

Abingdon Quaker Meeting Newsletter

October 2022 (online version)

No. 397

Meetings for Worship

Every Sunday 10:15am at the Abingdon Community Support Service (Abbey Centre), Crabtree Place, off Audlett Drive.

Thursday 6th October 7:30pm in the Garden Room, St Ethelwold's, 30 East St Helen Street.

Summer Outing 2022

On Sunday 18th September, sixteen of us and one dog enjoyed our summer outing to Chris and Kate Sewell's home in Wheatley. We enjoyed a guided tour through Littleworth Nature Reserve – practically on their doorstep – followed by tea and a bring-and-share cake bonanza in the sheltered warmth of their patio.

We thank Chris and Kate for their generous hospitality.

The Quaker Renaissance and the Growth of Liberal Quakerism

During the summer Guy and Liz Matthews attended an online Woodbrooke course, 'The Quaker Renaissance', led by Mark Russ. For Friends who may be intrigued by this period of Quaker history, here are some key points from their learning.

Historical background

For much of the 19th century British Quakerism was dominated by evangelism. In contrast with the early Quakers, for whom the Inward Light held greater authority than the Bible, evangelical Friends claimed that the Bible had primacy over the Inward Light. Differences among American Quakers over this question prompted the 'Great Separation' between the traditionalists ('Hicksites') and the evangelicals ('Orthodox' Friends). London Yearly Meeting (LYM) opted to side with the evangelicals. However, from the 1850s onwards young adult Quakers in Britain, especially in the Manchester area, began to develop more liberal views. These eventually led to the **Quaker Renaissance**: 'radical religious thinking alongside a renewed emphasis on activism in pursuit of peace and social justice' (Joanna Dale).

The principal developments were:

- **The Duncan Controversy (1860s).** This arose from a lecture by David Duncan in which he discussed the collection *Essays and Reviews*, authored by Anglican theologians who wrote positively about Darwinism.



- **The publication of *A Reasonable Faith* (1884).** The anonymous authors asserted the priority of inward revelation, with the Bible being ‘simply the greatest outward or instrumental means’ of Divine revelation.
- **The reaction, at 1888 LYM, against the Richmond Declaration,** a doctrinal statement by American evangelical Quakers. British evangelicals and liberals alike considered it to be a creedal statement and as likely to drive people apart as to bring them closer together.
- **The shift of power** from the (older) evangelicals to (younger) liberal Quakers at 1893 LYM; a speech by John Wilhelm Rowntree was particularly influential.
- **Educational initiatives** by liberals culminating in the establishment of Woodbrooke in 1903.

Key thinkers of the Quaker Renaissance included JW Rowntree, Rufus Jones and Edward Grubb. In his course notes Mark remarks ruefully: ‘These were men from wealthy backgrounds who had the resources to devote much of their time to serving within the Religious Society and developing the Liberal project. Rarely do the voices of women and those with little material resources come to the fore in this story.’ Nevertheless, women were active during the period; Joanna Dale mentions several, among them Matilda Sturge, Maria Catharine Albright and Joan Mary Fry.

Renaissance and later liberal thought

The Quaker Renaissance and the growth of liberalism were more than a simple return to early Quakerism and the Inward Light as the ultimate authority. Influences included 19th-century German Protestant thinkers, modern Biblical scholarship, mysticism and scientific thought (especially Darwinism).

In his analysis of the liberal legacy, Mark addressed a number of liberal Quaker concepts:

- **The use of the term ‘Inner Light’ instead of the older ‘Inward Light’.** Liberals considered that the Light no longer belonged to God, who planted it in the human heart; rather, the Light is a natural part of the individual, where the human and the divine meet.
- **Progressivism:** ‘the idea that humanity is naturally and inevitably evolving towards a more morally enlightened, free and prosperous society through the use of reason, and scientific and technological progress. According to progressivism, God’s Truth is gradually revealed to humanity over time. New revelations have a higher authority than older ones.’ This optimistic view of humanity was not shared by early Quakers and, as Mark commented, is becoming challenging for us to maintain today.
- **Supersessionism.** Linked to progressivism, this is the idea that new knowledge has greater relevance and importance than old knowledge. Unfortunately, Mark noted, it can be seen to imply that liberal Quakerism is more ‘advanced’ (or enlightened) than evangelical Quakerism. In fact, evangelical Quakers are in the majority worldwide and do not consider the shift to liberalism to be progressive.
- **Quakerism as a universal mysticism.** Rufus Jones considered mystical experience to be ‘a universal human capacity, rooted in our psychology’ that transcends history, culture and tradition. Jesus is considered the most perfect example of the human and divine working in union.
- **The centrality of experience.** The authority that liberal Quakers accord to personal experience is different from early Friends, for whom ‘the inward revelation of personal experience [was] in a dynamic tension with the outward revelation of the Bible.’ However, in the absence of a Quaker dogma or creed, some have suggested that there may be a risk that speaking from one’s direct experience may ‘fuel individualism. Individualism erodes

community and thus undermines Quaker practice' (Nadine Hoover, quoted by a contributor to the discussion forum).

- **The belief in universal religious experience.** Mark questioned whether there can be a single universal experience when the nature of that experience depends on the religious tradition in which one operates. Furthermore, he added, universalism blurs the distinctiveness of Quakerism.

In the course discussion forum the concept of a universal religious experience developed into a lively – and quite learned – exchange of opinions on whether the Religious Society of Friends can still be thought of as a Christian organisation, given the diversity of influences (Buddhist, Hindu, Pagan, non-theist etc.) on its current membership. Have British Friends, as one person proposed, entered an age of 'Post-Christian' Quakerism? Or, as another contributor suggested, is it the case that 'We, like every generation, must find the Light and Life again for ourselves', and that 'Even then, we must humbly acknowledge that our vision of the truth will, again and again, be amended' (QfP)?

References

Joanna Dales (2020), 'The Quaker Renaissance and Liberal Quakerism in Britain, 1895–1930: Seeking a Real Religion'. *Brill Research Perspectives in Quaker Studies* 3(3): 1–92.

Nadine Hoover (2020), *Walking in the World as a Friend*: Conscience Studio.

Mark Russ (2022), Course notes for 'The Quaker Renaissance.' Unattributed quotations in the text above are taken from these notes.

Abingdon Quaker Matters

Learning Sunday: 9th October

Alan Pearmain will talk about the work of Quaker Life.

Special Appeal: The Abingdon Bridge

From Chris Sewell, on behalf of Richard Smart

The Abingdon Bridge (TAB) is a wellbeing charity which enables young people to have the resilience to help overcome life's challenges. It provides a place where young people aged 13-25 from the Abingdon area can access support, information, advice and guidance which empowers them to raise their aspirations, make well informed life choices and to face the future feeling safe, secure, confident and socially aware of the opportunities available to them.



TAB can help young people in a number of ways: counselling, one-to-one well-being support, a healthy lifestyle programme, group work, and bespoke training and educational workshops.

In terms of one-to-one sessions, last year:

- 355 young people were supported by a team of professional counsellors (2,117 sessions);
- 114 young people attended sessions on healthier lifestyles (753 sessions);
- 134 young people attended sessions as part of the Youth Intervention Programme (899 sessions).

As a result:

- 90% reported a greater sense of their emotional wellbeing and felt less anxious and stressed;
- 85% of clients who were previously engaged in risky behaviours or self-harm showed increased resilience and reported that they participated less in risky behaviour or self-harm;
- 78% had improved their aspirations and confidence.

It costs nearly £250,000 a year to run TAB, money which has to be found entirely from donations, grants and voluntary contributions. You can donate in these ways:

- Online at <https://www.theabingdonbridge.org.uk/> (Note: Donating online will incur a voluntary admin fee that you are invited to pay in addition to your donation and Gift Aid.)
- By cash, after meeting for worship on the second and fourth Sundays of October.
- By cheque payable to The Abingdon Bridge. Send your donation to The Abingdon Bridge, 3 Market Place, Abingdon OX14 3HG.

Thank you.

Would you like to help TAB?

TAB is currently looking for people to join its bank of **volunteers to staff the reception desk** during its opening hours (Monday to Thursday 2–7pm and Friday 2–6 pm). The work mainly involves buzzing clients in and showing them to the waiting room, but it is a vital role that supports the counsellors. You can do as little a slot once a week or fortnightly or monthly. For further information, contact Sandy Kruger: sandy@theabingdonbridge.org.uk.

The Abingdon Bridge is a registered charity, no. 1160080.

Might We Meet Again ... on Zoom?

Rosie Page poses some might-y questions.

It seems a shame, now that we have more or less mastered the art of Zooming, not to use it to keep in touch with those friends who cannot join us in person.

I used to enjoy those times after Meeting for Worship on Sunday mornings when there would be a random four of us in a break-out room, and there was never a shortage of things to talk about. So, I'm thinking:

- Might we arrange a purely social event on Zoom?
- Might we explore a topic together?
- Might we base our Zoom meeting round an activity, as the Children's Meeting used to do?
- Might we specifically invite those who have moved away to join us for something, perhaps towards Christmas?
- Might we hold a Learning Sunday with bring-and-share lunch, and ask others to join us at a certain time?

We enjoy a get-together, but it seems harder and harder to choose a date, a time and a place that all can commit to. While Zooming would still require some commitment, it can more easily be fitted into a shorter slot. It costs nothing in terms of hiring premises, and we do not even have to provide refreshments!

So how about it? Do any of these Might-y questions raise a response in you? If so, please have a word with the clerk or any of the Pastoral and Spiritual Nurture Group – or me (Rosie).

Around the Area and Region

Regional Meeting

Saturday 15th October 10:30am, Reading Meeting House and via Zoom

Please see the poster on page 6.

Quaker and Bahá'í friendship evening

Friday 21st October 7pm for 7:30pm, Oxford Meeting House

Quakers and Bahá'ís are two faith communities trying to bring together prayerful contemplation and social action for a more peaceful and just world. We have much to learn from one another and we are curious to get to know each other a little better. Come to hear Bahá'ís and Quakers talk about what their faith means for them – and to share your own experiences too.

We hope the evening will bring a little spiritual refreshment for all of us. And there'll be cake.

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) and Ukraine

Wednesday 26th October 7.15pm for 7.30pm, Oxford Meeting House and via Zoom

Tim Gee, the General Secretary of FWCC, currently worshipping with Oxford Meeting, will report to Friends in our area on his recent FWCC visit to Friends in European countries bordering Russia.

Web link for Friends wishing to participate online:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89355942467?pwd=MHZEZmF3UWVwVGtgRnFuMDlqdmwrdz09>

Zoom app: Meeting ID: 893 5594 2467 Passcode: oxford

From the Wider Quaker Community...

Meeting for Worship During Just Stop Oil protests in London

Saturday 1st October (possibly also 8th) 11am, Friends House, London

A group of Friends are rallying Quakers to join the Just Stop Oil Coalition protests on Saturday 1st October, aiming to offer a Quaker presence and to hold a Meeting for Worship as part of the demonstrations. The protests are calling for an end to new fossil fuel exploration alongside investment in home insulation and public transport (see <https://juststopoil.org/>).

Peter Griffin, a Friend from Cambridgeshire Area Meeting told *the Friend*: 'Liz Truss' response to the cost of living crisis didn't mention home insulation once. Instead, we see over 100 new licences for oil and gas extraction, a return to fracking and taxpayer subsidised profits. We will let our Quaker silence ring out loud from Westminster to say this must stop'.

The group formed the idea at the recent Living Witness Gathering in Woodbrooke from a feeling that a Quaker presence can offer a powerful and distinctive voice in demonstrations. Peter said: 'As Quakers we can bring a distinctive, calming presence to support and strengthen peaceful protest.'

On 1st October Friends will be meeting in the garden of Friends House from 11am, moving off around noon. From there they will join wider groups and hold a Meeting for Worship on the streets of London. Please bring placards and banners showing we are Quakers who support action on climate change. Suitable posters for making into placards are available free: contact climatejustice@quaker.org.uk

(Continued on page 7.)

Berks Oxon & Bucks Regional Meeting

**Come and meet our new
Local Development Workers**

in person at Reading Meeting House or on Zoom

Saturday 15th October 2022

10.30 for 11.00hrs start



Find out how they can
work with us

What is a Local Development Worker?

Plan how we shall work
together with them

What support do Local Meetings need
to help us to develop?



In the morning we'll focus on ways in which Moya, our Local
Development Worker, can support us.

After lunch and a short business meeting, Julia Dover, the new
Children, Young People and Families Development Worker, shared
by Mid Thames and Oxford & Swindon Area Meetings, will give us
a taste of an All Age activity.

Please bring a contribution to a bring-and-share lunch. Hot drinks and
cake will be provided on arrival and before leaving at 16.00hrs.

Children are welcome all day, or just for the afternoon, but please tell us
ages and numbers by 1st October so that we can ensure good provision

To register please email acgriff9@phonecoop.coop

Please make it clear if you plan to attend in person or on Zoom

(Continued from page 5.) Coaches will be provided from Oxford. For details, and to book, visit <https://billetto.co.uk/e/wawtjso-oxford-coach-tickets-tickets-687055>

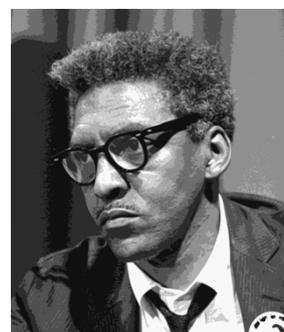
Just Stop Oil is undertaking action throughout October, and Friends hope to repeat this action on Saturday October 8th. Email QJSO@protonmail.com for more information.

Faith in Action Quarterly Gathering: Honouring Bayard Rustin

Tuesday 25th October 7–9pm, via Zoom

Faith in Action Gatherings are rejuvenating spaces for spiritual and community connection, and for creating a more just, equal and peaceful world.

In this first quarterly Faith in Action gathering we are looking to Bayard Rustin, a key leader of the Black civil rights movement during the 1960s. He was also openly gay, and it's for this reason that he remained behind the scenes and is little known today in comparison with peers such as Dr Martin Luther King.



My activism did not spring from being black. Rather, it is rooted fundamentally in my Quaker upbringing and the values instilled in me by the grandparents who reared me... Those values were based on the concept of a single human family and the belief that all members of that family are equal – Bayard Rustin.

For further details, visit <https://www.quaker.org.uk/events/autumn-faith-in-action-gathering>

For Friends who would like to know more about Bayard Rustin, Sally Reynolds has sent us links to two resources:

<https://makinggayhistory.com/podcast/bayard-rustin/>

<http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/884/the-roving-ambassador-bayard-rustins-quaker-cosmopolitanism-and-the-civil-rights-movement>

Faith in Action in and around Abingdon

Abingdon Peace Group

Abingdon Peace Group meets on the third Tuesday of the month in the Northcourt Centre. For information about the October meeting, please email abingdonpeace@gmail.com

Weekly Vigil against the War in Ukraine

Every Monday 8.15–8.45am until hostilities end, Abingdon War Memorial

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

Other Events

Saturday 1st October 12 noon: Rally at USAF Croughton as part of 'Keep Space for Peace' week. Annual Oxon Peace Campaign event (APG is a constituent of OPC). Speakers will be Paul Mobbs (Croughtonwatch), Dave Webb (Global Network) and Tom Unterrainer (CND Chair). For further information, visit <https://cnduk.org/events/>

Saturday 8th October 3–4pm: Abingdon Peace Group jumble sale. Tatham Room, Northcourt Centre. Please deliver items for sale between 1.30 and 3pm.

Abingdon Carbon Cutters

Abingdon Carbon Cutters meet on the third Wednesday of the month. For information about the October meeting, please email carboncutters@gmail.com

Events at the Climate Emergency Centre

Located below the County Hall Museum, the Climate Emergency Centre organises a variety of events aimed at building resilience in the face of the threat to the planet. October's calendar includes The Great Big Green Week, 'Knit & Chat', repair cafés organised by Abingdon Carbon Cutters and a clothes swap. For dates and details, visit <https://oneplanetabingdon.org/events/>

Among the Abingdon Churches

African History Season

From the September newsletter of the Church in Abingdon (CiA)

What does it mean to belong? How do we create a place of welcome that offers acceptance and respect to all? Come and join us as we explore the richness and depth of African history and these questions in a three-day exhibition at The Barn, Christ Church from 13th–15th October. There will be an opportunity to see and reflect on a collection of artworks, discover and celebrate the achievements and contributions of courageous African heritage people, and attend interactive workshops. There will also be a performance of *SOLD*, a play that tells the story of Mary Prince, a woman enslaved in the British Colony of Bermuda, her fight for liberation and her advocacy for freedom. There will also be opportunities to taste African Caribbean food.

The Abingdon Food Bank

From the September newsletter of the Church in Abingdon (CiA)

Abingdon Food Bank needs your support more than ever now, with the increasing cost of living adversely affecting those already struggling to make ends meet. A typical food parcel might contain: cereal, soup, pasta, rice, tinned tomatoes/pasta sauce, lentils, beans and pulses, tinned meat, tinned vegetables, tea/coffee, tinned fruit, biscuits, UHT milk, fruit juice. Also toiletries, nappies and household cleaning items. Food can be taken to either Preston Road Food Bank or Christ Church Food Bank. Some supermarkets also have collection baskets.

From the Governing Body Meeting, 22nd September

Noted by Liz Matthews at the meeting, with apologies for any inaccuracies.

The local group of **Christian Aid** has raised £4,067 this year.

Abingdon Baptist Church has a new Minister: the Rev. Rachel Hughes.

The **Lighthouse Parish** (Redeemed Christian Church of God) is now part of CiA. For information about the church, visit <http://rccglighthouseabingdon.org/>

The **Church Twinning Event** will take place from 27th–31st October with the theme 'Christian Stewardship of the Environment'. It is being organised in conjunction with Abingdon Carbon Cutters.

The **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** 2023 will take place from 18th–25th January. Plans include midday prayers, resource sheets, a united service (date TBC) and an inter-church quiz.

The **World Day of Prayer** 2023 will take place on Friday 3rd March with a service at St Michael's Church.

Among Abingdon Friends

Poem of the Month

From the Poetry Group

The Poetry Group has sent us two poems this month on the theme of 'birth'. They were contributed by Anita and Wendy respectively.

Air for an Heir

'Suddenly, you find that your child's not a malleable object, or an offprint of yourself, but is the culmination of goodness knows how many thousands of years and the genetic make-up of your ancestors' – HRH Prince Charles in The Guardian, 17th June 1983.

This miniature vessel
Contains the choice blood
Of William the Bastard
And Albert the Good.

Charles in the oak tree
And Charles in the dock
Contribute their mite
To this chip off the block.

Hanoverian Georges,
Though all of them odd,
Preserved the succession
Ap Adam ap God.

These eyebrows, that temper...
Oh, everyone knows
Through what wild centuries
Roves back this nose.

Loaded with lineage
From Odin to Guelph,
Good luck, midget Highness,
Look out for yourself!

UA Fanthorpe

To an Adopted Child

Not flesh of my flesh
Not bone of my bone
But still totally my own.
Never forget
For a single minute
You didn't grow under my heart
But in it.

Anon.

Opening Up at the Abbey Centre: October Rota

2 nd	Rosie Page	Alan Pearmain
9 th	Chris Sewell	Judy Goodall
16 th	Adrian Allsop	Richard Smart
23 rd	Liz Matthews	Sally Reynolds
30 th	Auriel Lancashire	Rosie Page

October Dates for Your Diary

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

Date	Time	Event details
Sat 1 st	11am	Meeting for Worship during Just Stop Oil protest Friends House, London.
Sat 1 st	12noon	Peace Rally USAF Croughton
Sat 8 th (TBC)	11am	Meeting for Worship during Just Stop Oil protest Friends House, London
Sat 8 th	3pm	Abingdon Peace Group jumble sale Northcourt Centre
Sun 9 th	After MfW	Learning Sunday
Thurs 13 th –Sat 15 th	All day	Exhibition: African History Season Christ Church, Northcourt Road
Sat 15 th	10:30am	Regional Meeting Reading Meeting House
Fri 21 st	7:30pm	Quaker and Bahá'í friendship evening Oxford Meeting House
Tues 18 th (TBC)	8pm (TBC)	Abingdon Peace Group Northcourt Centre
Wed 19 th (TBC)	7:30pm (TBC)	Abingdon Carbon Cutters (Venue TBC)
Tues 25 th	7pm	Faith in Action Quarterly Gathering: Bayard Austin Zoom
Wed 26 th	7:0pm	Tim Gee speaks about the visit to Ukraine by FWCC Oxford Meeting House and Zoom

Next Month...

The publication date of the newsletter lies between the 28th and the last day of the month. Please send your contributions to the November issue (in words and/or pictures) to the editors by **Wednesday 26th October**.

Abingdon Local Quaker Meeting

<https://abingdonquakers.org/>

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