

Abingdon Quaker Meeting Newsletter

March 2026 (online edition)

No. 438

Meetings for Worship

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

Thursday 5th March 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/>.

Other Forthcoming Meetings

Further information about these meetings is on the inside pages of this issue.

Sunday 1st March	After MfW	Business Meeting
Friday 6th March	2:30pm	World Day of Prayer, St Edmund's Church, Abingdon
Saturday 14th March	10:30—3pm	Area Meeting, Charlbury Meeting House
Saturday 28th March	2—4:30pm	Forest Foxes
Saturday 11th April	10:30—4:30pm	Regional Meeting, Banbury Meeting House



Tim Gee holds a rare first edition of 'Women's Speaking Justified...', Margaret Fell's defence of her right to speak in church, published in 1666.

Writing Our Own Words

Tim Gee follows up the Learning Sunday which he facilitated in November 2025, in which he led us on exploring the Acts of the Apostles through the medium of song.

I've been enjoying this way of engaging with Scripture for a while. Part of it arises from enjoying singing but not always enjoying the words put in front of me. Part of it comes from finding that some very old tunes somehow live within me and want to come out. Relatedly, it also comes from the liberation of realising that a great many well-known hymn tunes were in fact folk songs first. 'How Great Thou Art' uses a Swedish folk tune. 'Be Thou My Vision' adopts the Irish tune 'Slane', also sung as a love song, 'The Banks of the Bann'. This is also true of many songs Quakers love to sing. The 'George Fox Song' is set to a Morris dance melody called 'Monks March'. 'Lord of the Dance' is adapted from a Shaker tune, 'Simple Gifts'.

No-one knows the exact origins of the tunes which became the African-American spirituals. What does seem clear, though, is that the idea of set words to set tunes is a relatively modern one. Before the late 19th century (and still today), people would sing words as relevant to the moment.

In this, I sense an affinity with the Quaker approach to song, which is to sing as led by the Spirit. Fox recorded it happening in Ireland, and even though he said he didn't have a good voice, he sang on occasion too, especially as a protest against persecution.

It's well known that most Quakers today around the world sing, especially in Africa where most of the world's Quakers are. However, it's less known that the early Friends in Britain sang as part of worship too.

In Robert Barclay's *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, he describes singing as:

'Part of God's worship, and very sweet and refreshing, when it proceeds from a true sense of God's love in the heart, and arises from the divine influence of the Spirit, which leads souls to breathe forth either a sweet harmony, or words suitable to the present condition; whether they be words formerly used by the saints, and recorded in scripture, such as the Psalms of David, or other words.'

I've found myself setting passages of Scripture to tunes I love: like 'Love is Patient' to the folk song 'Aura Lee' (better known as 'Love Me Tender'), the Magnificat to 'Bella Ciao' and Psalm 1 to the Skye Boat Song. I also put some of George Fox's words to the tune 'Slane'.

And so it was a joy that in just over an hour a large-ish group of us had a go at setting some of the extraordinary adventures of Saul/Paul in Acts of the Apostles to the tune 'Dives and Lazarus' (also known as 'Kingsfold' or 'Star of the County Down'). I felt that we left with music in our hearts.

I was a little slow to write up our pieces of paper, and had to do some editing to make it a reasonable length, and also for consistency. What is here, therefore, is not exactly what each person wrote, but it is nevertheless a group effort.

The times we are living through are bleak, to put it mildly. To get through it we will need potent spiritual tools. Silence is one of these. Scripture is another. So is song. Here is ours:

The Ballad of Saul/Paul

Tune: 'Dives & Lazarus' ('Star of the County Down')

As I went down the Damascus Road
Some Christians for to chase
Their teachings and their way of life
Were much to my distaste

But then I saw a blinding Light,
And I quaked in my surprise
'Why are you persecuting Me?'
Came the voice of Jesus Christ

So I rose and I went to a street called Straight
To the house of one called Jude
And although I neither ate nor drank
I was filled with Spiritual food

I saw the Light, and regained my sight
As I rose I was baptised
I was filled the Spirit that connects all things
And the scales fell from my eyes

In Cyprus I met a sorcerer
Who didn't like my words
But then I met the pro-consul
Who was moved by what he heard

In Lystra Town was a man who was lame
Who came with me to talk
And I said to him 'stand on your feet'
And he found that he could walk

But then I was called to Jerusalem
Where I found that I stood accused
Of sharing faith with Gentiles too
Without becoming Jews

We listened to one another's words
And remembered the prophecies
We agreed the ways the gentiles could
Join the faith with greater ease

Then in Philippi I was put in jail
And the ground began to shake
Though the doors flew open and the chains came loose
I stayed and I didn't escape

My jailer asked me what to do
And how to be baptised
Then the rulers of the city came,
To us and apologised

And in Ephesus, a riot broke out
Led by men who the idols made
They were scared that if people worshipped God
Then they would lose their trade

For hours they chanted of Artemis
And there was a great uproar
But the clerk explained, that we were safe
For we did not break the law

Then I boarded a ship which was bound for Rome
Though I warned them not to go
But they wouldn't listen to a lowly man
And the storm winds they did blow

I told them that the ship would sink
And of that I had no doubt
We were wrecked on the Island of fair Malta
Where the locals helped us out

We later sailed again to Rome
Where I lived life under guard
But people came to visit me
And I spoke of the Kingdom of God

So, that's the story I have to tell
How my world turned upside down
When I met a stranger along the road
On the way to Damascus Town

Abingdon Quaker Matters

Business Meeting

Business Meeting took place on 1st March, before the publication of this issue. The next Business Meeting will be on **Sunday 26th April**, to avoid coinciding with Yearly Meeting.

Monthly Appeal: Street Talk

From Chris Sewell:

Street Talk is a Hackney-based charity that runs a counselling service for women who are trapped in street-based prostitution or have been the victims of trafficking. It provides professional, specialist care to some of the most vulnerable and marginalised women on London's streets.



Street Talk was founded in 2005 by Pippa Hockton, a Quaker NHS therapist who had become troubled by the inequalities within mental health care in East London. It seemed to her that the most vulnerable patients, with more complex needs, were excluded from mental health care; few of them could pay for therapy. Street Talk started humbly in 2005 at a drop-in centre in Hackney and continues to operate today in venues where vulnerable women feel safe.

Women in street-based prostitution find themselves excluded from care; they are not necessarily registered with a GP, the portal to most health services. They are refused access to A&E on occasions, even when they are injured or critically ill, let alone access to specialist services such as psychotherapy. Street Talk was founded in a spirit of experimentation, setting out to discover whether it was possible to engage extremely vulnerable women in therapy. In 20 years of practice it has found new, transformative ways of responding to their needs.

Street Talk's website describes those who have found their way to the charity in Hackney:

'The women we work with have grown up experiencing abuse and neglect; many have grown up in the state care system or in families who were not able to take care of them. When a woman experiences repeated abuse, her confidence and self-belief are diminished to such an extent that she may eventually believe that she deserves to be hurt. This makes her extremely vulnerable.

'The first step in helping someone who has been repeatedly abused is to enable them to believe that they deserve better. Street Talk's therapeutic services create positive relationships where a woman can encounter her own humanity and feel entitled to live safely and with dignity.'

In a celebratory booklet marking Street Talk's twentieth anniversary, Pippa Hockton wrote:

'For 20 years, rough sleepers, women just out of prison, women who have survived sea crossings in fragile boats, escaped from traffickers selling sex on the street, young mothers with no family, women grieving, lost, running from pain, some banned from other services, and sometimes all of those, have found their way to Street Talk.

I will never forget Lily, only 20, trafficked at the age of 14 and held in a brothel. I sat with Lily in the safe house and, shaking with fear, she said to me, "You are the only person I know in the world."

To our supporters, thank you for your generosity, your encouragement, but most of all for your love for our women. Our beautiful, brave and funny women who have taught me that the only things which matter are forgiveness and love. The aim of the work is to enable the women to encounter their own humanity, but it is I who has found my humanity with our women.'

You can donate in these ways:

- **Cash** when the appeal is made after Meeting for Worship on 8th and 15th March. 'Generic' Gift Aid forms should be available if you are a UK taxpayer.
- **Online** at <https://www.street-talk.org.uk/>. Clicking the 'Donate' button takes you to the Street Talk page on the website of Localgiving, which handles donations on Street Talk's behalf.

Thank you.

Street Talk is a Registered Charity no. 1117588.

Around the Area and Region

Area Meeting

Saturday 14th March 10:30—3:30, Charlbury Meeting House.

Meeting for Business will take place in the morning as normal, and the afternoon's Spiritual Nurture session will address the theme 'How Punk is our Quakerism? Reflections on Punk, Politics and Spirituality'.

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

Forest Foxes

Saturday 28th March, 2-4:30 pm, Hill End Outdoor Education Centre, Botley.

Forest Foxes Nature Socials for 11–14 year-olds are monthly Quaker-held afternoons of adventure, friendship and reflection around the fire, in the woods. They are held at Hill End Outdoor Education Centre and are co-ordinated by Julia Dover, OSAM's Children, Young People and Families Development Worker.



The poster (right) lists upcoming dates. Booking is essential:

contact JuliaD@quaker.org.uk by the Tuesday before the date when your children wish to attend.

Julia also invites Friends with a love of nature and a sense of play, and who enjoy holding exploratory spaces for young people, to join Forest Foxes as volunteer helpers. Please contact JuliaD@quaker.org.uk if you are interested.

Regional Meeting: 'Peace Building in a Time of Conflict'

Saturday 11th April 10—4, Banbury Meeting House and online.

Join us for a day of talks and discussions. The featured speakers are Caroline Crosfield, who will share her experience of being Ecumenical Accompanier in Gaza, and John Crosfield, who will talk about the work of the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA). He will cover work with conscientious objectors and rethinking security, with Ukraine and Russia in mind.

Tea and coffee will be provided, but please bring your own lunch.

Young people are welcome, and Banbury Friends feel that the presentations should be suitable for young people from age 11. They have space and, toys but no one to supervise under-11s and so parents would have to look after their own children.

Please email banbury@banburyeveshamquakers.org.uk if you plan to attend, whether in person or online.

Swindon Quakers' Listening Space

Saturday 18th April 10:30—4:30, Swindon Meeting House.

Good listening skills are important especially, in today's divided world, both within our Meetings and in our contacts outside. A Listening Space is an opportunity for Friends to come together in a facilitated and safe space to share experiences and thoughts in order to better understand a situation or topic.

In a Listening Space we don't make decisions, look for solutions or hold a debate. We simply listen and explore to gain a better understanding of the wider truth – welcoming diversity of views and experience.

A Listening Space goes beyond discovering new information. Being heard in a safe space fulfils many of our fundamental human needs. A Listening Space can help us to connect at a deeper level and thus improve discernment.



On 18th April we will focus on Advices and Queries No.

18, which begins 'How can we make the meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured, and strangers are welcome?...' We will be joined by Caroline Gibbs, Louise Scrivens, Fran Hicks, Alistair Heslop, all experienced listening space facilitators, and Moya, our local development worker.

Please email clerk@swindonquakers.org.uk by 13th March if you intend to come. There is space for maximum of 20 participants. Please bring your own lunch.

Nurturing Children's Spirituality in Meeting

Saturday 6th June 1—5pm, Oxford Meeting House.

Julia Dover is hosting a half-day session for OSAM Friends on nurturing children's spirituality in Children's Meeting. Facilitated by national CYP trainers and Quakers in Britain colleagues Ellie McCarthy and Naomi Richards, the session will offer resources, engaging reflection and support to those who run Children's Meeting in our Local Meetings or who would like to start a Children's Meeting. Friends who are not directly involved in Children's Meeting, but who would appreciate exploring engagement with children from a spiritual perspective as part of tending the all-age flourishing of their Local Meeting, are also encouraged to join.

Please confirm attendance (to juliaD@quaker.org.uk) by Friday 29th May if you wish to attend, and indicate whether you will need childcare (with ages of children).

From the Wider Quaker Community

World Day of Prayer 2026: A Quaker's Perspective

Judith Baker has drawn our attention to a short item by Ali Wallace on the Quakers in Britain website. Ali is the new Quaker rep on the World Day of Prayer committee for England, Wales and northern Ireland, and encourages Friends to attend services in their localities:

<https://quaker.org.uk/blog/learning-from-and-praying-for-the-women-of-nigeria-world-day-of-prayer-2026>

The service in Abingdon will take place on Friday 6th March at 2:30pm in St Edmund's Church, Radley Road.

Yearly Meeting

Friday 1st—Monday 4th May, Friends House and online.

A reminder that bookings are now open for Yearly Meeting, including all programmes for children and young people.

Special Interest Meetings take place online from 20th—26th March, and preparation sessions from 13th—16th April. Even if you don't plan to go to any of the YM sessions, signing up means you can attend any of the meetings on offer towards the end of March.

Full information about the booking process and the various advance sessions are at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/ym/bookings>.

Local Events of Quaker Interest

Film: Gentle Angry Women

Wednesday 11th March 6pm, Abbey Cinema.

The film follows three teenage activists as they join the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the start of the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp and discover the relevance of this historic protest to their own activism. The showing will be followed by Q&A with the director and local activists.

Book tickets through the Abbey Cinema in the usual way.

Abingdon Carbon Cutters: 'Grow More for Free!'

Wednesday 18th March 7.30pm, St Ethelwold's House (NB new venue).

A fun, hands-on workshop about propagating plants, taking cuttings, sowing seeds, dividing perennials and layering. Grow your garden the sustainable way!

Free entry, although a £3 donation will be welcome.

Repair Cafés

Saturday 7th March, 25 Bury Street, Abingdon.

10:30—12:30 Sewing repair

1—4 Household repairs and tool sharpening

St Edmund of Abingdon: 850th Anniversary

Born around 1175, Edmund of Abingdon studied in Oxford and Paris, and became a doctor of theology at Oxford University in 1214. He was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1233 and helped to end a civil war between King Henry III and a number of barons who revolted against him. Edmund died in France in 1240 and is buried at Pontigny, Burgundy. Canonised in 1246, he is known as St Edmund of Abingdon in the UK and St Edmé in France.

The Church in Abingdon newsletter has announced that a members of the town and church community are to launch a project to 'Raise the profile of our most famous son in his hometown.'

You can find out more about St Edmund on the website of Abingdon Town Council:

https://www.abingdon.gov.uk/abingdon_people/st-edmund-abingdon.

Among Abingdon Friends

Poem of the Month

From the Poetry Group

'Floating' was the theme of the Poetry Group's February meeting. Poem of the Month was read by Roger Baker.

Floating

No wine tonight.
Soberness everywhere; yet I float.
I float to the thought of having found you.
A musical, a dream, thin rain, cars' lights, city lights.
I'm in your arms, completely conscious of where I am,
whom I'm with, yet I float.
I float to the feeling I feel.
It's night, it's velvet dark, yet I see your dark eyes finding mine.
And I float to my insanity. I float.
It's rapid, slow, warm and cold.
And I float in London Bridge.
There's no music but I hear it, yet I'm sober and I float.
Our hands touch and float, yet I'm there.
Holding your hand.
Through the night.
Floating.

Juliana Dornellas

News of Friends

Philippa Killick has written to us from Scotland with this happy announcement: 'We welcomed our daughter Inka Nancy Kathleen Killick on 23rd January, weighing 8lb 11oz. We are all doing well and gradually settling into life as a family of four.' We send love and congratulations to Philippa, George and Otto.

Richard Smart will be hosting a reunion of old friends from Saffron Walden School on the weekend of 27th June I. He says: 'I will try to persuade them to come to Meeting on Sunday 28th. Please let me know if you knew anyone who attended Saffron Walden between 1963 and 1970.'

Quaker Peace & Social Witness: Web Links

Following her talk on QPSW on 22nd February, *Judith Baker* shares links to further information:

Video of 'Peace is Every Step', the multi-faith silent walk for peace held on 21st January, 2024:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EreVxZSRUFI&list=PPSV>

Learning opportunities with Woodbrooke: These opportunities are rooted in the Quaker tradition but are open to all. Programmes and resources and resources include those focused on:

- **Climate crisis.** You can find a number of courses, sessions and residentials, as well as resources, workshops, spiritual accompaniment for climate witness and the Quaker Eco Church Network, at www.woodbrooke.org.uk/climate-crisis/.

- **Peace, racial and social justice.** You can explore Woodbrooke’s sessions and courses in this area at www.woodbrooke.org.uk/socialjustice.

For information about other learning opportunities with Woodbrooke, visit <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/>.

General information about Quaker Faith in Action: <https://quaker.org.uk/action>.

Monthly updates on Quaker Faith in Action: <https://www.quaker.org.uk/faith-in-action-newsletter>.

Forthcoming events: <https://quaker.org.uk/events>.

Quaker Space Facebook group: <https://bit.ly/QuakerSpace> (alternatively, if you have a Facebook account, search for ‘Quaker Space’).

Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI): <https://quaker.org.uk/action/palestine-and-israel/eappi>.

Toolkits for action: short booklets look at practical aspects of campaigning and community organising. Bringing together Quaker values and practical tips, each toolkit for action can serve as starting point for anyone feeling inspired to take action for social change. <https://www.quaker.org.uk/toolkit-for-action>.

Email address: qpsw@quaker.org.uk.

Donate to QPSW work: <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/24686> or at <https://quaker.org.uk/>.

Opening Up at the Abbey Centre: March Rota

1st	Eryl	Richard
8th	Jenny	Laura
15th	Alan	Auriel
22nd	Judy	Anne
29th	Clark	Rosie

Next Month...

Please send your contributions for the April issue (in words and/or pictures) to the editors by **Friday 27th March**.

Abingdon Local Quaker Meeting
<https://abingdonquakers.org.uk> | <https://www.facebook.com/AbingdonQuakers/>

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