

Abingdon Quaker Meeting Newsletter

July 2026

No. 442

Meetings for Worship

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

Thursday 2nd July 7:30pm in the Garden Room, St Ethelwold's House, 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 5th July	12:15 onwards	Family picnic, Abbey Meadows
Saturday 11th July	10:30—3	Area Meeting & AGM, Burford Meeting House
Saturday 11th July	10:00—4	Tangled Roots: Engaging with the 2026 Swarthmore Lecture, Oxford Meeting House
Friday 17th July	7:30pm) Becoming Friends: session 3, Dorothea's Room,
Saturday 18th July	2:30pm) St Ethelwold's House
Saturday 18th July	9:30—4:30	Yearly Meeting, Manchester and online
Saturday 18th July	2:30—5	Forest Foxes, Hill End Outdoor Education Centre
Friday 24th July	12:30—3	Bring & Share lunch, Burford Meeting House

Yearly Meeting: New Ways Into Membership

Saturday 18th July 9:30—4:30, King's House Conference Centre, Manchester and online.

One of the items on the agenda for July's Yearly Meeting is a consideration of new ways into membership. Many Quakers in Britain Yearly Meeting today do not attend local meetings in the traditional sense. They belong to and receive spiritual support from non-geographic or online worshipping communities. Quaker Life Central Committee was asked to consider how we could make membership more accessible, and its members have produced a detailed proposal, available at <https://quaker.org.uk/ym/documents>. In a nutshell, the proposal puts forward a new route into membership to support those who belong to online or affinity-based Quaker groups.

The preparation document for the meeting (also available at <https://quaker.org.uk/ym/documents>)



provides five queries for Friends to reflect on, either in their own time or in discussion. Even if we don't plan to attend YM in either mode, these queries provide useful food for thought:

1. Where would you say your sense of Quaker belonging is located: In your meeting house (or venue)? In a community of like-minded Friends? In the community you happen to find yourself, warts and all? In the service you undertake and the Friends you work with? Somewhere else?
2. The proposal before Yearly Meeting is for certain kinds of non-geographic Quaker groups (such as those who worship together) to become equivalent to local meetings, and for Friends to be able to apply for membership via their connection with a community of that kind. How do you feel about that?
3. How do you respond to the idea that Quaker practices should adapt to situations changed by new technology, in particular the rise of online communities?
4. For various reasons some Friends have no real connection with a local or area meeting. Should these Friends be able to apply for membership of BYM by a different route? Does it make a difference whether their lack of connection is a choice or outside their control?
5. Quaker worship in the UK might be evolving into three practices: in-person, online and hybrid; does this matter? Does it matter if the same applies in our community life, business practice and Quaker service?

The full agenda and supporting papers for the July Yearly Meeting will be published on 3rd July. There will be an online preparation session on Thursday 9th July at 7pm. Booking for both modes of attendance closes on 10th July: <https://quaker.org.uk/ym/bookings>.

The Dilemma of Military Imagery

Liz Matthews writes:

A number of ministries in Meeting for Worship on 7th June addressed the use of militaristic imagery in Christianity. For example, in the Bible we read Paul's injunction to the Ephesians to 'Put on all the armour which God provides' (6:11); William Blake calls for his 'bow of burning gold', 'arrows of desire', spear and 'chariot of fire' in order to build an English Jerusalem; and the hymn 'Onward Christian soldiers' (by Sabine Baring-Gould) portrays Christ leading us into battle against the foe. However, all these texts make clear that the fight is a metaphorical one: 'not against human foes, but against cosmic powers' (Ephesians 6:12), Blake is engaged in 'mental fight' and the Christian soldiers march 'as [though] to war'.

The use of a militaristic metaphor to characterise struggle that is spiritual in nature has extended to Quakerism. In his tract *The Lamb's War* (published in 1658), James Nayler underscores the fledgling movement's commitment to non-violence in a direct echo of Ephesians 6:

'And as they war not against men's persons, so their weapons are not carnal, nor hurtful to any of the creation; for the Lamb comes not to destroy men's lives, nor the work of God, and therefore at his appearance in his subjects, he puts spiritual weapons into their hearts and hands: their armour is the light, their sword the Spirit of the Father and the Son; their shield is faith and patience; their paths are prepared with the gospel of peace and good will towards all the creation of God.'

Problematic Verses in the New Testament

Even if we accept that such language was 'the language of the day', as Iain Strachan pointed out an email on the subject, two verses in the New Testament remain problematic. One is Jesus' statement in Matthew 10:34: 'I have not come to bring peace, but a sword'. Taken in isolation, this jars with his other teaching. Yet he immediately qualifies it in the next verse: 'I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother...'. Iain writes: 'the sword is allegorical. Embracing Christianity causes fractures within a family.' So, in Matthew 10 Jesus is warning his disciples that they will be subject to persecution and even die for their faith.

Luke 22:36 is the more perplexing of the two verses: '...if he has no sword, let him sell his cloak to buy one.' Preparing his disciples for his imminent arrest, Jesus is warning them that, while they may previously have been given food and shelter when they travelled around, things are about to change. Like Jesus, they will be treated as outlaws and they will need to provide 'purse and pack' for themselves. But is he also advocating violent self-defence and/or revenge? No; not least because Jesus later rebukes Peter for using his sword to cut off the High Priest's ear.

In his article "'Go Buy a Sword!' Luke 22 and Christian Gunslingers', Preston Sprinkle reviews a number of modern interpretations suggesting that the sword signals the coming persecution of the early Christians and is to be viewed symbolically: the disciples will need to be self-sufficient and ready for what will happen to them. He reminds us that, in his arrest and execution, Jesus will be fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 53 in being 'reckoned among the transgressors' (as Jesus himself points out in Luke 22:37). Placing Jesus' death in its contemporary context, he adds:

'Rome only crucified those who were a potential threat to the empire. For Jesus to be crucified, Rome would have to convict him as a potential revolutionary. ... With swords in their possession, Jesus and His disciples would be viewed as potential revolutionaries and Jesus would therefore fulfil Isaiah 53 to be numbered with other (revolutionary) transgressors. If Rome didn't have any legal grounds to incriminate Jesus, there would have been no crucifixion.'

Nevertheless, as Iain commented to me, passages such as the ones discussed may remain as a source of discomfort from a pacifist perspective.

Jesus Depicted With a Sword

Friends' ministries on 7th June also reminded me of a very rare, possibly unique, image: Christ holding a sword. It's one of the frescos in the church at Visoki Dečani, a Serbian Orthodox monastery in Kosovo, and an exclave that remains under UN military protection. The fresco dates from the 14th century; the face was disfigured after the Ottoman conquest of 1455 and later partially restored. At first sight, the image might seem to illustrate Jesus as the bringer of a sword, not of peace (Matthew 10:34). Instead, the monastery's website offers a more reassuring interpretation: 'Christ ... has a sword in his hand, not to threaten people or punish them, but to destroy sin.' Returning to Ephesians, the sword can therefore be seen to represent 'the words that come from God' (6:17), although interestingly the website doesn't make this link.



With thanks to Iain Strachan and the following sources:

James Nayler: *The Lamb's War*. <http://www.qhpress.org/texts/nayler/lambswar.html>.

Preston Sprinkle: "Go Buy a Sword!" Luke 22 and Christian Gunslingers'. <https://theologyintheraw.com/go-buy-a-sword-luke-22-and-christian-gunslingers/>.

Visoki Dečani Monastery. <https://www.decani.org/en/>.

Biblical quotations are from the New English Bible.

Abingdon Quaker Matters

Family Picnic

Sunday 5th July 12:15 onwards, Abbey Meadows.

Bring a picnic and join the children and their parents for an afternoon of fellowship and fun after Meeting for Worship.

Annual Outing

Planning is under way for this year's annual outing. We propose to visit BBOWT's Nature Discovery Centre, Thatcham, near Newbury, after Meeting for Worship on Sunday 20th September. The Centre hosts a variety of habitats: woodland, orchard, lakeside and reedbeds. There's also an adventure playground for the children.

We have booked a room for our exclusive use, where hot drinks and biscuits will be available. Please bring your own picnic lunch; alternatively, you can buy sandwiches etc. in the café.

Further information will follow in the August newsletter. You can find out more about the Centre on the BBOWT website at <https://www.bbowl.org.uk/nature-reserves/nature-discovery-centre>.

Library Catalogue

Sally and Phil have been busy revamping the online catalogue for our Meeting library. It is now live and you can browse the books at <https://www.librarything.com/catalog/ALQM>. Sally says 'Phil and I are in the process of checking how many are missing but it won't affect the link.'

Monthly Appeal: Oxford Friends Action on Poverty (OxFAP)

From Chris Sewell:

OxFAP is a committee that administers grants on behalf of Oxford Quaker Meeting. It is one way in which Oxford Quakers respond to poverty in Oxford. OxFAP gives quarterly block grants to five voluntary sector organisations: Asylum Welcome, Homeless Oxfordshire, Citizens Advice, Elmore Community Services and Aspire. In turn, these organisations provide individual small grants to meet the urgent needs of their clients who live in or close to the city of Oxford. OxFAP reviews the grants quarterly.

Examples of recent grants include a cooker for a family who had been rehoused because of domestic abuse, warm winter clothes for a recently discharged prisoner and a laptop for a client who was doing online courses to enable them to get a job.

OxFAP's work is done by volunteers and without overheads, so that every penny donated goes to help the people in need.



Oxford Friends Action on Poverty

You can donate to OxFAP in these ways:

- **Cash** when the appeal is made after Meeting for Worship on 5th and 19th July. Gift Aid forms will be available if you are a UK taxpayer.
- Payment through your **online banking facilities** to:
Sort code: 08-90-38 Cooperative Bank
Account no: 50000898. Oxford Quaker Meeting R/C 1137897
Please use the reference **OxFAP**.
- **Cheque** payable to Oxford Quaker Meeting. Please write **OxFAP** on the back. Send your cheque to OxFAP, c/o Oxford Quaker Meeting, 43 St Giles', Oxford OX1 3LW.

Thank you.

Results of Appeals April–June 2026

The amounts below represent the cash collected when the appeals were made at Meeting for Worship. Individual Friends may have donated directly to the charities.

April: Abingdon Carousel	£123
May: Asylum Welcome	£210
June: Money for Madagascar	£142

OSAM Safeguarding Document

The link to Oxford & Swindon Area Meeting's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures document disappeared from our website when we moved to our new platform. It is now available again at <https://abingdonquakers.org.uk/safeguarding/> (or via 'About Our Meeting' on the website menu).

Around the Area

Area Meeting and AGM

Saturday 11th July 10:30—3pm, Burford Meeting House.

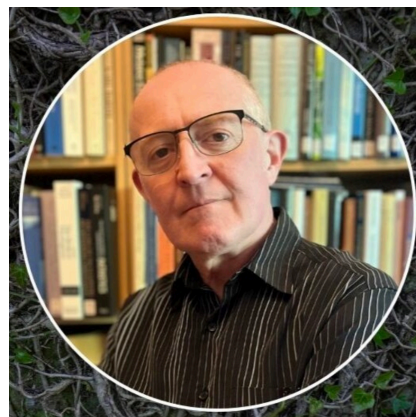
The AGM of the OSAM Charity will take place at 10:30am, followed by our meeting for church affairs. Refreshments will be provided, but please bring your own lunch.

Tangled Roots: Engaging with the 2026 Swarthmore Lecture

Saturday 11th July 10:00-4:00, Oxford Meeting House.

In this year's Swarthmore Lecture, Stuart Masters focused on the faith and practice of the first Friends and explored how their complex legacy presents Quakers today with a range of challenging choices and dilemmas.

In this event organised by Woodbrooke we will explore the main lecture themes in more detail. We will be able to develop a deeper appreciation of the roots of global Quaker diversity and become better able to navigate important choices and dilemmas as we encounter them in our communities today. The day will comprise a mixture of talk, discussion and workshops. Written and visual materials will be provided.



Refreshments will be available but please bring a packed lunch.

For further information, and to book, visit <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/courses/tangled-roots-engaging-with-the-2026-swarthmore-lecture-oxford/>.

Forest Foxes

Saturday 18th July 2:30–5pm, Hill End Outdoor Education Centre, Botley, OX2 9NJ.

All 10–14 year-olds are welcome to join for Quaker-led adventure, friendship and fire with Julia Dover. To book, please contact JuliaD@quaker.org.uk by Tuesday 14th July.

‘Way to Welcome’ Bring & Share Lunch

Friday 24th July 12:30–3pm, Burford Meeting House.

An afternoon for Friends to spark ideas, excitement and curiosity about new ways to nurture vibrant all-age connections.

Julia Dover has just over one more year in her role working with OSAM Quakers to support you to offer opportunities for all ages and connect across generations. The Local Support Group would love to welcome you to share ideas for children’s, youth and family development work. They hope to grow connections between Friends and generate enthusiasm and ideas for what is possible in welcoming people of all ages in our communities.

Please bring:

- A dish for the bring and share lunch.
- Any ideas you want to develop and that might benefit from Julia’s support

Please fill in this form to let us know if you are coming: <https://forms.office.com/e/DCgiCRA3hQ>

Local Events of Quaker Interest

Talk: Practical Wildlife Gardening

Wednesday 15th July 7:30pm, Abingdon Baptist Church, 35 Ock Street.

Dr Steve Head, founder patron of the Wildlife Gardening Forum, will be speaking at the July meeting of Abingdon Carbon Cutters. All welcome.



Talk and Discussion: Healing the Planet

Thursday 23rd July 2pm, Kempster Room, Climate Emergency Centre, Market Square (underneath the Museum).

Dr. Sailesh Rao is the Founder and Executive Director of Climate Healers, a non-profit organisation dedicated towards healing the Earth’s climate. He will be speaking at this meeting organised by the Climate Emergency Centre.

Dr Rao is the author of *A Guide to Planet B*: ‘a practical roadmap from crisis to flourishing, ... from extractive to regenerative, from violent to compassionate, from dying to thriving.’ You can download a copy for free at <https://climatehealers.org/for-you/books/>.

Hiroshima Exhibition, Ceremony and Lantern Floating

Thursday 6th August 7pm onwards, St Ethelwold's House.

Abingdon Peace Group invites you to their annual commemoration, which includes a ceremony around the Peace Pole at 7:30pm and a procession to the river at 8pm to float the lanterns. The lanterns were painted by students at a school in Hiroshima and have been given to us by Hiroshima Coventry Club, a friendship group between the two cities.



Film: People's Emergency Briefing

Wednesday 16th September 7:30pm, Abingdon Baptist Church, 35 Ock Street.

In November 2025, the National Emergency Briefing brought together leading experts to present the latest evidence on the climate and nature crisis to politicians and other influential people in Westminster. This new 50-minute film sets out the risks facing the nation — and the credible, positive responses available — in a clear and accessible account based on authoritative scientific content from the 2025 meeting. It will deliver the frank facts about the threats, but also the enormous benefits if Government leads genuine emergency action.

Designed for screenings in communities across the UK, the film is being shown at the September meeting of Abingdon Carbon Cutters. For further information, including other dates and venues, visit <https://www.nebriefing.org/the-film>.

Please register for the event at <https://buytickets.at/abingdoncarboncutters>.

Among Abingdon Friends

Poem of the Month

From the Poetry Group

We went star-gazing — attending to both literal and metaphorical astral bodies — at our meeting in June, and shared our customary eclectic range of verses. A number of poets featured more than once: Gerald Manley Hopkins, Sara Teasdale and the Canadian astronomer Rebecca Elson. For poem of the month we picked one by Sara Teasdale, read at the meeting by Iain:

Stars

Alone in the night
On a dark hill
With pines around me
Spicy and still,

And a heaven full of stars
Over my head,
White and topaz
And misty red;

Myriads with beating
Hearts of fire
That aeons

Cannot vex or tire;
Up the dome of heaven
Like a great hill,
I watch them marching
Stately and still,
And I know that I
Am honored to be
Witness
Of so much majesty.

Sara Teasdale

Iain also drew our attention to a musical setting of the poem by the Estonian Composer Eriks Ešvalds. You can watch the world première performance of this atmospheric and deeply moving piece by the Salt Lake Vocal Artists, to the accompaniment of tuned glasses and Tibetan singing bowls: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWdjF2K2bZA>.

News of Friends

We hold in the Light **Joe Wheeler** and his family — Anna, Edith and baby Flo — following Flo's recent admission to hospital. Flo is the youngest member our Meeting and we hope to see her at Meeting again very soon.

We send our love and sympathy to **Esther Peacock** on the unexpected passing of her mother in early June. 'When others mourn, let your love embrace them' (Advices & Queries 30).



Miscellany

The Promise of Quaker Community

'Community is not an optional extra'. In the latest post on his *Quaker Renewal* blog, Craig Barnett reminds us that being a Quaker is not just about the individual's silent worship, but is equally about our need for each other to learn and carry out the core practices of worship, discernment and testimony. A Quaker community is 'a place where we know each other and are known, where we are challenged as well as accepted', not only when we meet on Sundays, but also when we spend time together, whether socially or in small groups. In Abingdon Meeting we can point to our Learning Sundays, reading groups, 'Becoming Friends' sessions, poetry group and annual outing.

As Craig points out, 'A Quaker community is not just a group of individuals with common interests.' Rather, in a living Quaker community we can experience 'a profound spiritual reality; that we need each other, that we were made for sharing and mutual service, and this is where our flourishing and the peace of the world can be found.'

You can read Craig's post in full at <https://quakerrenewal.substack.com/p/the-promise-of-community>.

Worfolk Holiday Cottage: An Eco-Friendly Retreat

Worfolk is a welcoming, eco-friendly holiday cottage located on the east Yorkshire coast between Whitby and Scarborough. Rooted in Quaker heritage dating back to 1659 and now cared for by Pickering & Hull Area Meeting, it offers a peaceful, though fully restored, retreat powered by

renewable energy. The cottage sleeps up to 14 people and features a spacious open-plan kitchen and dining area, ideal for family gatherings, reunions, retreats, or use as a Quaker study centre.

A 10% discount is available to Quakers during the off-peak season, with reduced rates for Quaker groups.

For more information, and to book, visit <https://worfolkcottage.com/>.



Opening Up at the Abbey Centre: July Rota

5th	Chris	Esther
12th	Alan	Eryl
19th	Anne	Clark
26th	Auriel	Richard

Next Month...

Please send your contributions for the August issue (in words and/or pictures) to the editors by **Saturday 25th July**.

Abingdon Local Quaker Meeting

<https://abingdonquakers.org.uk> | <https://www.facebook.com/AbingdonQuakers/>

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