

Abingdon Quaker Meeting Newsletter

June 2022 (online version)

No. 393

Meetings for Worship

In Person

Please remember your face covering for indoor meetings.

Thursday 2nd June 7:30pm in the Garden Room, St Ethelwold's

Sundays 5th, 19th & 26th June 10:15am in the Northcourt Centre

Sunday 12th June 10:30am in St Ethelwold's Garden (Garden Room if wet)

Note the start time. Please bring warm clothing and/or wet weather gear, depending on the forecast.

On Zoom

Thursday 16th June 7:30pm (log in from 7:00pm)

Meeting ID: 899 4318 5568 Passcode: ALQME

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89943185568?pwd=ZDhNWEZlY0FZaXdCemdKdnd3MwphUT09>

Celebrating Roger Baker's 90 Years

(Photos of the event have been removed from this online edition.)

Roger's significant birthday provided Abingdon Friends with the first opportunity for a bring-and-share lunch in nearly two-and-a-half years on 15th May. Unfortunately, the weather put on a less than festive display, and so while a few hardy enthusiasts gathered under a gazebo in Roger's garden, the remainder of the party goes gathered in the living room.

Judy Goodall baked a birthday cake for Roger and wisely topped it with considerably fewer than 90 candles. Even so, the effect was quite dramatic once they were all lit! We also discovered that some of the candles were self-relighting, which caused some merriment when Roger attempted to extinguish them.

Roger wrote to the Meeting afterwards:

'Thank you for coming to help me celebrate reaching an anniversary which, because of the human dedication to the decimal system, is deemed to have more importance than many others. ...

Thanks to you all for the cards and food, for helping to erect the gazebo and for all the work in kitchen both preparing and washing up.'

We thank Roger in turn for sharing his special day with us and for his warm hospitality.

Abingdon Quaker Matters

A Special Business Meeting Regarding the Abbey Centre: Sunday 12th June

Alan Pearmain, our Clerk, writes:

The Abbey Centre is now in a position for us to return for our normal Sunday meeting for worship, so we need to decide if this is what we want. We will have a special business meeting after our St Ethelwold's meeting on 12th June to discern the way forward. The business meeting will be held in the garden room.

The Spiritual and Pastoral Care Group considered the matter on 24th May and recommend that we return to the Abbey Centre, but there are advantages and disadvantages in making this move. A question-and-answer paper is being prepared and will be circulated before the business meeting so that we can come to an informed decision.

June Appeal: Asylum Welcome

From Chris Sewell

Our appeal this month is for a local organisation playing a key role in the support and resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers in the county. Asylum Welcome offers information, advice and practical support to asylum seekers, refugees and vulnerable migrants arriving and living in Oxfordshire. They help adults, young people and families to feel safe, respected and understood as members of Oxfordshire's diverse community.



In the last year Asylum Welcome has played a leading role supporting the welcome and resettlement of Afghan refugees in the county and, more recently, they have been working with Oxfordshire County Council and the five district councils within Oxfordshire to help provide the best possible experience for Ukrainians coming to the region under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

A visit to their website shows a very comprehensive range of support services, including:

- Legal immigration advice
- Education and employment support
- Domestic abuse support
- Support for refugee community organisations
- Visiting support to foreign national prisoners
- Recycled bicycles to help clients travel freely and independently

You can donate in these ways:

- Online at <https://www.asylum-welcome.org/>
- By cash, after meeting for worship on the first and third Sundays of June
- By cheque payable to Asylum Welcome. Send your donation to Asylum Welcome, Unit 7, Newtec Place, Magdalen Road, Oxford, OX4 1RE.

Thank you.

Asylum Welcome is a registered charity, no 1092265, and a company limited by guarantee, no. 4361627.

Summer Outings

Plans for a whole-meeting outing and an outing for the children during July are under way; stay alert for more news in the next few weeks (and in the July newsletter).

Around the Area and Region

Memorial Meeting for John Gould

Saturday 18th June 2pm, Oxford Meeting House

John Gould died on 23rd February as a result of a road accident in which his wife, Elizabeth Salisbury, was seriously injured. Friends are invited to remember John and give thanks for his life at this Memorial Meeting for Worship. Tea will be served afterwards.

Meetings to Discuss the New OSAM Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

Katherine Gee, the Area Meeting's Safeguarding Co-ordinator, is organising a series of Zoom meetings to provide an opportunity for Friends to discuss the new policy and procedures.



The meetings will take place on Thursdays on the dates below, from 7–8:30pm. You are invited to attend whichever meeting(s) you feel would be the most helpful to your role(s) within the Meeting or Area:

9th June: DBS verifiers and those involved in nominations (LM or AM)

16th June: Those involved in children and young people's work

30th June: Pastoral Care Groups

7th July: Members and attenders of Abingdon, Burford, Charlbury, and Faringdon LMs (there is another meeting on 14th July for the other four LMs)

Zoom weblink:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87370014936?pwd=aC9BYUpNMHpzdW4wNzNzNzZqd1hVQT09>

Zoom Meeting ID: 873 7001 4936

Passcode: Safe

The policy and procedures document can be accessed via our website at

<https://abingdonquakers.org/safeguarding/>

A New Local Development Worker for the Thames Valley

Local Development Workers work with Friends in a group of area meetings, helping to make sure that Quaker communities are able to thrive. We are pleased to announce that Moya has started work as the Local Development Worker for the Thames Valley, supporting meetings and Quaker communities in Mid-Thames, Chilterns, Oxford & Swindon, and Banbury & Evesham Area Meetings. The role includes:

- listening, encouraging and reassuring to meetings, groups and individuals
- connecting Friends with people and resources, and pointing them to services provided by BYM and Woodbrooke

- facilitating sessions on a variety of themes
- helping to review existing activities or processes
- assisting with major projects

Moya can be reached by email at moya@quaker.org.uk and looks forward to meeting us.

For more information, visit the Meeting-centred support page of the BYM website (from which part of this text is taken): <https://quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/support-for-meetings/meeting-centred-support>

From the Wider Quaker Community...

Maintaining Quaker Witness in a War Zone

The Quakers of Kyiv were recently interviewed by a young American journalist, herself from a Quaker background. They talked about the challenges in maintaining their Quaker witness in the current situation. It's a short, but compelling, read and ends on this hopeful note:



**Quakers Of Kyiv, Ukraine /
Квейкери Києва**
@QuakersKyivUkraine

‘Frankly, it’s hard to love your enemies. And it’s hard to love your enemies when they lie, but we try to do it. Because we know that when the time comes and the light of God shines over the Russian Federation, so too will we live in peace.’

<https://www.wnewsj.com/opinion/columns/200933/guest-column-from-wc-grad-quaker-keeping-faith-and-preserving-life-in-war-torn-kyiv> (shortlink to the same web page: <https://bit.ly/alqm-kyiv-intvw>)

And for a UK-based **Russian Quaker’s** response to the war in Ukraine – reaching out to people in his homeland through podcasts – listen to Radio 4’s ‘Sunday’ programme of 15th May: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0017csx> (alternatively, Google ‘Radio 4 Sunday programme’). The interview with Sergei Nikitin starts at 20:23.

An Appeal for Warsaw Quakers’ Project to Help Ukrainian Refugees

From an email sent by Fiona Meadley, Painswick Meeting

‘At the outset of the war in Ukraine, Painswick Meeting was introduced to Warsaw Meeting by one of our attenders now living in Poland. We wish to support an initiative by this small Meeting. Guided by their Quaker values, they have discerned a specific unmet need of the refugees. Our May/June collection will be for this project, and we would like to encourage other Local Meetings in the area to consider joining us.

‘Inspired by Quaker initiatives from earlier decades of working with mental health, Warsaw Meeting contacted the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Clinic at the SWPS University in Warsaw. This is the leading Polish clinic treating the consequences of traumatic experiences. Warsaw Quakers offered to subsidise therapy sessions for those affected by the war, a proposal that has been accepted with great enthusiasm and gratitude at the Clinic. The Clinic Directors have put together a list of certified cognitive behavioural psychotherapists in Poland and elsewhere who speak Ukrainian and Russian and who are willing to work with traumatised refugees both online and in their home countries. The Clinic will send periodic reports to Warsaw Quakers as to how the funds are being used.’

Since Warsaw Meeting doesn't have a bank account, Painswick Meeting will be organising a bank transfer to either the Clinic's account (earmarked 'Quakers') or the account of Central European Gathering in early July. If you would like to make a contribution, you can do so via Painswick Meeting:

Sort code 30-98-29
Account no. 01147586 Painswick Quaker Meeting
Payment reference: Ukraine

If you require an acknowledgement, please send an email to Fiona: fionakammeadley@mac.com

Faith in Action

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'.

Abingdon Peace Group

Tuesday 21st June 8pm, online

Topic and speaker to be confirmed. Please contact Sally Reynolds for details nearer the time.

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

Meeting ID: 913 1513 4101 Passcode: 015836

Abingdon Carbon Cutters

Wednesday 15th June 7:30pm, venue (online or in person) TBC.

Councillor Catherine Webber will speak on the Vale Climate Action Plan. Cathy is the Climate Lead for the Vale and lives in Drayton. For confirmation of the venue, visit

<https://abingdoncarboncutters.org.uk/> or email carbon.cutters@gmail.com nearer the time.

The Low Carbon Hub's Community Group of the Month

The Low Carbon Hub fosters a growing partnership of people and organisations across Oxfordshire, working together for a low carbon future. In May the Hub selected Abingdon Carbon Cutters as its Community Group of the Month. To read more, visit

<https://www.lowcarbonhub.org/community-members/community-stories/> (you can also navigate to this page using the menu bar on the home page).

Around the Abingdon Churches

Platinum Jubilee Festival Event: 2nd June

11am–3pm, Rye Farm

The Church in Abingdon (CiA) is organising activities for the event at Rye Farm on Thursday 2nd June, alongside Abingdon's clubs and societies. Plans include cookie making and decorating, crafts, face painting (12–2 only), and a prayer station. All are welcome.

Among Abingdon Friends

Why Attend Meeting for Worship if You Don't Believe in God?

Liz Matthews attended a Woodbrooke webinar on 10th May facilitated by Rhiannon Grant.

I was motivated to attend as part of my ongoing search for a personal conceptualisation of 'God' and a meaningful personal spiritual practice in meeting for worship (MfW). I wanted to hear the perspectives of people who don't believe in a Christian God, many of whom call themselves 'non-theist Quakers'. What follows is a compilation of contributions to the webinar, largely unattributed for reasons of confidentiality. The quotations are taken from my notes and from the transcript automatically generated by Zoom.

In her introduction, Rhiannon pointed to the theological diversity of unprogrammed, liberal Quaker meetings which embraces, among others, Christian believers, non-theists and people inspired by multiple traditions including Buddhism and Neo-paganism. What unites us, she said, is the 'behavioural creed' of silent worship. That is, we have a shared practical sense of what it means to sit in MfW; what is lacking is a shared language or single explanation of what happens in MfW in the metaphysical sense.



For the first of two group discussions during the webinar, Rhiannon invited us to consider the different reasons why we might come to MfW.

As one would expect, many of the reasons given centred around the concepts of community and searching: the value of being in a group where members are connected by the question 'how are we to live?' and are 'considering things that are important.' MfW is seen to facilitate reflection in the company of others: 'listening to my own heart and what's in others' hearts;' 'a mix with mystery in a shared experience.' Through listening to others one can begin to clarify one's ideas.

Contrasting MfW with the programmed services of other denominations, some people spoke about the 'alien language' that they discern in churches. Others described the absence of clergy among Quakers as 'crucial': 'no single figure with all the power and all the answers' and 'no sense of one person possessing the revealed truth.'

So much for the 'meeting' part; what about 'worship'? For a number of people, the word seemed to be burdened by the ritual of church services, and it was even suggested that Quakers should find new language to express what we mean by worship as a concept. Rhiannon offered a way forward by breaking the word down into its older components: 'worth' + 'ship', or 'worthship'¹ (see also *Quaker Faith & Practice*, 8.02). She commented:

'...participating in worship starts with a requirement that we believe ourselves worthy, that we think we have worth [in ourselves]. But we can also think about it more broadly ... we can use the word worthship to think about focusing on what is important to us, what we value, perhaps what we want to value, even though it isn't valued in the surrounding culture that we operate within.'

Contributions to the discussions included a questioning of the idea that there is a distinct entity outside humanity that guides, directs or leads us: 'for me, it's more the humanness that ... unites [Quakers].' The notions of 'surrender,' 'acceptance' and 'gratitude' also featured; for example:

'worship ... for me is ... a surrender to that which I believe is something greater that can cause shifts to take place; just being available, being open and to the possibility of something that's never happened before can happen.' Joycelin Dawes' phrase 'open heart, open mind, open will' was offered as a reminder of how we might approach MfW.²

I felt that the webinar certainly touched on some constructive aspects of non-theist Quakerism, but it left open the question of one's relationship to the explicitly Christian beliefs and writings lying at the historical roots of Quakerism. The peregrination continues...

¹ Old English *weorthscipe*: 'the condition of being worthy' (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/worship>).

² Joycelin Dawes (2017), *Discernment and Inner Knowing*. FeedaRead.

Poem of the Month

From the Poetry Group

In May we climbed (almost) every mountain, searched high and low, and forded every stream in search of suitable 'mountain' poems. Altitude was no barrier: poems about hills and poems about metaphorical eminences were also permitted. For the second month running, we are sharing a poem read by Roger Baker – and not only read, but also composed by him:

Lakeland Fells

Helvellyn, Blencathra, Great Gable

The names of Lakeland fells I've climbed
Nostalgic pleasures bring
Of trips in summer sun and rain -
In winter and in spring.

Close your eyes; enjoy the sound
While I indulge – because I've found
Reciting such is, for me,
a splendid, visual, symphony.

Loughrigg Fell, Crinkle Crag, Catstycam,
Scafell Pike, Pavey Ark, Wetherlam

Bowfell, Swirl How, Whin Rigg,
Slight Side, High Stile, Latrigg

Great End, Catbells, Lingmell
Helm Crag, Skiddaw, Scafell

But which of all the tops is best?
Uniquely fine is Haystacks crest.
Though shunned by some for lack of height
It is a place of pure delight
For here lie tarns and tors and heather
A magic place what e'er the weather.

Roger Baker

Haystacks was Roger's choice in our series on 'Sacred Places' in 2021. To illustrate his poem, here is the photo he contributed.



We offer you a second poem this month, which was chosen by both Roger Baker and Jenny Carr. They recalled hearing it read many years ago in a Meeting for Worship by Frank Perkins, and we thought that other Friends might also remember it and enjoy it again:

When the Days Come

When the days come that I must live alone in my own thoughts, and when my eyes are dimmed and cannot see the shadows on the hills, and when I cannot hear the far-off sounds of hurrying streams and sheep, then will I turn my mind to those great days we spent upon the fells, and I will count them over, one by one, and treasure them as jewels no-one can take from me –

Days when the sun was hot on rock and heath, and I would lie far up upon some ledge hearing below those solemn murmurings, the sad, incessant voices of the dales, and smell the moss and bracken 'neath my head.

And I will dream of little mountain flowers – the butterwort with slender, purple blooms; the sundew sticky with its clutch of flies; the spongy mosses, green and rusty red; the cotton grasses wearing silken plumes beside some lonely tarn high in the hills.

I will remember rain and bitter winds, the feel of clothes drenched by the stinging shower; teas at a wayside inn with some good friend; hot baths and fires and warmth for tired limbs, and all the loveliness of home and rest.

And whilst I think of all those joyous days, of all the heights I've gained and hours I've loved, I will not envy those who take their turn in tramping, manfully, in storm or fine, the hills I know, for they are part of me, a heritage of beauty nought can spoil.

Anon.



News of Friends in Brief

We send love to Wendy Regaard, who has been in hospital recently.

Opening Up at the Northcourt Centre: June Rota

5 th	Rosie Page	Liz Matthews
19 th	Sally Reynolds	Richard Smart
26 th	Judy Goodall	Auriel Lancashire

June Dates for Your Diary

Date	Time	Event details
Thurs 2 nd	11am–3pm	CiA activities at the Platinum Jubilee Festival Rye Farm
	7:30pm	Outreach Meeting for Worship St Ethelwold's
Sun 5 th	10:15am	Meeting for Worship Northcourt Centre
Thurs 9 th	7–8:30pm	OSAM Safeguarding meeting for DBS verifiers and those involved in nominations (see page 4) Zoom
Sun 12 th	10:30am	Meeting for Worship followed by Special Meeting for Business (see page 2) St Ethelwold's garden (Garden Room if wet)
Wed 15 th	7:30pm	Abingdon Carbon Cutters (see page 6)
Thurs 16 th	7–8:30pm	OSAM Safeguarding meeting for those involved in children's and young people's work (see page 4) Zoom
	7:30pm	Meeting for Worship on Zoom

Date	Time	Event details
Sun 19 th	10:15am	Meeting for Worship Northcourt Centre
Tues 21 st	8pm	Abingdon Peace Group (see page 6)
Sun 26 th	10:15am	Meeting for Worship Northcourt Centre
Thurs 30 th	7–8:30pm	OSAM Safeguarding meeting for Spiritual and Pastoral Care Groups (see page 4) Zoom

Next Month...

The July issue is due for publication on **Sunday 26th June**. Please send your contributions (in words and/or pictures) to the editors by **Wednesday 22nd June**. Although we don't set a word limit, we may make judicious edits for length and/or readability.

Abingdon Local Quaker Meeting

<https://abingdonquakers.org/>

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