

Abingdon Quaker Meeting Newsletter

May 2023 (online version)

No. 404

Meetings for Worship

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

Thursday 4th May at 7:30pm in the Garden Room, St Ethelwold's, 30 East St Helen Street.

Acknowledging the impact of the slave trade, colonialism and economic exploitation on the lives of many today; what should, and can, we do?

This was the theme of the Bucks, Berks and Oxon (BORM) Regional Meeting held at Jordans Meeting House on Saturday 25th March.

Minute of Record from BORM Regional Meeting held at Jordans Meeting House on Saturday 25th March 2023

Today 60 of us met in Jordans Meeting House and on Zoom for a blended meeting.

Ann Floyd hosted the day partly on Zoom, and partly in-person, supported by Nina Liebenberg, Douglas Butterfield, Jane Edmonds, Rose Tolley and all present.

The theme for the day was 'Acknowledging the impact of the slave trade, colonialism and economic exploitation on the lives of many today; what should, and can, we do?'

We were asked to consider these issues by British Yearly Meeting (BYM) in 2022.

For our meeting today we were sent background documents of BYM 2022 Minutes 27 and 33, and the QAIG/Quaker Africa Interest Group's response to the YM minutes dated August 2022.

Minute 27 reads 'Learning uncomfortable lessons and taking forward our witness'.

Minute 33 reads 'Faith, Community, Action'.

Ann Floyd welcomed everyone before leading us into period of worship.

She then delivered a very helpful and comprehensive background on the development of current Quaker thinking on addressing inequalities and concluded with asking everyone to go into breakout rooms, online or at the meeting house, to discuss the question – 'what should, and can, we do?'

Our next session introduced two speakers from Kenya to share their perspectives. We heard of their concerns and ideas of opportunities for partnership.

Bainito Wamalwa, FWCC's Africa Section Clerk spoke first, seeing social injustices and the climate crisis as hand in hand saying it cannot be considered just in relation to Kenya (Kenyan friends speak of these things with Rwandan Friends and Ugandan Friends). He spoke of the background of the

injustice of colonialism and the need for forgiveness and asked 'but what is the next step?' 'Injustice' now is climate injustice and Kenya has not the resources to address it. He suggested that there is a need within Africa generally to train groups of people to stand and be counted and to speak on these issues; that Africa needs to have a real say about projects. He suggests if partnership is offered it needs to be a partnership of equals where both care about what they do.

Esther Mombo, who gave the 2016 Swarthmore Lecture and is a professor at St Paul's University, Limuru, spoke of injustice in the context of the past and of the present. She gave examples of economic and political instability caused by decades of resource extraction and of 'mental colonisation', by which she meant the way in which the past impacted on peoples' self-esteem in the present. She sees that injustice and instability continue, and that it is important to hold companies to account. These are global issues. Globally women are still most affected by inequalities e.g. the struggle for clean water, and by abuses of power at all levels. All these elements she says are connected. She stressed the importance of being 'intellectually humble' - listening, asking questions, being open to different ideas, and to equal partnering. She asked why in her own country is there injustice; advising us we need to continually ask 'why?'; question terminology used; support initiatives; consider how we can mitigate the impact on those affected and concluding that there is a need for systemic change. Look to our communities, churches, women's groups; ask questions and listen to hear what is needed.



The afternoon session opened with two more Kenyan speakers sharing their concerns and ideas for partnership.

John Muhanji, Africa Ministries Director, Friends United Meetings, gave an interesting summary of how Kenyan Quakers came into being. It was American Friends who brought Quakerism to East Africa. He described how American Quaker support ceased completely in the 1960s with a massive impact on Kenyan Friends' presence in their society so that the Kenyan government took over the institutions they could no longer maintain. Subsequently British Friends have connected with Kenyan Friends, and he asks 'how do we work in partnership now? He believes that Kenyan Friends have the spirit of faith and do reach peoples' lives; he considers that they show leadership and that their Quaker schools attract many people. He sees this as a possible way forward, and would welcome partnership.

Robert Wafula, Principal of Kaimosi Theological College, questioned whether reparation is necessary, asking could it undo what took place. Rather he suggests support is needed as communities throughout Africa are still suffering. He shared an observation he made in America when he read a book by Walter Rodney called 'How Europe Underdeveloped Africa' in which a key message was 'whilst Africa Developed Europe'. He works on challenges at his college and community in face of the environmental degradation through drought and resulting conflict. He believes that it is best to work through established institutions to address the needs. He spoke

about some of the work he does for the environment and of his concern to preserve Kenyan Quakers' heritage, much of which is undocumented, and is in danger of being lost.

Towards the end of the day people went into breakout rooms for a second time, and then returned to the wider group for a period of Plenary Worship which brought up a range of ideas and suggestions as to what we can do.

Warm thanks were expressed to the speakers, and to Ann Floyd for organising the day.

To find out more about the work of the Quaker Africa Interest Group, visit <http://quakerafraicainterest.org.uk/>

Abingdon Quaker Matters

Learning Sunday on Sunday 14th May: Outreach

After Meeting for Worship and refreshments, we will gather in the main hall to consider the rationale of outreach and whether we, as a Meeting, need to carry out some outreach activities. Judith, Sally, Kate and Chris will share insights from a recent meeting at Oxford Meeting House about approaches to outreach across the Area Meeting. They will ask us to consider why we might need to do outreach, what our key messages might be, how best to do it and what kinds of outreach we might carry out in the near future. They hope that many members and attenders will attend and share their thoughts and ideas, especially those who have joined our Meeting in response to local outreach.

The learning session will close at 1pm and will be followed by a Bring and Share Lunch. Just bring whatever food you would like to share, or bring your own if you are unable to share.

The next Learning Sunday will be on 11th June with Moya, our Local Development Worker. Further details in the June newsletter.

Alternative Forms of Worship

Chris Sewell made a proposal in the newsletter of July 2021 that Abingdon Meeting might occasionally offer a programmed meeting for worship.

The programmed meeting would take place at a different time or day from our normal Meetings for Worship and include a period of silent worship. Chris envisaged not so much a service around a sermon with hymns and formal prayers but a blend of music — perhaps songs and selected readings based on a planned theme — with space at the heart of the meeting for silent worship and vocal contributions. His hope was that this might help enrich our Meeting, as well as offering an opportunity for outreach by drawing in people who are not familiar or at ease with silent worship. He recognised that it would not suit all Friends, especially those who had joined Friends to 'escape' from programmed worship, but he hoped that some Friends as well as enquirers might value it. After all, the majority of Friends across the world worship in a programmed way! The response to the proposal, however, was not strong.

Recently Chris shared his article with the Spiritual and Pastoral Care Group and he was encouraged to try again on the basis that it would be additional to our normal Sunday Meetings for Worship.

Chris now asks whether there are any interested Friends and attenders who might form a small group to come together and discuss its feasibility. If the group can find common ground, it will be invited to produce a proposal that could be put to a future Business Meeting.

If you are interested in joining such a group, please get in touch with Chris (phone number and email address in our list of members).

Special Appeal: ROSY – Respite Nursing for Oxfordshire’s Sick Youngsters

From Chris Sewell

ROSY is a Banbury-based charity that funds additional respite nursing care at home for children with chronic, life-limiting or terminal illnesses across Oxfordshire. Until ROSY was founded in 2002 there was very limited provision of respite nursing in the home for parents with profoundly sick children.



ROSY currently funds 11 respite nurses and health care assistants in Oxfordshire, who do the equivalent of seven full-time jobs. The charity also provides equipment for sick children which can improve their day-to-day lives, and offers a counselling service for families who have a child suffering from an illness requiring respite care.

All ROSY’s respite nurses are selected, trained, allocated and supervised by the NHS, ensuring close collaboration with the NHS and allowing the charity to concentrate on raising the money to pay their salaries. There are no overheads, and most who work for ROSY do so voluntarily. This means that every penny raised goes towards paying for nursing care, equipment for the children, creating opportunities to bring their families together and making life easier for the ROSY families.

It costs £250,000 each year to provide ROSY’s services. You can make a donation in these ways:

- **In cash** at Meeting for Worship on the first and third Sundays of the month
- **By a cheque** payable to ROSY. Send it to The Treasurer, ROSY, c/o 16 The Beeches, Deddington, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX15 0TY.
- **Online** at <https://www.rosy.org.uk/donate/>

If you are donating by cheque or online, you can Gift Aid your donation at <https://www.rosy.org.uk/gift-aid/>

For further information about ROSY, visit <https://www.rosy.org.uk/> or call 07774 273250.

Annual Appeal: Building Hope for a Peaceful World

Our Treasurer, Liz Matthews, writes:

‘Building Hope for a Peaceful World’ is the strapline for this year’s appeal for contributions to Britain Yearly Meeting and to our local meetings. Caroline Nursey, Clerk of BYM Trustees, and Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, write:

As we see so many afflicted by war, climate breakdown and spiralling living costs, we know how much the world needs Quaker values and witness. ... We believe that our thriving and diverse Quaker communities, locally and through our centrally managed work, can help the world in these troubled times.

The generosity of Abingdon Friends in 2022 has enabled us to make donations to local charities and other non-profit groups working with people who are experiencing difficulties, in addition to

our monthly special appeals. We have also been able to maintain the level of our annual collective contribution to BYM.

Fortunately, the running costs of our Meeting are low in comparison with Meetings that have their own premises to maintain. Our biggest outgoing is, unsurprisingly, rent for the use of the Abingdon Community Support Centre, to which we returned in the summer of 2022. This has given us improved facilities for our re-growing Children's Meeting and the valuable intergenerational exchanges made possible thereby.

We are deeply grateful for every contribution, and in making our annual appeal to Abingdon Friends for 2023 we are ever mindful that some have more capacity to give than others. Our appeal letter, which will be sent during May, will explain the different options for contributing. However, our overarching message is that Friends should not feel under pressure to contribute financially to the running of our Meeting. After all, there are also other ways to build hope for a peaceful world!

Thank you.

Reading Groups Welcome New Members

Our two reading groups are reading the same text at present: *Quaker Shaped Christianity* by Mark Russ. New members are always welcome; if you would like to join, please contact

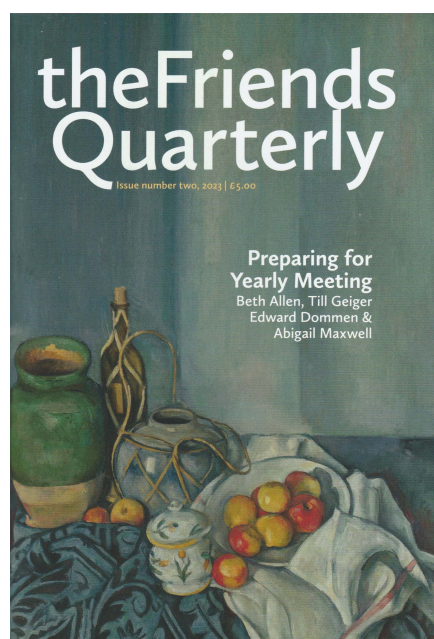
- **Sally Reynolds** for the Sunday evening group meeting at her house; or
- **Kate Sewell** for the Friday morning group meeting either at Wendy's house or online.

Friends Quarterly, May 2023 Issue

The latest issue of *Friends Quarterly* is now available. As a Meeting, we have a subscription to the journal; the copy is sent in the first instance to Rosie Page and is then available to anyone.

Although the four articles have been intended to help Friends prepare for Yearly Meeting, their interest and relevance are far from transient. 'Beth Allen shares insights on discernment, Till Geiger writes about the challenges of peace in Europe, and Edward Dommen proposes ideas on social justice in a biblical vein. Finally, Abigail Maxwell focuses on the individual, personal journey that enables us to work in the world and speak our truths' (from the editors' 'Frontpiece').

Each issue of *Friends Quarterly* concludes with a set of discussion questions based on the articles. The editors hope that these might stimulate individual reflection and discussion for groups wishing to use the journal as a learning resource. Is this something that Abingdon Meeting might consider?



A Thank-You From CyclAbility/Wheels for All

We have received the following letter of thanks in relation to the special appeal in March:

To all at Abingdon Quakers,

On behalf of CyclAbility (Wheels for All Oxford), please may I express our enormous gratitude for your recent donation. We very much appreciate your support for the service we provide. The donations we receive enable us to continue helping more people have fun cycling.

Following discussion with Liz, we have used your donation to purchase a banner that we can display at our sessions (and elsewhere). We've wanted a banner for some time to use at our events and as a result of your donation we can now buy one to help promote our new name.



We are also hoping to be able to buy a variety of bells so our participants can have fun making lots of noise as they enjoy cycling around the track!

We hope that you will be able to visit us at some stage so you can see first hand how much our participants enjoy the sessions - and you would be welcome to try out some of our cycles.

Thank you again for your generous donation.

Yours sincerely,

Steve & Jennifer

(on behalf of the CyclAbility/Wheels for All Oxford team)

Around the Area and Region

Area Meeting and Spiritual Nurture Session

Saturday 13th May 10:30am, Charlbury Meeting House

Information about the Spiritual Nurture session will follow in due course.

Friday with Friends: Seeking to Fix Britain's System of Government

Friday 5th May 7pm for 7:30-9pm, Oxford Meeting House

Our friend Stuart White (Associate Professor of Politics and International Relations at Oxford University) and Nicholas Drake (Fellow in Politics at Jesus College) will lead a session with us in the Garden Room entitled 'How can we seek to fix Britain's system of Government?'

Oxford Friends hope that a goodly number of people will be able to attend what promises to be a most interesting evening.

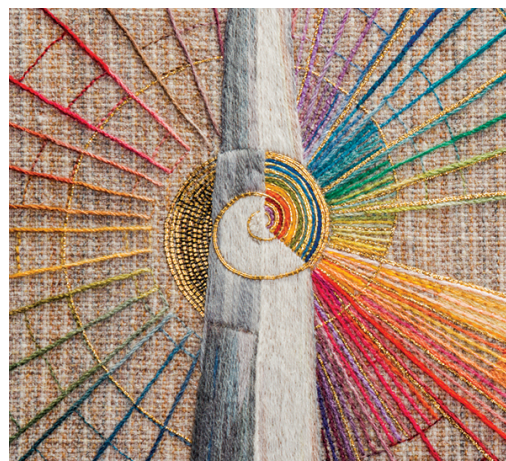
Tea and coffee will be served from 7-7:30pm.

‘The Feeling of Light’: An Outreach Event at Sibford School

Thursday 25th May 7pm, via Zoom, for
Thursday 15th June 1:45 for 2pm, Sibford School

OSAM Friends are welcome to attend an afternoon of shared creating with Year 6 pupils at Sibford School on Thursday 15th June. Inspired by the Kendal panels, Friends and children will create panels together that evoke what it feels like to shine one’s inner light.

Julia Dover, Youth Children and Families Development Worker (Thames Valley), will be offering an information session on Zoom for Friends who wish to take part in this event on Thursday 25th May. *Note that you must have a current DBS.*



Please contact Julia with queries and confirmation of your attendance. She will then send a Zoom link for the preparatory information session: JuliaD@quaker.org.uk or 07529 223379.

From the Wider Quaker Community

The Horrible Wonderful Truth About Climate: The Salter Lecture 2023

‘Right here is a life’s purpose waiting for anyone and everyone who needs one...’

Organised by the Quaker Socialist Society, the annual Salter Lecture forms part of the programme for Yearly Meeting. This year’s lecture was given on Friday 21st April by Rupert Read, Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of East Anglia, author, journalist, and climate and environmental campaigner. He is also currently co-director of the Climate Majority Project (<https://moderateflank.org/>).

You can watch a recording of Rupert’s lecture on YouTube; in Google (or similar) search for “salter lecture 2023”.



The Big One: What's Next?

Following on from the weekend of climate-related events in April, Quakers in Britain are organising three discussion-based online workshops in May. They explore different ways to take climate action. All are online and run from 6:30—8pm:

- Tuesday 9th May: Nurturing Nature
- Thursday 18th May: Building Community Power
- Monday 22nd May: Pressuring Powerful Institutions

To book, visit <https://www.quaker.org.uk/events>

Faith in Action in and around Abingdon

Abingdon Peace Group

‘Peace in Northern Ireland – what progress since the Good Friday agreement?’

Tuesday 16th May 8pm, Zoom

Speaker Gerry McFlynn, former Secretary of Pax Christi in Ireland, will explain the Good Friday agreement and talk us through what has happened since then, and what the prospects are for peace now. It promises to be a fascinating evening!

Zoom link:

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

Meeting ID: 913 1513 4101

Passcode: 015836

Global Days of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS)

GDAMS is a campaign of the Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCOMS) and this year runs from 13th April until 9th May. On Saturday 29th April we will have a stall in the precinct in Abingdon to tell the public just how much money is spent.



The meeting on GCOMS on Tuesday 18th April was well-attended, and was packed with ideas for changing our priorities for public spending to something more positive. If you missed it you can watch the recording on the Peace Group YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5sQoWE00pcZe8EZEkdYzXg>

You can also find many other recorded meetings on the group's YouTube channel.

To find out more about GCOMS, visit <https://demilitarize.org.uk/>

Abingdon Carbon Cutters

Carbon Cutters meet on the third Wednesday of the month. Details of the January meeting will follow in due course. Visit <https://abingdoncarboncutters.org.uk/> or email carbon.cutters@gmail.com

Among Abingdon Friends

Poem of the Month

From the Poetry Group

For our April meeting we were set the challenge to find poems on the theme of 'difference', which as usual we interpreted freely. Differences between place, between past and present, between perception and reality, between self and others, between perspectives or opinions, between the options available to one: our choices ranged far and wide. Of the 30 poems shared, we have selected this extract from 'Little Gidding', the fourth of T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, which has a meditative flavour:

III

There are three conditions which often look alike
Yet differ completely, flourish in the same hedgerow:
Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment
From self and from things and from persons; and, growing between them, indifference
Which resembles the others as death resembles life,
Being between two lives—unflowering, between
The live and the dead nettle.

T.S. Eliot

Opening Up at the Abbey Centre: May Rota

7th	Alan Pearmain	Liz Matthews
14th	Auriel Lancashire	Judy Goodall
21st	Adrian Allsop	Chris Sewell
28th	Richard Smart	Sally Reynolds

Next Month...

Please send your contributions for the June issue (in words and/or pictures) to the editors by **Tuesday 23rd May**.

Abingdon Local Quaker Meeting

<https://abingdonquakers.org/>

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