://youtu.be/P915GO5GxsM>



# 43 St Giles Community Noticeboard online!

## Events July 2022

Poems in the Meeting House. Monday 25 July  
 'Laughter' in the Meeting House  
 and on Afterword zoom.



16:00-18:00

**12th and 26th Days of the 7th Month**

This is when our living, spiritual conversations take place on zoom (afterword link)  
 Grab a cuppa and come along for a refreshing chat all about the eternal things.  
 16:00-17:00  
 Living in the Spirit

in and around **43**

Who's in this month – just so you know ....










Just a few of the many social, spiritual, support, training and campaigning groups who use our rooms through the year. We give them a home—they support our work. [Oxfordquakers.org/room](http://Oxfordquakers.org/room)

**Free cake!**



Anyone prepared to take on the Kindness Café once a month from September?

Staff have a lot on their plate (ha, ha) so we are looking for a Friend on Duty who might like to run **The Kindness Cafe** with our support. In fact ... from September we need **FODS** to 'come back— all is forgiven!'



**Interested?**  
 In worship-sharing events, talks, discussion groups, reading and support groups, helping/speaking at enquirers evenings??  
 Please contact  
[office@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:office@oxfordquakers.org)

**SILENCE PLEASE!**

Please let the office know if you'd like to come along to a **Retreat** led by **Barbara Gabrys** and **Anthea Richards** called 'Working with Silence'  
**Saturday 16 July, 10:00-13:30.**  
 Bring bite-size food for a shared lunch.



## JULY 2022

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many meetings and events are being held via Zoom.

Link for all Oxford Meetings for Worship:

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

Please contact the Office for more details:

Email: [office@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:office@oxfordquakers.org) Telephone: +44 (0)1865 557373



Photo by SL Granum

### OXFORD MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

Meetings for worship are via Zoom and/or in person.

For more information, contact the Office at  
[office@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:office@oxfordquakers.org) +44 (0)1865 557373

#### First Sunday of each month:

Meeting for Worship 10:30-11:30 (in person & Zoom)  
MfW for Business 12:15 (in person & Zoom)

#### All other Sundays:

Meetings for Worship 09:30-10:15 (in person and Zoom)  
11:00-12:00 (in person and Zoom)

#### Monday:

Young Adult Friends 19:00-21:00 (in person and Zoom)

#### Tuesday:

Meeting for Worship 07:30-08:00 (in person only)

#### Wednesday:

Meeting for Worship 07:30-08:00 (Zoom only)  
Meeting for Worship 11:30-12:15 (in person & Zoom)

#### Friday:

Meeting for Worship 07:30-08:00 (Zoom only)

### HEADINGTON MEETING FOR WORSHIP

Headington Meeting meets each Sunday at 10:00  
at Old Headington Village Hall,  
Dunstan Road, Headington, OX3 9BY

For full details see

<https://headington.quakermeeting.org/>

## From Quaker Faith and Practice

*Our sense of community does not depend on all professing identical beliefs, for it grows from worshipping together, knowing one another, loving one another, accepting responsibilities, sharing and working together. We will be helped by tried and tested Quaker methods and procedures, but the meeting will only live if we develop a sense of community, which includes children and adults alike. If all those who belong to our meeting are lovingly cared for, the guidance of the spirit will be a reality. The celebration and commemoration of life's great events draw us together as we share the occasion and rejoice or mourn with one another.*

*Our shared experience of waiting for God's guidance in our meetings for worship and for church affairs, together with careful listening and gentleness of heart, forms the basis on which we can live out a life of love with and for each other and for those outside our community.*

QF&P 10.03, 1994

*Forty-Three* is available online,  
<https://brooksidepress.org/quaker/>  
and on the Oxford Quakers website,  
[www.oxfordquakers.org/newsletter](http://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 views expressed in this newsletter  
do not necessarily reflect those of the editors.*

Editorial Team:

SHERRY GRANUM, JULIET HENDERSON,  
and MICHAEL HUGHEY  
(Joint Editing and Production);

DEB ARROWSMITH and JACQUI MANSFIELD  
(Calendar and Distribution)