

Abingdon Quaker Meeting Newsletter

October 2026

No. 445

Meetings for Worship

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

Thursday 1st October 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 4th October	3pm onwards	World Quaker Day: Global online MfW
Friday 16th October	7:30pm	) Becoming Friends: session 5, Dorothea's Room,
Saturday 17th October	2:30pm	) St Ethelwold's House
Saturday 17th October	10—4	Regional Meeting, Reading Meeting House
Sunday 25th October	After MfW	Business Meeting

'We Don't Have Children, Just Dogs': A Visit to Marazion Quaker Meeting

Chris and Kate Sewell made a Friendly visit on their travels during the summer:

On a warm sunny Sunday in Cornwall, what better way to spend the morning than to visit Marazion Quaker Meeting? The stone-built meeting house is the oldest public building in Marazion and sits perched on a hill overlooking the iconic St Michael's Mount. There it has stood since 1688, built by some of the first Quakers in Cornwall, who had been convinced by George Fox's message during his three visits to the county.



We were warmly welcomed by an elderly Friend sitting outside in the sunshine who showed us the entrance. The meeting room is plain and simple. As we sat on a somewhat creaky bench we looked through the main window and saw, perfectly framed, St. Michael's Mount above the rooftops.

The walls were painted pure white from floor to high ceiling. But the simplicity should not deceive. From the ceiling hung a digital projector which projected an image of the meeting, as it gathered, onto the wall above the old, slightly raised elders' bench which could be viewed online by several remote attenders. Gathering for this group of Friends meant also settling in two canine 'Friends' who lay peacefully on their rugs throughout meeting with hardly a whimper. In talking with members after meeting, we said our meeting was blessed with several families with children. A member commented 'We don't have children, just dogs'.

After the meeting had settled a Friend spoke about her deep sadness at the death of the Cambridge sociologist Jason Arday, saying that she had been praying for him and all his family. A theme of forgiveness developed with many deep and helpful contributions. Afterwords was a brief opportunity to speak, which no one responded to. We were welcomed by the Clerk whom we later hugged warmly as we discovered a strong mutual friendship with some friends in the Lake District, where he had once been their Anglican priest! We sent Abingdon Meeting's greetings, which were reciprocated.

After many friendly conversations, in which we made several connections between Marazion and Abingdon Friends, including one of Roger Baker's best friends, we stepped outside into their peaceful garden, sat in a beautiful stone circle seat, examined their burial ground and admired their strikingly simple Peace Pole before going on our way back into bustling streets full of holidaymakers. A treasured addition to our holiday.



For more information about Friends in Cornwall, visit: <https://quakersincornwall.org.uk/>.

Silent Walking Vigil for Peace

Judith Baker writes:

Tim, Johan and I took part in the Quaker silent walking vigil for peace in central London on Saturday, 19th September. Other Friends joined other vigils around the country, it being the Saturday closest to the international day of peace on 21st September. We had been asked to wear white and not to bring any placards or banners, but to focus on silent prayer and inner stillness as we walked. Quakers were joined by people from other churches, faiths and those of no professed faith. We held two meetings for worship: at the beginning in Victoria gardens and the end in the courtyard of St Martin-in-the-Fields. An uplifting and hopeful experience for all concerned.



Abingdon Quaker Matters

All-Age Meeting and Summer Outing: Sunday 20th September Image

From Liz Matthews:

Sunday 20th September was a happy day for the Meeting: an all-age Meeting for Worship in the morning created a warm and family-like atmosphere, setting us up perfectly for our annual outing in the afternoon.

The all-age Meeting was our contribution to Word Quaker Day (4th October), with the theme 'Let Peace Be Among Us'. The adults held their normal silent worship for the first half-hour while children prepared for the half-hour of semi-programmed worship.

Chris introduced the second half-hour by reminding us of the Advice and Query (number 19) that enjoins us to 'Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognise the gifts they bring.'

Kate read the story of Jesus calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee (Mark 4: 35—41), from the point of view of the ship's mouse, who was both intrigued by this man who was capable of sleeping through the tempest and impressed by the immediate cessation of the wind and waves on his command: 'Peace, be still'. Then, led by Tim and the children equipped with rain makers and blue scarves representing the waves, we collectively brewed up a storm. When calm returned, Iain read a poem that he'd composed specially for the event and Sally introduced a short guided worship. We may often say that we have can't have an impact by ourselves as we're only a drop on the ocean — but, as Sally pointed out, the ocean is composed of millions of drops. So, she asked us to reflect on, and share, the drop that each of us feels they can contribute. Some lovely thoughtful responses ensued.

The Meeting closed with the singing of 'I've got Peace Like a River' accompanied by Tim on his ukulele.

Thirty-seven adults and 11 children then made their way to the BBOWT Nature Discovery Centre at Thatcham for our annual outing. We had a room to ourselves which opened onto the terrace. BBOWT staff had kindly roped off a section of the terrace and erected a gazebo to shade us from the welcome, but still strong, sunshine. It was lovely to have the families with us, and to see Hetty and Ernest again. The geese and ducks honked and quacked vociferously on the lake, and we also spotted great crested grebe and cormorants. Many of us went for a stroll around the lake, shaded by the willows and other trees. We broke up reluctantly when the Centre buildings closed at 4pm.

We thank the Children's Committee and the organising group (Kate, Judy, Auriel and Sally) for a truly memorable day.

A number of Friends have sent photographs from the outing, which we will share separately.



Annual Appeal for Contributions to Abingdon Meeting

From the Treasurer:

The Meeting's finances are in reasonable shape; however, we need to increase this year's income a little more before we can send our annual donation to Britain Yearly Meeting in November.

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, please make the cheque payable to Abingdon Quaker Meeting and send it by post to Liz Matthews (address in the list of members) as soon as convenient for you. If you plan to make a contribution but won't be able to do so before November, please let Liz know. Thank you.



Business Meeting: Sunday 25th October

Please note the earlier date. Items for the agenda items should be notified to our Clerk, Jenny Carr, by Wednesday 21st October: abingdonquakers@gmail.com.

Monthly Appeal: Quaker Action on Drugs and Alcohol

From Anita Wickens:

Those of us who take *The Friend* will have seen the regular inserts with news from Quaker Action on Drugs and Alcohol (QAAD).

QAAD says that while they do not speak on behalf of BYM, all their public work is based firmly on Quaker principles and informed by their faith.

QAAD monitors trends and policy developments and investigates differing perspectives. This helps to ensure that their responses to government and other consultations and discussions are always evidence led.

When QAAD looks at drugs, it argues that the development of a public health and harm reduction framework is better than one led primarily by criminal justice. Its work includes the impact of legal and prescribed drugs which can lead to problems, including dependency.

With regard to gambling, QAAD says it approaches its work on gambling-related harm in the same way: that is, by working from an evidence base and working from the Quaker values of compassion and inclusivity. It became focussed on gambling harm when the 2005 Gambling Act liberalised the law and regulations. A significant concern is the exposure of young people to gambling advertising on TV, online and via mobile apps.

And with alcohol, QAAD states that its work is also founded on the evidence base, which shows that some groups, and some people, are more vulnerable to developing problems than others — mainly because of social and/or personal factors. There is also considerable evidence that the affordability of alcohol, its availability, and cultural attitudes all have a bearing on how widespread alcohol problems become, as do social inequalities.

In other matters, QAAD's Director provides support to adult Friends troubled by these issues and also to family members and friends who are, or have been, affected. Although not a counselling organisation, QAAD does offer the opportunity to talk in complete confidence about these problems. QAAD can also advise on sources of information and specialist support and, when appropriate, facilitate supportive and confidential links between Friends with similar experiences.



QAAD can attend Area and Local Meetings by invitation. To find out more, including details of QAAD events, visit <https://qaad.org/>.

You can donate in these ways:

- **Cash** when the appeal is made after Meeting on two Sundays in October. Gift Aid forms should be available if you are a UK taxpayer.
- **BACS payment (online banking):**
Sort code: 60-83-01 Unity Trust Bank Plc
Account no.: 20547080 Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs
- **Cheque** payable to Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs. Send it to Peter Warm, 16A Stone Hall Flats, Plymouth PL1 3QZ.

If donating by online banking or cheque, you can download a Gift Aid form at <https://qaad.org/donate>. Send it to the address above.

Thank you.

QAAD is a registered charity, no. 1059310.

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.

July: Oxford Friends Action on Poverty	£110
August: Mi Casa es Tu Casa c/o Apoyo Comunitario	£155
September: The Abingdon Bridge	£170

Around the Area and Region

Berkshire and Oxfordshire Regional Meeting: What Can We Do For Prison Leavers?

Saturday 17th October 10—4, Reading Meeting House, 2 Church Street, Reading RG1 2SB.

The next Regional Meeting will explore how we can help prison leavers into our Meetings. Robert Wilson from Quakers in Criminal Justice (QCIJ) will talk about how we can indeed welcome prison leavers into our Meetings. QCIJ has produced a guidance document on how this can be achieved in a caring, competent way paying all due attention to any safeguarding issues. A former prisoner now in the community will speak about how his Meeting has helped him. Another former prisoner has written about how important it was for him to be accepted into the community; his contribution will be read out. A representative from Prison Phoenix Trust will also speak contributing. After lunch, there will be a talk from Circles of Support and Accountability, alongside another prison leaver who has experience of being in a Circle.

If you are unable to be there in person, you can watch the event on Zoom. Send an email to the organiser, Naomi Iliff, for the link: naomi@iliff.co.uk.

Please bring your own lunch. Tea will be served at the end of the meeting.

Jenny Carr writes: 'I have known Naomi Iliff for a long time on QCIJ and with regard to supporting one particular prisoner. She has extensive experience working with men both inside prison and outside in the community. I am sure this Regional Meeting will be a very interesting one and worthwhile, as we all need to think about how we would welcome prison leavers to our Meetings.'

Forest Foxes Nature Socials

Sunday 31st October 2—4:30, Hill End Outdoor Education Centre OX2 9NJ.

All 11–16 year olds are welcome to join Quaker-led woodland adventures, friendship and fire. To book, please contact JuliaD@quaker.org.uk.

Adult Friends are welcome to help: please let Julia know if you are interested.

The next session will be on Sunday 6th December.

Local Events of Quaker Interest

Abingdon Carbon Cutters

Wednesday 21st October 7.30pm, Abingdon Baptist Church, 35 Ock Street.

In the first follow-up to the showing of the People's Emergency Briefing, our October meeting will explore how our food system could change to help us all to live more sustainably. The talk will be given by John Ingram, Associate Professor and Senior Research Fellow at Somerville College, who specialised in planning for food system sustainability and resilience. Everyone is welcome.

Abingdon Peace Group

The peace vigils continue every Monday from 8:15–8:45am every Monday at the War Memorial.

Abolishing War – Challenges and Opportunities: Celebrating MAW at 25
Thursday 29 October 7:30pm on Zoom.

The Movement for the Abolition of War is 25 this year and warmly invite you to an online meeting to mark the occasion. Starting with a photo presentation looking back over the past 25 years, our speakers will tell us what they see as hopeful signs towards positive change.

To register, visit <https://abolishwar.net/happy-25th/>.

The poster is for an event by Abingdon Carbon Cutters. It features a green background with a large white bowl of food in the top right. The text 'acc' is in the top left, with 'Abingdon carbon cutters' below it. The main title is 'EATING WELL FOR THE PLANET: What Needs to Change – and Who Has to Do What to Make it Happen'. The date and time are 'Weds 21st Oct 7.30pm'. The location is 'Abingdon Baptist Church, 35 Ock St, OX14 5AG'. The speaker is 'Dr John Ingram, specialist in planning for food system sustainability and resilience.'. There are three circular images: a man in a hat working in a field, a field of crops, and a portrait of Dr John Ingram. The bottom of the poster includes the email 'carbon.cutters@gmail.com' and the website 'www.abingdoncarboncutters.org.uk'.

acc
Abingdon carbon cutters

EATING WELL FOR THE PLANET:
What Needs to Change – and Who Has to Do What to Make it Happen

Weds 21st Oct 7.30pm

Abingdon Baptist Church, 35 Ock St, OX14 5AG

Speaker:
Dr John Ingram,
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www.abingdoncarboncutters.org.uk

Among Abingdon Friends

Poem of the Month

From the Poetry Group:

The September meeting addressed the theme of 'Love' in all its manifestations. Poem of the Month, 'The Manhunt' by Simon Armitage, was read to the group by Eryl. It was originally written for a Channel 4 documentary, 'Forgotten Heroes: The Not Dead' (2007), directed by Brian Hill, which explores the mental and physical scars of warfare through the stories of three men, including Fusilier Eddie Beddoes, who served as a peacekeeper in the Balkans conflict during the 1990s. Simon Armitage wrote a series of poems based on each veteran's account of his experiences and their aftermath. In the film Eddie's wife Laura recites 'The Manhunt' as she looks straight at the camera:

The Manhunt

After the first phase,
after passionate nights and intimate days,

only then would he let me trace
the frozen river which ran through his face,

only then would he let me explore
the blown hinge of his lower jaw,

and handle and hold
the damaged, porcelain collar-bone,

and mind and attend
the fractured rudder of shoulder-blade,

and finger and thumb
the parachute silk of his punctured lung.

Only then could I bind the struts
and climb the rungs of his broken ribs,

and feel the hurt
of his grazed heart.

Skirting along,
only then could I picture the scan,

the foetus of metal beneath his chest
where the bullet had finally come to rest.

Then I widened the search,
traced the scarring back to its source

to a sweating, unexploded mine
buried deep in his mind, around which

every nerve in his body had tightened and closed.
Then, and only then, did I come close.

Simon Armitage

You can learn Eddie's story and watch Laura recite the poem in this clip from the documentary on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGX4vwXvek4>.

Churches Together in England: All Ecumenical Representatives Conference

Clark Seanor writes:

I attended the Churches Together in England All Ecumenical Representatives conference from 29th September to 1st October, alongside several other Quakers. I was acting as a young people's representative for the Quakers, having responded to a call for a young Friend to attend this conference. I was fortunate to receive a Young Adults Events & Learning grant covering the costs of my attendance. I am writing this report in the service of encouraging the participation of other young Friends in events that bring people from different churches into the same space to discuss matters of faith and society.

The depth of sincerity and open-hearted engagement between people from different denominations, who were mostly involved specifically as faith leaders, and often ordained, was heartening to witness. I never felt unable to engage or participate in discussions due to the differences in Quaker structures. One of the other representatives, during a discussion, said: 'The more we become united with Christ, the more people will meet Christ when they meet us.' I continually felt as though I was meeting Christ in the people I met there, again and again, across and through our differences and similarities.

It was informative to hear how other churches are responding to nationalist and fascistic movements that adopt the symbolism and language associated with Christianity. Some churches were more involved in counter-protesting. Others made attempts to reach the demonstrators across the political line: to hear why they were there and to show them empathy. Some people noted that political divisions within their congregations and between their churches were damaging relationships and making them 'ungovernable'. Some were concerned that while they wanted to welcome people who came to church following involvement in the far right like any other person, this posed challenges that they did not feel equipped for. We heard warnings of the complicity, and then active participation, of the German church in the Holocaust, and the necessity of recognising nationalism as a thing that can have similar properties to religion.

We didn't talk about relationship-building with people on the left; at least, not in the conversations I was involved in. I wasn't sure if it was because of a sense of alignment between the churches and the counter-protestors in the demonstrations they tended to both attend, or a discomfort with acknowledging how they might also be positioned as an 'other'; I felt as though this was a deep and apparent lack, a failure to ask the same questions. *Why are you so concerned that you are at this protest? What matters to you?* This is a fraught conversation, but no more fraught than holding it with people who have become convinced of fascism. We talked about non-proselytisation, about invitations without expectations, about favouring the language of 'come and see' over directives to 'go and be'. This grace could be extended further, an open curiosity toward people we may be more inclined to see as allies.

I attended this conference primarily to listen and to learn. I found this continually reciprocated, and I hope that young Quakers will be afforded the opportunity to continue in this work.

News of Friends

We send love and best wishes for a smooth recovery to **Phil Wield**, who recently underwent surgery. Our love also goes to **Wendy Regaard**, who is out of hospital and receiving care at home.

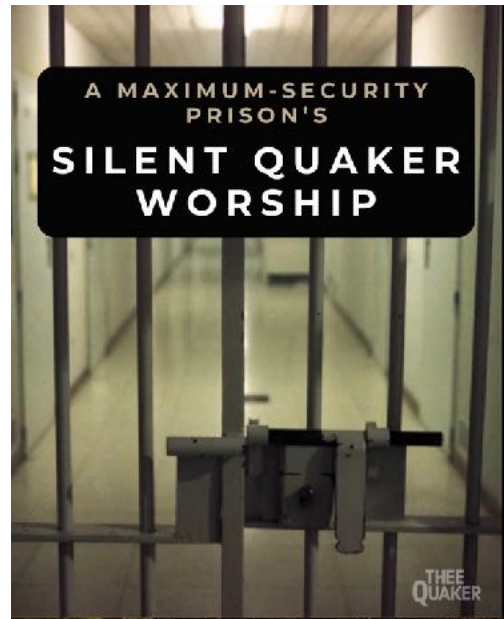
Miscellany

A Quaker Meeting in a Prison

Reproduced, with kind permission (and minor edits), from a post on Facebook by Thee Quaker on 17th August 2026:

There has been a Quaker meeting inside Green Haven Correctional Facility, a maximum-security men's prison in Stormville, New York, for over 50 years. Up to 15 attenders gather together weekly for silent worship and fellowship.

Green Haven Correctional Facility is where the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), the now-worldwide conflict transformation and trauma resilience program, got its start. Founded in 1975 by Quakers and incarcerated people, it uses experiential workshops to help people handle anger, build communication skills, and resolve conflicts without violence. Some men incarcerated in Green Haven come to Meeting for the first time after hearing about Quakers at an AVP workshop.



Incarcerated Friends at Green Haven have had some of their religious freedom taken away in recent years. In 2015 they lost permission to gather for quarterly meetings, and in 2018 they were no longer allowed to hold their weekly meeting for business on the supposed basis that it 'does not appear to be a study group or a worship service and therefore does not appear necessary'. They have been supported by outside Friends and legal action is ongoing. Last year Friends also lost their weekly spiritual study group, as the prison said it did not have enough officers to supervise.

Quaker ministry in prisons goes back to the earliest days of the Religious Society, when many Friends were imprisoned for their faith.

From one volunteer at Green Haven:

'Incarcerated people are deeply touched by the presence of outside Friends: we listen to their spiritual journeys, share our own, and bring a profound respect for them. And prison worship touches me, too. I find an inspiring level of connection, honesty, dignity, and inner strength in the prison circle.'

Thee Quaker Project: <https://theequaker.org/>.

Wendell Berry: Poet, Ethical Farmer and Man of Faith

The death was announced in August of Wendell Berry, an American poet whose practice of environmentally conscious farming was rooted in his strong Christian Baptist faith. Members of our poetry group will be familiar with the poetic legacy of this remarkable man, and you can read more about his environmental ethics and role in the movement for sustainable farming in three articles in The Conversation:



<https://theconversation.com/wendell-berry-spent-his-life-farming-and-writing-his-legacy-is-an-ethic-of-care-for-the-natural-world-292047>

<https://theconversation.com/farmer-poet-wendell-berrys-environmental-ethics-were-deeply-rooted-in-his-christian-faith-and-belief-in-caring-for-creation-291025>

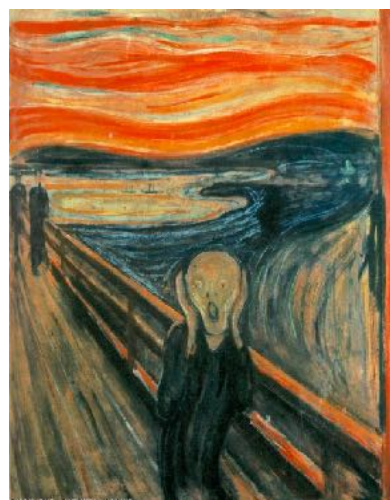
<https://theconversation.com/what-wendell-berry-meant-to-christian-farmers-going-green-291756>

When the News Becomes Too Depressing...

Following on from some heartfelt ministries shared on 13th September, Liz Matthews writes:

Climate change, wars, the rise of the Far Right, predictions that AI could eradicate humanity... The urge to turn off the news is hard to resist. Indeed, according to a 2025 Reuters study, 40% of people are avoiding the news (*The Guardian*, 11/01/26¹). Though understandable, is this the wisest course of action?

Seth Ashley, Professor of Communication and Media at Boise State University in the USA, suggests that we remain engaged with current events but practise “news hygiene”, by developing strong news literacy skills² and learning to resist misinformation.² The strategies that he proposes include asking questions: Who has written the article? Do they give their sources? Can you find the same information in other outlets? As he says:



‘Democracy relies on an informed and active citizenry to hold accountable their government and the officials who work in it as well as other powerful players in society. ... Read deeply, look beyond headlines and short video clips, question the framing of stories.’

He also recommends restricting amount of time that we spend reading the news: maybe keeping to as little as 30 minutes a day. Then turn off your digital devices, go outside and connect with nature to ‘calm and soothe your busy brain’, and make contact with friends and family in real life.

On a spiritual level, Justine Toh suggests that devotional readings — prayers, reflections or Bible verses — may also help, such as the prayer by William Wilberforce that asks God for ‘more love, more humility, more faith, more hope, more peace and joy’.¹ To this we can add Sally’s recommendation, in Afterwords on 13th September, to reflect on Paul’s words in Philippians 4:8:

‘whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.’

Finally, let these words calm you. They are from ‘Peace, Be Still’, a poem composed by Iain and read by him at our All-Age meeting on 20th September:

Peace, Be Still

While the world whirls, wild with wind

With wars, the strident storms of climate

And the whims of the wealthy,

Peace, Be Still

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/jan/11/dont-avoid-news-headlines-read-better>

² <https://theconversation.com/exhausted-by-the-news-here-are-6-strategies-to-stay-informed-without-getting-overwhelmed-or-misled-by-misinformation-248807>

Opening Up at the Abbey Centre: October Rota - from Auriel

4th	Richard	Alan
11th	Esther	Eryl
18th	Clark	Anne
25th	Laura	Chris

Next Month...

Please send your contributions for the November issue (in words and/or pictures) to the editors at newsletter@abingdonquakers.org.uk by **Sunday 25th October**. Thank you.



The Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Ascension in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Abingdon Local Quaker Meeting

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

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