

Abingdon Quaker Meeting Newsletter

November 2023 (online version)

No. 410

Meetings for Worship

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

Thursday 2nd November 7:30pm in the Garden Room, St Ethelwold's, 30 East St Helen Street.

Woodbrooke offers online meetings for worship on Zoom at various times during week. For a timetable and the link to the Zoom room, visit <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/worship/>

Responses from Abingdon Quakers to the Crisis in the Middle East

Quakers in Britain are shocked and deeply saddened by the major escalation of violence in Israel and Palestine.

Quakers in Britain Statement on Israel/Palestine, 11th October 2023.

Iain Strachan penned this personal response on 10th October:

Solidarity

Standing together, shoulder to shoulder
Old and young, invariant to age
Living face to face, together with grace
Intolerant of nothing — excepting this foolishness.
Diverse we may be, but blended as a band,
A congregation of poets, swapping swords for words
Resurrecting the common sacredness of our kind
In everyone finding, the divine residing
Tear away the masks of hatred, and we all unite
Your beliefs and mine still point to the same light.

© Iain Strachan

Chris and Kate Sewell sent this message to Friends on 20th October:

There can be no winners or losers, for all are losers when violence is allowed to let rip. Dare we hope that some pause will save thousands of precious lives and that some time for reflection will kindle the flame of peace, truth and reconciliation which one day will bring light and hope to the darkest corners? It would be just one first step, but let's hope and pray that gradually, step by step, it will create the space for peace-making to take root.

Our daughter, Laura, has sent us this quote:

Peacemaking doesn't mean passivity.
It is the act of interrupting injustice without mirroring injustice,
The act of disarming evil without destroying the evil-doer,
The act of finding a third way that is neither fight nor flight

But the careful, arduous pursuit of reconciliation and justice.
It is about a revolution of love that is big enough to set both the oppressed and the oppressors free.

Shane Claiborne, 'Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals'

We have to hope while also taking whatever action we can.

Special Appeal for November: Medical Aid to Palestinians

From Chris Sewell:

Following a consultation with members of the meeting, the charity chosen for the November collection is Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP).

MAP works for the health and dignity of Palestinians living under occupation and as refugees. It provides immediate medical aid to those in great need, while also developing local capacity and skills to ensure the long-term development of the Palestinian healthcare system.



MAP's vision is a future where all Palestinians can access an effective, sustainable and locally-led system of healthcare, and the full realisation of their rights to health and dignity.

Through its programmes in the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and Lebanon, MAP works with trusted and experienced local partners to achieve this vision. Its programmes, designed and delivered by Palestinians, provide access to essential health services and build local knowledge and skills to address Palestinian health problems. In times of humanitarian emergency, MAP is ready to respond rapidly with aid and assistance.

MAP is also committed to bearing witness to the injustices caused by occupation, displacement and conflict. It speaks out in the UK and internationally, and ensure Palestinian voices are heard at the highest levels, to press for the political and social barriers to Palestinian health and dignity to be addressed.

MAP's response to the current emergency since 7th October is described on its website: 'MAP's permanent team in Gaza were the first to respond to the current emergency by releasing more than US\$570,000 worth of pre-positioned stocks of drugs, medical disposables, and other humanitarian supplies held in our warehouses to hospitals and shelters. ... We are working with UN and NGO partners to advocate for immediate, unimpeded, and safe access for humanitarian supplies and personnel into Gaza.' (<https://www.map.org.uk/landing-pages/gaza-emergency-situation-2023>)

You can donate in these ways:

- **Cash** when the appeal is made after Meeting for Worship on 5th and 19th November. 'Generic' Gift Aid forms should be available if you are a UK taxpayer.
- **Online** at <https://www.map.org.uk/donate/donation-details/484> This is the **dedicated donation page** for the Gaza emergency and includes the option to add Gift Aid.
- **Cheque** payable to Medical Aid for Palestinians. Send it to Medical Aid for Palestinians, 33a Islington Park Street, London, N1 1QB.

MAP is a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered Number 3038352 England. Charity Registration No. 1045315.

Responses from the Wider Quaker Community

You can keep up to date with responses at both national and international level on the **Quakers in Britain website** at <https://quaker.org.uk/> The Home page and News page currently include links to the joint call for ceasefire by Quaker organisations in Britain, the USA, Canada and at the UN; the Five Solidarity Actions suggested by the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI); and the statement by Christian organisations in the UK, convened by Christian Aid.

On 24th October **Ian Cave** of Charlbury Meeting gave a very powerful talk on Zoom about his recent experience as an Ecumenical Accompanier in Hebron on the West Bank, together with his fellow EA Sherin Shabet. He will give the talk in person at Charlbury Meeting House on Monday 13th November at 7:30pm. An article based on the Zoom talk is planned for our December issue.

Abingdon Quaker Matters



The Abingdon Meeting banner, on display for the first time in several years flanked by Wendy, Richard, Roger Baker and Martin.

Business Meeting: Sunday 5th November

Our next Meeting for Business will take place after Meeting for Worship on Sunday 5th. Please send any items for the agenda to Judy Goodall by Friday 3rd: abingdonquakers@gmail.com

The agenda will include sharing the findings of the Learning Sunday held on 8th October on the topic of outreach: see Chris Sewell's article on page 4. Everyone is welcome.

Learning Sunday: 19th November: Sharing Our Spiritual Journeys

Our next Learning Sunday will take place after Meeting for Worship on 19th November. Wendy Regaard and Robert Stocks have kindly agreed to talk about their spiritual journeys; this will be followed by a period of sharing and a bring-and-share lunch. Further information nearer the date.

Contributing to Abingdon Meeting: A Request from the Treasurer

A number of Friends send a single contribution to the Meeting's funds towards the end of the year. If you are doing so by cheque (bank or CAF), **please send your cheque by post** to Liz Matthews as she is unable to come to Meeting for the next few weeks. Make the cheque payable to Abingdon Quaker Meeting; Liz's address is in the list of members.

Reaching Out to the Community: Report from Learning Sunday, 8th October

From Chris Sewell, on behalf of the ad hoc Outreach Group:

This lively Learning Sunday addressed the topic of outreach and what activities we would like to plan for the next year or so. We began by reflecting on the different ways in which we can practise outreach, sometimes unawares:

Quaker outreach can come in many forms, in acts both large and small: speaking to an audience of thousands, or having a conversation at a bus stop; wearing a pin badge; volunteering at festivals and youth events; sharing leaflets at the village fair; shaking a new visitor's hand at meeting; sending postcards to other organisations and churches; or listening intently to someone. It's useful to remind ourselves that our outreach efforts can be shaped by the time and energy we have to offer, and that simply living out our witness in the world each day might trigger an invitation for someone else to try our way of worship (*The Friends Quarterly*, 2023(3), p. 3).

We then focused on a range of options already suggested by Abingdon Friends. After discussion everyone present was invited to say what they would be happy to take part in and/or help organise. The options receiving most support were:

- A talk and discussion about Quakerism or seeking a spiritual path, possibly using story-telling and drama.
- Local Quaker walks, talking and sharing while walking.
- Making a flowerbed around our sign at the Abbey Centre.
- A talk about Quaker work at national level on major Quaker concerns.
- An occasional programmed meeting blending silent worship with readings, music and the arts. This would be open to all and held at a different time or day from our normal Meeting for Worship.
- Hosting a travelling Quaker theatre performance on a Quaker theme.
- Organising an event as part of national celebrations marking George Fox's 400th birthday in 2024.

As can be seen, most of these would be 'inreach' as well as outreach, contributing to our own spiritual journeys as well as, hopefully, drawing in enquirers. There were also offers to help us with our publicity.

These suggestions will now be shared with Business Meeting on Sunday 5th November with the aim of deciding which events we will organise this coming year and possibly in years to come.

Friends present at the Learning Sunday thanked the *ad hoc* Outreach Group for organising the event: Jenny Carr, Judy Goodall, Sally Reynolds, Kate and Chris Sewell. New members are always welcome to join us.

Around the Area and Region

Area Meeting

Saturday 11th November 10:30—3:15, Swindon Meeting House

The Spiritual Nurture session will be led by Janet Scott. Janet gave the Swarthmore Lecture in 1980, entitled *What Canst Thou Say?*. A reading group met earlier this year, convened by John Mason of Oxford Meeting, and prepared a series of questions to guide Janet's reflections on her writing 43 years ago. It may be helpful to read the book of the lecture before the Meeting (copy available in our library).

Refreshments will be provided, but please bring your own lunch.

Friendship and Enjoyment: Regional Meeting, 14th October

Regional Meeting produced a detailed and vivid minute of the day, which we have included at the end of this issue. Here are reflections on the day from two Abingdon Friends:

From Sally Reynolds:

I was only able to stay for the first hour of the sessions proper (having enjoyed a delicious coffee and croissant and some really good networking at breakfast time!) – but it was enough to impress me with the enthusiasm and confidence of the Young Adult Friends (YAFs) who stepped out of their comfort zones to speak in front of a roomful of older Friends with disarming honesty about what drew them to Quakers, and what kept them coming back for more. For many of them, Oxford Meeting provided a 'home from home' for them in their first few terms as undergraduates – older people to interact with who were not stressed about exams and essay deadlines. Some had made lasting inter-generational friendships and had had practical help at crisis points in their lives. For some their entry point was environmental activism, for others it was the open space to explore their own spirituality in a religious community that was open and questioning. And all stressed the importance of shared food, not just the weekly baked potato and beans, but 'so much cake!'



Pumpkins decorated in one of the children's activities during the day.

From Rosie Page:

Visiting the picture-postcard buildings and gardens of Oxford Friends Meeting House for the first time for a long while, and on a lovely day,, I was struck by the contrast with our more prosaic, functional facilities, but then I thought I am glad that we are able to make our premises a welcoming place of worship and community. 'Building Community' was the theme of the day, and from many contributions we heard that knowing one another, through groups and shared activities is the key to this. Whether it is Young Friends eating baked potatoes each week, or our own reading groups and shared lunches, we need to meet and talk and laugh together.

From the Wider Quaker Community

Quake! Are You a Subscriber?

Quake! is a weekly email round-up from Britain Yearly Meeting, sent on Thursdays. It's the main way for BYM staff to communicate with Friends, for Woodbrooke to tell people about courses, and for sharing news from around the country relating both to Quaker spiritual life and witness in the world.



Quake! takes only a few minutes to read, as each item simply comprises a brief summary of the topic covered, with a link to further information, full article etc. if the topic piques your interest. To take a recent example, the edition of 19th October covered the current events in the Middle East (including a call for a ceasefire by major Quaker bodies and resources for Meetings); a Friend's reflection on participation in the year-long programme 'Exploring Faith and Climate Justice'; and notices of two forthcoming Woodbrooke sessions on the structure of BYM and clerking.

A summary of the topics in each week's *Quake!* is normally read out in the Clerk's notices, but we encourage you to subscribe the mailing list and receive the email yourself:

<https://quaker.org.uk/resources/newsletters/quake>

Quaker Survey

The Quaker survey is open until Tuesday 14th November:

<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/research/our-current-projects/british-quaker-survey/>

Quaker Life Representative Council

The Quaker Life Representative Council met at Milton Hill from 13th—15th October. On the Saturday Guy Matthews of Abingdon Meeting led 17 of the delegates on a short ramble to Steventon, and on the Sunday some Abingdon Friends joined the Council in their Meeting for Worship. Afterwards, Judith Baker wrote: 'I think they may be back, the venue was a terrific hit!'

Our Shared Humanity: A Meeting With Letlapa Mphahlele

Monday 6th November 7 for 7:30pm, The Bowler's Arms, Enbourne Street, Newbury, RG14 6TW.

Friday 10th November 7 for 7:30pm, Garden Room, Oxford Meeting House.

Letlapa Mphahlele is a former South African liberation army commander during the apartheid era, who ordered retaliatory massacres of white civilians. However, a radical transformation in his perspective has led him to see the whole of humanity as 'my people'.

Letlapa Mphahlele featured in a documentary film, *Beyond Forgiving*, together with Ginn Fourie, the mother of a young woman killed one of the massacres he had ordered. You can read their uplifting


story on the website of The Forgiveness Project at <https://www.theforgivenessproject.com/stories-library/ginn-fourie-letlapa-mphahlele/>

In a trailer for *Beyond Forgiving*, Ginn Fourie speaks the following words, which have a tragic resonance in the current situation: 'If there was more sharing and understanding of the deep needs of people who have been marginalised the world could be a different place' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inghPuBNSEE>)



Worship, Ministry and Afterword: A Woodbrooke Workshop at Reading Meeting House

Matthew Callow of Reading Meeting invites Abingdon Friends to join them for this workshop about *Worship, Ministry and Afterwords* with Rhiannon Grant of Woodbrooke.



Saturday 11 November
11:30-15:45

Worship, Ministry and Afterword

With Rhiannon Grant

Reading Quaker Meeting House
2 Church Street, Reading, RG1 2SB

How do we encourage quality and depth in Quaker worship and spoken ministry? Everyone in a Quaker community, and especially those with eldership responsibility, should consider this issue sometimes. Some things are simple, like encouraging people to arrive with hearts and minds prepared. Other things involve bigger changes. In her research on 'afterwords' in 2016, Rhiannon found that: *"lots of Quaker meetings had experimented with afterwords, joys and concerns, and other ways of making their worship time more fruitful and inclusive"*. In this workshop, we'll look at the process of attending meeting for worship: arriving, centring down, prayer, ministry, afterwords or other options, notices, social time, and leaving.

To register, please contact
Matthew Callow, Reading Local Meeting
matthewcallowe@gmail.com

Costs have been covered by local meetings so this event is free to attend. Registration is open to members and attenders within Mid Thames Area Meeting, on a 'first come' basis.

Faith in Action in and around Abingdon

‘Israel/Palestine – Working Across the Divide’: Abingdon Peace Group

Tuesday 21st November 8pm, online

This will be a DIY meeting, possibly starting with a brief video reminding us all of the history of the conflict, then pooling our collective knowledge or research about organisations which have been working for years to heal the divide. You are invited to bring what you have found out and join the discussion.

Zoom link:

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

Meeting ID: 913 1513 4101 Passcode: 015836

Note: The Peace Group currently plans to produce a newsletter and hold a meeting every two months, in odd-numbered months.

‘Solar Panels – Are they the Answer?’: Abingdon Carbon Cutters

Wednesday 15th November 7:30pm, online

The meeting will take the form of a Zoom talk and Q&A with Phil Coker. Phil is a Carbon Cutter and lecturer on Renewable Energy Systems and Urban Sustainability at the University of Reading. Contact Sally Reynolds for the Zoom link.

Repair cafés in November

Sewing Repair Café: Saturday 4th 10:30 – 1pm in Unit 24, Bury St precinct (an empty shop currently leased by Friends of Abingdon).

Repair Café & Sharpening: Thursday 16th 5–7pm at Oxford Wood Recycling, Unit 4 Suffolk Way, Abingdon OX14 5JX.

More details at <https://abingdoncarboncutters.org.uk/> or on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/AbingdonCarbonCutters/>

‘Which Side Are You On?’: A Concert by SeaGreen Singers

Friday 24th November 7:30pm, Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon

SeaGreen singers are Oxford’s political choir, singing songs about peace and the environment at demonstrations and public events; it boasts a fair number of Quakers. This is an evening of songs, words and images of famous and less well-known Oxfordshire protests, from the Cutteslowe Wall saga to the Campsfield campaign, and from the Otmoor riots to Oxford University’s links to slavery. Join us on a journey of discovery and inspiration!

Note: The Unicorn Theatre is located in the mediaeval Old Abbey buildings. Unfortunately, it is totally unsuitable for people with mobility issues (outside metal steps, two flights of stairs, several changes of level and a long walk to the toilets, which have no disabled access). If you can manage a few steps, please contact Sally as you may be able to park outside the venue and enter via the fire door (two steep steps down to the seating area).

SeaGreen Singers

present

Which side are you on?



Tickets are free, but there will be a collection for charity. To reserve your ticket, visit Eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/which-side-are-you-on-an-evening-of-songs-about-protest-in-oxfordshire-tickets-715713707967>

‘The Role of the Arts & Culture in Promoting Peace and Opposing War’: MAW Annual Remembrance Lecture

Saturday 11th November 2pm, Oasis Hub, Waterloo.

The Movement for the Abolition of War (MAW)’s Annual Remembrance Lecturer this year is a Quaker playwright and actor, Michael Mears. Michael’s play *The Mistake*, about events in Hiroshima in August 1945, has been touring England, Scotland and Wales to great acclaim. Our Friend Madeleine Trivasse has designed a beautiful poster:



The poster features a QR code in the top left, the MAW logo (Movement FOR THE Abolition of War) in the top center, and a stylized dove with a purple and green body and wings on the right. The main title is in large, bold, purple letters. Below it, the speaker's name and the date and time are listed. A list of three discussion questions is on the left, and a photo of Michael Mears is on the right. At the bottom, there are social media icons and links for the MAW website and social media pages.

 **Movement FOR THE Abolition of War** 

MAW Remembrance Lecture 2023:

THE ROLE OF THE ARTS & CULTURE IN PROMOTING PEACE & OPPOSING WAR

by actor, playwright & peace activist
Michael Mears

Saturday 11 November 2023 at 2PM

Oasis Hub, 1 Kennington Road, London SE1 7QP. Free of charge, all are welcome.

- Can a stage play, film or painting have a real, lasting impact on the serious issues of our time?
- Do the arts have a vital role to play in engaging people with & teaching them about those issues?
- Is there a danger that artistic works tackling issues around war & peace only ever 'preach to the converted'?

Michael Mears has had a rich and varied career in theatre, TV and film, and is known also for his socially impactful plays for theatre and radio:

- *This Evil Thing* (2016), a solo play about people who resisted conscription, and
- *The Mistake*, about Hiroshima and the first atomic bomb and which ran at the 2022 Edinburgh Fringe, played in London earlier this year and will tour UK-wide this autumn; see michaelmears.org for details.



  <https://abolishwar.net/>   @abolishwarUK  @abolishwar

Among the Abingdon Churches



Abingdon Church Twinning

French Bourree Dance Workshop then Bourree & Barn Dancing

Saturday November 18th 2023

The Conduit Centre (Trinity Church), OX14 1DB

Bourree workshop 5:30-7:00pm

Dancing (Bourree and Barn) 7:30-10:00pm

Individual £10, children free

Tickets include a light buffet, after workshop and mid-dance
Wine, beer & soft drinks are available, monetary donations welcome

Among Abingdon Friends

Volunteering: Improving Our Own Wellbeing Through Helping Others

In the latest issue of *The Indie Oxford Magazine* (Autumn/Winter 2023), Lynne Davies-Craigne describes the benefits that volunteering can bring to the volunteer, as well as those they seek to help.

Lynne recently left her post in the local charity The Archway Foundation to become a full-time coach, a role which 'helps people reconnect with themselves and learn how to take care of their own wellbeing'. She noticed how coaching and the charity sector overlap. Volunteering provides opportunities both to learn new skills — thereby increasing one's confidence — and to meet like-minded people and, even, make new friends. As Lynne writes, 'Humans are wired for connection. We need to belong and be part of a community, so giving to other people, and connecting with others, meets that need.'



However, it's important to keep an eye on your wellbeing while volunteering: 'Make sure you don't take on too much of a commitment or responsibility that isn't realistic; otherwise, it won't be sustainable.'

If you, or anyone you know, is interested in volunteering, Lynne recommends Oxfordshire Community Volunteering and Action as a good place to start: <https://ocva.org.uk/>

Poem of the Month: Pets

From the Poetry Group

Dogs, cats, rabbits and guinea pigs: yes. But a falcon and a rattlesnake as pets? That's the Poetry Group for you: ever imaginative in the way individual members interpret the month's theme. The poems below were both contributed by Sally Reynolds.

The Falcon to the Falconer

Unleash me from your hand
And I will lance the light for you;
I'll cut a sword-blade on the wind
And pennant it with flight for you
To signal I am yours
If you will free me to be true to you.

Unleash me from your hand
And I will mock the sky for you;
I'll pull the anger from the air
And make the breezes sigh for you
To show that I am yours
If you will free me to be true to you.

Unleash me from your hand
And I will jewel it bright for you;
I'll hunt the treasures of the wind
And pluck them into sight for you
To show that I am yours
If you will free me to be true to you.

O, cast me from your hand
That I may show my love for you,
And throw me to the wind
That I may know my need for you;
All darkness on your hand
I'm hooded, pinned and held by you;
O, give me back my wings
That they may bring me back to you.

Jonathan Steffen

Rattlesnake

My rattlesnake has warm skin,
He sleeps by my feet and rustles
Through my dreams, his diamond
Back glistening all night.

Better than a fat alarm clock
Is his subtle rattle at seven,
His cool glide towards breakfast,
His little fangs clinking the tea cup.

Jo Shapcott

News of Friends

A new venture lies ahead for **Lynne and George Davies-Crane**. George has been offered a position at Lancaster Girls Grammar school, starting in January. Lynne writes: 'It's all been a bit hectic for us as we're going off on our long delayed honeymoon to Sri Lanka ... and then when we're back we'll have to get house-hunting up there. My mum is in the area too so I'm sure we'll have to camp out with her for a bit too!'

Liz Matthews thanks Abingdon Friends for their warm messages, cards and good wishes following her recent mishap. She hopes to come back to Meeting in a few weeks' time.

Opening Up at the Abbey Centre: November Rota

5th	Rosie	Adrian
12th	Richard	Auriel
19th	Jenny	Alan
26th	Sally	Chris

Next Month...

Please send your contributions for the December issue (in words and/or pictures) to the editors by **Sunday 26th November**. Thank you.



The giant herbaceous border at Aston Pottery, still colourful in early October.

Regional Meeting for ‘Moya’s patch’ – the Area Meetings of Chilterns, Mid-Thames, Banbury & Evesham and Oxford & Swindon. Currently known as BORM – Berks and Oxon Regional Meeting.

Today we have been beautifully hosted by Oxford Friends, and we thank them most warmly.

Minute

Berks and Oxon Regional Meeting was held in Oxford Friends Meeting House on 14th October 2023. Over 70 people were present, including three online. Children had their own programme which they shared and reported on to the rest of us. We hope that fuller notes from the day will be available in due course, including the questions from the workshops.

Before we began our day of joyful sharing, under the title ‘Friendship and Enjoyment – how do you sustain a community?’, we took a moment to think about people in Gaza and Israel. Our attention was drawn to the BYM website’s five ideas for actions that we can all take at this distressing time. <https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/5-solidarity-actions-you-can-take-for-palestine-and-israel-oct-2023>

Friendship and Enjoyment – how do you sustain a community?

A panel of Young Adult Friends shared their spiritual journeys in a deeply personal way; it was a privilege for the rest of us to hear of their experiences. Why do they come to the Oxford Young Adult Friends group? They each talked about how they came to Quakers. Many had started to come when they were students, finding a place where they could be quiet for a while in the middle of a busy life. Their reasons were both spiritual and practical. The morning mid-week meetings offered an opportunity to meet with people from an age group other than students. They talked of being attracted by the Quaker posters outside, by being able to define what their faith is in their own language and finding a group which ‘show up with abundance’, both material and spiritual. But overall it was about friendship.

Many have joined the Young Adult Friends (YAF) group not because of traditional outreach, but because they were brought by a friend. When the group re-started after the pandemic, they deliberately chose to take the Quaker basics really seriously. There were then 5 of them; there are now 30. We heard of the importance of openness and that, like learning a language, the spiritual or religious life is only meaningful when shared. Their Quakerism gave them a shared spiritual language with which they could explore and share their differing beliefs. A question about leadership revealed that as the group has become larger, they saw the need for greater formality.

In response to questions, we heard that there is a distinction between membership and conviction, and each supports the other. The panel were asked why they thought that people who had been active in Young Adult Friends often did not stay in Quakerism through their 30’s and 40’s. One member said that her parents had found that their Meeting had made demands of them, such as committee memberships. They were seen as the ‘next up and coming person’ so they requested, in return, that there be a good children’s programme.

The panel were asked if, as a group, they talk about issues such as climate change, reparations or economic justice. They said that these were not the Number One topic of conversation as these can be polarizing. Each person is called to different issues.

Our second session was called ‘Reporting Back’. The Young Friends wanted to share two recent enriching experiences, made possible through the generosity of Oxford Meeting.

One Young Friend had been to Geneva Summer School, learning about the work of the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO). Her frank report included telling us of some tensions within the group of young people, from 12 different countries. She discovered that ‘disagreeing well’ is not necessarily something that young people are good at. And this at the same time as they were hearing from QUNO staff about their work bringing diplomats, with huge differences of position, together to listen to each other in what Rufus Jones called ‘small circles and quiet processes’. These are a contrast to the huge circle of a UN meeting. Nevertheless, she had found it a wonderful experience and had been impressed by the longevity of some of the work. She had also been struck by how the faith of the QUNO staff sustained them in their long-term work. One said she ‘needed more than herself to rely on’.

Young Adult Friends were also very grateful to Oxford Meeting for supporting them in a journey to climb Pendle Hill and to visit (and sleep on the floor of) Clitheroe Meeting. They had Meeting for Worship at the top. They didn’t find the well, but did find great hospitality from Clitheroe Meeting. They noted that a small Meeting doesn’t ‘over welcome’.

Our third session was a workshop on questioning Quaker Community. In ten groups, we considered a series of challenging questions, rotating around the groups to maximise the number of different people talked to. There was lots of reflection in the workshop feedback on community across diversity.

Young Adult Friends then presented a skit, ‘Religious Society of Friends goes to the doctor’, in which the symptoms of the Religious Society of Friends (‘but I call myself Quakers’) are addressed by Dr God. Dr. God’s recommendations included to be quiet and listen, and let Dr. Jesus ‘open you up with his intense inward light’. We all enjoyed this laugh at ourselves which has given us much food for thought.

The children had made beautiful postcards which we then wrote on to send messages to Friends who were not able to be with us today.

Our day ended with a barn dance!

We are immensely grateful to Oxford Friends for their abundant hospitality today and to Oxford Young Adult Friends for this wonderful programme.



Right: Members of the YAF organising team.

Abingdon Local Quaker Meeting

<https://abingdonquakers.org/>

Clerk: Judy Goodall – abingdonquakers@gmail.com

Newsletter Editors: Roger Baker & Liz Matthews

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Image credits: Pages 3 & 10: Chris Sewell; Page 5: Patrick Fopma; Page 12: Liz Matthews; Page 14: Matthew Callow, Reading Meeting.