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Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
2022 Interim Minutes and Reports

Canadian Yearly Meeting was founded in 1955 by Friends in Canada from Canada Yearly Meeting (Five Years Meeting)
Genesee Yearly Meeting (General Conference)

Canada Yearly Meeting (Conservative)

Since 1955 many new Meetings and individual members have joined Canadian Yearly Meeting. The designation above was approved in 1955 to be included in all published reports and minutes to indicate the pre-existing legal entities now incorporated in Canadian Yearly Meeting.

These documents are published online
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MEMORIAL MINUTES 2021–2022

Cutler, Christopher Benjamin 18 November 1960 – 7 February 2022

Christopher (Chris) Benjamin Cutler was sixty-one years old when he suffered an unexpected and fatal heart attack. His passionate and vibrant life was characterized by service to others as he placed his religious faith into practice. He is missed by the Hamilton Meeting community, where he was an active and vivacious influence, meeting individual's needs and working for the common good.

Chris became a member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in 2010. His religious beliefs were initially honed by his early upbringing in The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons). After considerable personal struggle, his religious evolution continued as he was drawn to become a member of Hamilton Friends in which his sincerity of faith was supported, recognized, and honored.

Chris lived an exceptional public life including involvement in many civic groups including: the Beverly Heritage Society, the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council, and the St Leonard's Society, and he was also a mayoral advisor and a member of the Gandhi Peace Festival. Chris liked to be practical and get things done. His calm reassuring manner inspired others to work together to accomplish an impressive list of achievements. He serves as president of the Rotary Club of Hamilton, Chair of the Hamilton branch of the St Leonard's Society, National Co-Chair of the Canadian Peace Initiative, and City Councilor for the Town of Flamborough. He was also a Paul Harris Fellow and a recipient of the YMCA Peace Medal. In anticipating the future, Chris helped to lay a foundation for the Commonwealth Games for Hamilton in 2030.

Chris knew how to “talk with crowds and keep [his] virtue, or walk with kings – nor lose the common touch.” He let his life speak. There is no doubt that he has left a lasting impact. He exemplified the Quaker Testimonies of Integrity, Peace, Stewardship of the Environment, and Community. In Chris, the contemplative practice of Quaker worship and the energetic public life, far from being opposites, supported each other. He was nourished both by seeking inner peace and by being of active service to others.

Muller, Robert Andrew

10 December 1943 – 14 October 2021

Robert Andrew Muller – Andy – was born in Montréal, Québec, on the tenth of December, 1943, to Helen McMaster and Francis Bernard Muller. After his parents divorced and remarried, a half-sister, Brenda Muller, was born to Bernard and his wife Edith, and a second sister, Hester Paulin, was adopted by Helen and Murray Paulin. Andy grew up in Toronto and returned to Montréal to attend McGill University for a Bachelor degree. A high achiever, he decided to pursue a PhD in the field of economics, and accomplished that goal at the University of Toronto, where he received both an MA and a PhD.

In Toronto he met Janis Suzanne Whitehead at a Unitarian youth group and was captivated by her liveliness and positive approach to life. They were married in 1969 at St. Lawrence Hall in Toronto. Their daughter Krista was born in Toronto in 1972. That year Andy accepted a position in the department of economics at McMaster University, and the couple moved to Hamilton.

Their daughter Elise was born in 1976, and the couple felt the need for a spiritual home for their young family. They worshipped for a time in several different churches, including the Unitarian Universalist church. A presentation by Helen Brink, a Hamilton Friend, followed by Janis's dream telling her to "Go to the Quaker Church," led them to Quakers. They began attending Hamilton Monthly Meeting around 1980. This proved to be the home they were seeking.

Andy and Janis quickly became involved in the life of the Meeting, and Krista and Elise seemed happy attending First Day School. The group of children around their age grew very close, and continued as a lively First Day School throughout their years of public school and high school. John Andrew, born in 1986, after his parents came to Hamilton Meeting, became part of a younger but also enthusiastic and connected First Day School group.

Andy and Janis were part of the First Day School Committee, which was made up mainly of parents of the children. The committee shared much of the teaching of the children, recruited other teachers from the Meeting, planned special activities, and met twice a year in the homes of the parents, which of course included the Mullers, where committee members were always welcomed with merriment and good food.

Andy served Hamilton Meeting in several capacities over the years. In addition to the First Day School Committee, he took on the role of Treasurer for a long term of service. In that capacity, Andy always combined his knowledge of finance with a clear vision of the necessity for a solid monetary basis for the work that Quakers want to do: keeping up and sharing a welcoming and comfortable meeting house; sponsoring and assisting refugees; supporting organizations that promote the welfare of the wider community; and more.

Andy also served the Meeting as Clerk. His smile as he brought First Day worship to a close, or presided in a meeting for worship for business, affirmed the friendship of Friends and inspired us to maintain positive connections and outlook.

In a sharing session following a potluck supper one evening, Friends spoke of their beliefs about religion, faith, spirit, and the divine. Without betraying the confidence of that intimate occasion, it can be said that Andy's description of his faith in something holy within everyone – a pervasive and embracing spirit in the world – was an explanation and an affirmation of his open, caring, involved, and loving approach to all those he came in contact with and to everything around him.

He nurtured this sense of connection with a universal spirit not only in Quaker worship, but in meditation and mindfulness practices. Andy drew on a variety of spiritual resources to make him the person he was. Friends described him as "forthright but kind," "a man of integrity," "a faithful friend," "both a seeker and a doer".

He was an exemplary husband, parent, and friend who cared deeply about his family and the many long-time friends he made in every sphere in which he moved. Big family get-togethers, good times at the cottage, attending symphony concerts with colleagues from the university, travels around the world from his youth through his later years – all these activities and more expressed his enthusiasm for life and caring for others. He loved the out-of-doors, skiing and canoeing with enthusiasm and skill and teaching his children. He also sang with a senior's choir and danced in a senior's musical production each year until those activities were curtailed by the pandemic.

In recent years Andy suffered from Parkinson's disease, an illness that his mother also suffered, and through which he had supported her with love and strength. It is a cruel affliction that no doubt brought him – privately – to many a low point, but he faced it with courage, knowledge, and hope. In his typical style he found out everything he could about Parkinson's and what could possibly be done about it, and then made carefully-considered decisions about his health and lifestyle. He continued to be active and positive in the life of the Meeting. When the pandemic forced our community into online worship, Andy was a loyal participant, and his spirit flowed over the airwaves to nourish our worship. When outdoor worship in person was possible, and later when carefully-restricted in-person indoor worship was instituted, Andy participated in those too.

He remained an active and valued part of Meeting until the last week of his life, when a stroke and a serious fall sent him to Hamilton General Hospital. He was well-cared-for, but doctors soon determined that any recovery would be slight. This was definitely not Andy's style, and his spirit chose rather to leave this life. He slipped away, with his family beside him, on 14 October 2021. Hamilton Friends feel his loss keenly, while recognizing that this was what needed to happen. We will miss his abundant presence.

Sanders, Margaret Ann
25 March 1947 – 31 May 2021

Margaret Ann Sanders was born on 25 March 1947 in Cinnaminson, New Jersey (USA) and departed this life on 31 May 2021 in Ottawa, Ontario. Her Memorial Meeting was held in the Ottawa Monthly Meeting virtual meeting space on August 14, 2021 due to restrictions on gathering in person during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fifty people gathered from across Canada and from New Jersey and Arizona in the United States.

Margaret grew up in New Jersey with her mother Minnie and father William along with her sisters Shirley, Patricia, and Joyce and her brother William, Jr, whom she helped raise. She regularly attended the Baptist Church, where her father was minister, and became the superintendent of the Sunday School at a young age.

Like many African-American families in her community, Margaret's parents insisted on serious study. The children were taught to read before attending school by reading the local newspapers. Margaret was a bright and capable child whose intelligence was hard to hide. Though the community was not strictly segregated, a white classmate from Cinnaminson reported: "There was an invisible curtain between the white kids and the black kids ... There was certainly no interracial dating or dancing. That possibility was literally unthinkable. What's more, we were both good students and we paid a price for that too. Kids on the honor roll had to learn how to fight."

Margaret graduated from high school and then attended Temple University, Philadelphia where she received a nursing diploma. In 1969, in strong opposition to the Vietnam War she came to Canada with her then husband to avoid the military draft. Margaret had been introduced to the Society of Friends by a Girl Scout leader as a young person and Quakers helped to get her and her husband to Toronto and Hamilton. She told her visiting committee about being hidden from the police by Quakers in Buffalo. As with many draft resisters, this action was difficult on Margaret's loving family. She divorced her husband about five years later. They had no children.

Margaret studied at the University of Ottawa, where she received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Her education continued at McGill University, Montreal, where she received a Master

of Science degree in Nursing. When Margaret first arrived at McGill, she was told by the department head that she could not attend. Margaret had to insist that she had been accepted based on her qualifications. Her studies at McGill continued to be fraught with racism though she was staunchly defended by her peers and accomplished her goals. She had many other personal stories of systemic racism in both the United States and Canada, but shared them very rarely and only to very close friends. Her battles for racial fairness were always understated. Sometimes a profound sadness would be evident, but she preferred to carry this alone.

Margaret worked and taught in several hospitals in Ottawa. For 27 years she was a Professor of Nursing at CEPEG Heritage College in Gatineau, Quebec, specializing in psychiatric nursing. Her accumulated wisdom shone through her life's work as a nursing educator: she was described by a former student as a brilliant and strict teacher. Margaret was also caring. Knowing that a student who was struggling financially likely had had no dinner, Margaret invited her to dine with her and proposed that we "eat dessert first," winning the student's agreement.

Margaret Sanders was welcomed into membership in Ottawa Monthly Meeting (OMM) on 7 January 1995. She was a faithful member of our Meeting, serving in many positions that kept the Meeting functioning. Margaret generously and often served on committees of care and of concern. Margaret also was instrumental in creating and holding custody of End of Life plans and was highly sensitive to end of life care for many of our members. She served on Ministry and Counsel, Nominating Committee, was a Marriage Registrar.

At the Yearly Meeting level, Margaret served as a member of Personnel Policy committee during a difficult transition time. She showed great empathy to all those in pain or confusion and reached out unbidden to many.

Margaret shared her journey as a Friend in excerpt 3.70 of *Canadian Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice*:

Meeting has given me more balance in living. Over time, the urge to rescue others has lessened as I increasingly brought their troubles, as well as my own, to Meeting and silently asked the Meeting to hold these people in the light. This new way of rescuing works much better. It has resulted in an increased sensitivity to the feelings of others and a higher capacity to listen without attempting to "fix" the situation or to rescue the person from her/his difficulties.

The increased balance allowed me to see that difficulties can be opportunities for an individual to reach new developmental milestones, to grow by solving the current crisis. It also helped me see that rescuing harms the people involved more often than it "saves" anyone. Margaret Sanders (1996).

Margaret was a reliable, conscientious, and courageous leader. She was an advocate for social issues and accepted that she had to educate people on the visceral effects of racism. Margaret worked with the Ottawa Police Services on the recruitment of women of colour. She was often called on to explain racial and colonial/imperial aspects of interpersonal difficulties.

As one of only a very few Friends of African descent in our Meeting, many of us felt that this was a burden that would have been kinder to share. She called us out for our hidden biases though many could not listen. She spoke in ways that were direct and blunt, and invited introspection. To those who could hear her, she gave a lasting gift.

Margaret would distance herself periodically from the Meeting when she found she needed to step back. This was a regular occurrence in her later years, and though she continued to nurture her friendships, she wondered if her absences were noticed. There were real reasons for this distancing, sometimes process-related and sometimes due to endemic racism, and there is some regret that these absences were not treated with the same attention as were her periods of attendance.

Margaret was a renaissance woman and did not indulge in self-promotion. She was, at once, a strong feminist and an iconoclast. In addition to English, Margaret spoke several languages: French, German and Kiswahili. She was an accomplished calligrapher, doll-maker, and miniaturist, a cat-lover and tae kwon do practitioner. She understood the healing nature of art and, combined with the friendship of shared activities, let it underpin many circles of friends. However, she was a very private person who did not invite intimacy, even in her final illness. Independence of spirit and action were central to her life.

One Friend, now passed on, said of Margaret: “I love Margaret and she loves me.” That simplicity holds the essence of Margaret’s relationships. Margaret was beautiful and graceful inside and out. She enjoyed authentic life and truly walked in this world as a Friend.

Showler, Frank Lloyd
17 August 1919 – 10 February 2022

Frank Lloyd Showler (“Lloyd” for Lloyd George) was born in Toronto of parents from Yorkshire, England. As a child he roller-skated all over the city. All pastors in the United Churches he attended discussed war and social issues, and in 1938 the United Church declared that war was contrary to the mind of Christ. The church backed away from this position in 1939, but Frank never did.

As a conscientious objector (CO) during the Second World War, Frank did alternative service in highway work camps in Ontario and British Columbia, and then served as an orderly in Toronto General Hospital; after he helped to organize a union, he was sent elsewhere. He also taught school in a Japanese internment camp in Lemon Creek, British Columbia.

Meanwhile, in the fall of 1943 Frank’s friend Walter Alexander invited him to a meeting at his parent’s home, where Frank met Walter’s sister Isabel. Frank and Isabel were both active in young adult groups at Carlton Street United Church and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). They kept in touch while Frank was teaching in Lemon Creek, and in 1946, Isabel joined Frank to teach Chippewa children in a two-room elementary school on Christian Island (now Beausoleil First Nation). They were married in Toronto in 1947.

Back in Toronto, Frank went to university, had several teaching positions, spent a year at Emmanuel College, and then went to work for the Ontario Department of Highways, first in Toronto and then in London, Ontario. In 1955 Frank and Isabel adopted five-year-old Stephen (now deceased) and in 1957, six-month-old Carolyn.

They also got involved in peace issues, including the Canadian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and Frank was on the board of the Student Christian Movement. Many family summer holidays were a combination of family camping and direct action with the groups such as the FOR. Frank also supported the grape boycott led by Cesar Chavez, and campaigned against the war in Vietnam.

Frank retired at age 60, and then spent two years on staff at the Canadian Friends Service Committee, but his peace work and activism were always more interesting and important to him. Frank and Isabel were often a first point of contact for Vietnam War resisters and they provided temporary housing for some of these young men in a strange city. Later they housed refugees from Chile and Central America. Frank also supported the Iraq War Resisters who, in turn, were influenced by his example.

Frank and Isabel had come to know Quakers in the course of their peace work, and when Isabel needed a different kind of worship experience than she had in the United Church, the family began to attend Quaker Meeting. Isabel joined Toronto Monthly Meeting in 1976. Frank remained a faithful attender, even sitting in his wheelchair in his last years, but he never became a member. He said it was partly because “I feel more passionate about peace, human rights, labour rights, and homelessness than I do about the running of Friends House.”

Frank seemed to be at *every* demonstration. People said that a demonstration didn’t officially start until he showed up! He was arrested a number of times (including the time he poured fake blood on the steps of Queens Park). At age 95 Frank joined the Toxic Tour to show solidarity with the Aamjiwnaang First Nation living close to Sarnia’s Chemical Valley.

Isabel died in February 2006, but Carolyn her family lived with Frank for many years, taking wonderful care of him. To know Frank, even briefly, was to feel recognized, cared about, and supported. Frank embodied the Quaker peace testimony in his faithful service. He invited all who attended Meeting for Worship to become involved the many activities he shared so passionately with everyone. When he was asked how, after a lifetime of social justice work, with all the obstacles he continued to face, he still kept going, he replied:

We are not called to be successful, but we are called to be faithful.

Verrall, Catherine
6 September 1943 – 7 March 2021

Mary Catherine MacGregor Fraser Verrall, first called Catriona (Gaelic), was born in Summerside, Prince Edward Island, although her ancestral roots were in Nova Scotia. Born in 1929 – the year women were declared “persons” under Canadian law – she spent her life being the change she hoped to see in the world. A life-long activist, writer, and educator, she engaged others to work on countless causes by her passion, her determination, and her endless capacity for hope and love.

In the 1950s she earned a BA in Philosophy and English from the University of Toronto, and met and married her great love, Arthur Verrall. Arthur became a United Church minister, and they supported each other in their work for justice and social change. It was a life-long, loving partnership.

As a mother, grandmother, and teacher, Catherine was a fierce defender of creativity, play, art, and music in childhood development. In her first years as a mother in Severn Bridge, in the Muskokas in Ontario, Catherine created a kindergarten in her rural home. When she moved to Halifax in 1961 (with three children under the age of four) the shock of the racism she witnessed motivated her to reach out to the New Horizons Baptist Church, located around the corner from Brunswick Street United where Arthur was the minister. Together they formed a partnership to create Brunswick-Cornwallis Pre-School, the first inter-racial pre-school in the Maritimes, “where people at every level met on a basis of equality.” The pre-school started in the Verrall’s home before moving to New Horizons.

Back in Ontario in the 1970s and 1980s, Catherine was an unconventional teacher in the conventional school system. She overcame her natural shyness to challenge the status quo and inspire young minds. Nothing seemed to deter her from doing what needed to be done for a cause she espoused: approaching strangers, knocking on doors, public speaking, and more. Her writings on parenting appeared in Ward Seven News and Chatelaine Magazine.

When the family moved from Toronto to Hamilton in 1975, she co-founded the Hamilton branch of the Canadian Alliance in Solidarity with Native Peoples (CASNP) – learning, campaigning, and publishing with that group. Her teacher’s guide – *All My Relations: Sharing Native Values Through the Arts*, created with Lenore Keeshig-Tobias and Shelley Niro – was used widely and she was involved from the beginning with the Indian Friendship Centre in Hamilton.

In Hamilton, Catherine also began attending Hamilton Monthly Meeting, where she quickly became an inspiration and an example of putting belief into action. At announcement time, following First Day worship, she usually had a notice of a cause to be supported, an action to be taken, or a protest to attend, and she often got us singing after Meeting. Catherine became a member of Hamilton Meeting in 1980, while steadfastly retaining her membership in the United Church. She clearly saw no limits to faith, just as she acknowledged no limits to her ability to work to make the world better.

In the 1990s, she and Arthur moved to Brantford. She retired from teaching but not from activism. Starting the Brantford Raging Grannies, co-founding the Citizens for Clean Water, and working for better transit and environmental protection, she carried on her lifelong campaign for a better world. The *Raging Grannies Songbook* was yet another of her projects. In 2001 she was officially thanked by the City of Brantford for “Being a champion of peace, social justice, democracy, the environment, and a healthy community.”

Hamilton Friends remember Catherine as a small, soft-spoken woman with a sweet and sincere smile on her face and enormous energy, motivation, and involvement. Though she perceived the need for change in many areas – education, indigenous relations, public transit, environmental protection, peace, community, democracy, and more – she never lost faith in the ability of people to be better and to do better. Her children and grandchildren and her communities, were beneficiaries of her loving and caring approach to everyone and everything she held dear.

In 2001 Catherine and Arthur moved to Regina to be closer to family. There she hosted the Quaker worship group in their home. Then in her seventies, she didn’t slow down. She joined groups working for the environment, peace, intercultural relations, economic justice, and more. She collected, by bicycle, signatures to support causes such as library preservation. She delivered – also on her bike – letters to 52 local agencies to gain support for the discounted transit pass, which was finally supported by City Council in 2009. She was the recipient of many awards in Regina, including one for *Every Bite Affects the World: An Earth Care Cookbook for Joyful, Mindful Eating*, published in 2016. This culminating work, created with a host of friends, shows how everything is connected. Proceeds from the sale will continue to go toward local sustainability projects.

Over the years, from Halifax to Toronto, Hamilton, Brantford, and Regina, she wrote articles for various publications and was the subject of many other articles, including a *Globe and Mail* piece by David Suzuki in 1989. Catherine never just sat and said what a bad thing was happening; she got going and did something about it.

In 2015 Catherine’s iconic pink bicycle was traded for a “trusty walker.” She regarded this and every other experience as an opportunity to learn and grow. Catherine loved walking in nature, reading, CBC Radio 2, bees, and dandelions. She saw the environment as encompassing the whole cosmos and recognized the inseparable link between the well-being of humans and the natural world. Each day she looked for new ways to walk more lightly on this earth. She was a spiritual seeker and innovator, finding spiritual community as a member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) as well as Saint James United Church.

Catherine was predeceased by her husband Arthur, and by chosen daughter Catherine Lambert, but is survived by her children Krys, Ann, Elizabeth, and Martin, and her four grandchildren. She had a long and productive life full of wonder and love. She lived strictly according to her principles, and did not quail to take on a cause. She was ever-thankful for the mystery and magic, the universal energy that surrounds and upholds us all. We may all hope to live up to the example of her profound engagement with everything that really mattered.

STATE OF SOCIETY REPORTS FOR 2021

In January 2022, when the Canadian Yearly Meeting Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel sent their usual letter to Meetings of Ministry and Counsel across Canada, in addition to their usual instructions and suggestions regarding the preparation of a State of Society Report, included the following comment with four queries. Since many of the State of Society reports comment on (and even quote) these queries, they are copied here for Friends' reference and also to avoid duplication.

This past year we have heard a concern about the increasing secularization of Quaker process, especially in the meeting for worship for business, a symptom, we believe, of a lack of shared understanding of core Quaker practices. The following queries are intended to help provide a focus, but you need not feel bound either to respond to all queries or to limit yourselves to these queries.

- 1 *[On Meeting for Worship for Business]* In Meeting for Worship for Business, do you take the time and discipline required to search for leadings to a decision that is not arrived at by consensus but by "sense of the meeting"? Do you place your meetings under the guidance of the Spirit that leads you to truth and unity?
- 2 *[On "Sense of the Meeting"]* How well does the following statement capture your understanding of the Meeting for Worship for Business? "In gathering the sense of the meeting the clerk must take into consideration that some Friends have more wisdom and experience than others and their conviction should therefore carry greater weight. The opposition of such Friends, cannot, as a rule, be disregarded." Howard Brinton, *Guide to Quaker Practice*
- 3 *[On Quaker Practices and Spirituality]* Do you reach out to the wider society with a confident Quaker message and invitation? How knowledgeable is your meeting about basic Quaker practices and spirituality? Do you teach the Quaker way to inquirers and seekers who are searching for a spiritual home? How do you nurture the spiritual life of children and young people in your meeting?
- 4 *[On Trust and Confidentiality]* When committees we have nominated to work on our behalf must operate under restraints of confidentiality, do we trust them to distinguish between information of legitimate interest to the meeting, and that which has been told in confidence? Do you support these Friends and offer helpful guidance when not in unity with their findings?

Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel: Charles Brown (clerk), Jeff Dudiak, Lilia Fick, Erika Koenig-Sheridan, Rosemary Meier, Ruth Mills

Annapolis Valley Monthly Meeting

We are a small Meeting that meets weekly for worship and for regular Meetings for Worship for Business. We held a special meeting to reflect on the life of our meeting in preparation for our State of the Society Report. At this meeting we read the queries sent by Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel, but did not feel the need to discuss them. It was also felt much of our last year's report still applies.

Friends felt that we have been supportive of those who are active in our Meeting. We recognize that we have not supported those who are inactive. We were able to hold Meeting for Worship in person for approximately 35 weeks during 2021. Most of these were held in the Anglican Church in Wolfville. These were hybrid meetings where about half of those present joined by Zoom. Several Friends learned how to set up for hybrid meetings – a new skill that we are pleased to have. We had some social time in person in the summer following Meeting for Worship. We have missed our face-to-face social times when we can only meet on Zoom or at the church. We regret that we were not able to hold events such as retreats.

We've been pleased that the Zoom platform enables our meetings, plus our connections with Friends in our Half-Yearly Meeting, our Yearly Meeting and with Quaker groups around the world. Our Meeting has discerned a leading to do outreach, and we hope to act on it when we are able. Our few active Friends have kept our meeting operational. We are not able to do everything we want to do. Our Clerk is the only member serving on our Ministry and Counsel. Nevertheless, new attenders have found us. One family who attended via Zoom for a year moved to our area.

We have listened to each other and have made a change to how we begin our Meeting for Worship which is in the traditional manner of sitting in expectant waiting for messages to arise. Friends in the Meeting recognize our limits. Some of us are very busy with Canadian Yearly Meeting, others are simply feeling their age, or family pressures, or too much pandemic anxiety.

We continue to take part in the Half-Yearly Meeting and find it broadens our horizons. A very successful Atlantic Friends Gathering was held via Zoom. Although our Meeting is very small, it is important to us and is still vital.

Argenta Monthly Meeting

The year 2021 was hard for our meeting, what with the health and safety mandates, the Meeting House shutdowns, our winter road conditions, and members' personal difficulties. However, we found deep joy and heartfelt meaning in the times we were able to connect both on Zoom and, later, at our Meeting House. We had a sense of how much we treasure connections with our Friends, how very important to all of us to be in person with each other when we can. We have also found that Zoom is a great tool when conditions make it so we can't travel on our roads.

In the summer we met outside under our birch tree, a beautiful addition to our worship. When we were able to use the Meeting House again, with chairs six feet apart and masks, we gave thanks to be able to worship and hold our business meeting with each other. We held one regional gathering in Nelson in the Nelson Women's Centre and after our worship some members went to Nelson's Hume Hotel restaurant for lunch. Due to the unfortunate winter road conditions only one member from the Argenta and Kaslo area was able to attend.

Two to four Argenta Friends are continuing to hold Meeting for Worship mostly weekly. We are reminded, at these low attendance times, of our Elders who have passed – Betty Tillotson and Dottie Ross – who were steady in their attendance at the Meeting House on Sundays.

The Nelson Worship Group has not been able to hold Meeting for Worship, partly because the Nelson Women's Center where they meet has not been open, and partly because of COVID-19 mandates. Despite the challenges we have faced, we are grateful to carry on in our Meeting community.

Calgary Monthly Meeting

As is our practice, Calgary Monthly Meeting held a Worship Sharing on the State of Society, via Zoom, on March 13, 2022. Ministry and Counsel wrote this report based on the Worship Sharing and other comments that had been made through the year.

This, the second year of the pandemic, has truly tested the cohesion of our small community. Most of our activities: Meeting for Worship, Meeting for Worship for Business, Worship Sharing, Quakers Talk Books, and our Retreat, have been held on-line. This has brought people to our events who we may never have seen in person and allowed us to continue our spiritual journeys in spite of the pandemic. Many Friends, however, are experiencing zoom fatigue in their work, and many do not feel that this format is right for their children. We very much miss those Friends who cannot attend by this format and have made additional efforts at keeping connected as the pandemic continued. We had a few in-person events like fire-pit worship, walks, and socializing in various parks. We missed our potlucks and meetings for eating. We sought other ways to connect with Friends by email, telephone, and one-on-one visits outdoors or indoors as pandemic rules allowed.

Because our Social Action Committee has been laid down, we are seeking ways to highlight the activities of individual Friends and to define paths for Friends to bring their concerns to the attention of Meeting. We recognize a need to consider processes for including Meeting and its resources in social, environmental, and justice initiatives. We strive to generously nurture and support Friends as they deal with the various crises in the world, e.g. indigenous relations, refugees, climate/environment, pandemic behaviour. Friends have participated in the work of the Indigenous Gathering Place Society of Calgary, the Calgary Bear Clan Patrol, and we regularly report on ongoing activities related to the Truth and Reconciliation Report.

We made targeted efforts to integrate the *Advices and Queries* and Quaker testimonies in our readings for Quakers Talk Books, so as to highlight these sources for those new to Quakers and to reacquaint seasoned Friends with our spiritual texts. We are grateful for the enhanced role of many Quaker organizations in educating newcomers so that at the local level we can concentrate on community building and pastoral care.

On-line technology has facilitated participation in Quaker events outside of Calgary such as those sponsored by Canadian Yearly Meeting, Western Half-Yearly Meeting, Canadian Friends Service Committee, Pendle Hill, Woodbrooke Study Centre, Friends Association for Higher Education, and other monthly meetings, widening and enriching our local spiritual practice. People are making friends in the broader Quaker community and becoming involved in other Quaker networks. We recognize the value of introducing our members to the activities of these organization and highlight them in our internal announcements and web page.

We have new clerks of Calgary Monthly Meeting and Ministry and Counsel, and a Recording Clerk, who are learning their roles and Quaker process. A reconstituted Nominations Committee has been active in identifying leadings and roles among Friends. New members and attenders continue to rejuvenate the Meeting. Lethbridge Worship Group continues to meet with Calgary Friends on Zoom.

Our Retreat this year, on the theme of “Coming to Better Know One Another” was based on the Pendle Hill Pamphlet 473, *The Atheist’s Guide to Quaker Process: Spirit-led Decisions for the Secular*, written by Selden W. Smith

In online Worship Sharing sessions we discussed how theist and non-theist Friends share a trust in each other’s integrity and achieve the unity of a strong community. In the safe space of meetings, each of us is on our own journey of discovery as our understanding of our faith is continuously revealed. Regular Worship Sharing and Quakers Talk Books provide opportunities for Friends to explore our spiritual concerns and learn how to live as Quakers.

The miracle of Quaker structure is that it allows a global family of individuals to commit to making a safe space open for others to enter and explore. That is why we always have an open door and are ready to welcome anyone who is seeking truth.

Cowichan Valley Monthly Meeting

As we gathered to reflect on the past year for our Monthly Meeting, we identified emotive words that help describe the state of our Meeting during this second year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Frustration, Relief, and Acceptance capture the range of emotions and response to the ever-changing and challenging situation to gather as a group of seekers during 2021. There were disappointments and delays that impacted how and where we could worship together and we greeted the fall of 2021 with a sense of relief as we could resume gathering at Providence Farm. Frustrations during the ongoing cycles of changes and protocols to manage COVID-19 and gather together safely were expressed by many of our members. However, throughout this year, there remained an openness and a respect for each other as we collectively navigated both the official rules and individual levels of comfort and safety.

As the year continued with its changing landscape, there was an acceptance and even appreciation that the concept of meeting on-line (through the Zoom platform) was a real bonus for a meeting that covers significant geography and even ferry rides to gather in-person only.

Over the year, the meeting committed to a hybrid model of online and in-person Meetings for Worship as well as Meeting for Worship for Business. At times during 2021 the worship was required to be online only due to COVID-19 but the advantage of continuing with an online component became clearly a benefit to broaden participation for those farther afield or managing health and accessibility issues.

We identify that there is still work to do to ensure technology access – particularly for some of the meeting elders who remain more isolated by both their health and limitation of tech knowledge. We hope to develop a model of tech buddies who might gather directly with some of our elders for Meeting for Worship and business sessions to better facilitate their access to the Meeting. We look forward to building on our learning in this new “hybrid” approach to Meeting for Worship as well as business sessions as we practice creative adaptability and resilience. This requires us to trust both the process and each other as we continue in this new way of gathering as Friends.

Our Meeting’s approach to business has been one of sharing tasks and responsibilities. This approach includes a rotational pattern of clerking our business sessions as well as operating as a Committee of the Whole for most other meeting responsibilities. We mostly avoid the structure of naming ongoing standing committees (with a few exceptions).

This model serves us well as it creates regular opportunities for Friends to build their skills as well as to follow their personal leadings. This model is not perfect and we realize that things may occasionally “fall through the cracks” but it does create a great sense of communal responsibility for the life and work of the Meeting.

Our model of rotating clerks as well as our overall communication is only sustainable due to the ongoing role of our administrative clerk. This Friend truly keeps our Meeting and its tasks on track as well as recently becoming the default techie as we enhance our hybrid meeting tools. We are all so grateful that she willingly shares her organizational gifts with us!

We have noticed a significant number of Friends who serve on yearly meeting committees for the small size of our meeting and are led to conclude that our local limited committee structures likely enable Friends to say yes to these CYM appointments.

The final emotive words we wish to report upon are *Joyfulness*, *Creativity*, and *Gratitude*.

The life of the Cowichan Valley Monthly Meeting has been greatly enhanced by the opportunity to celebrate major life events with each other. The same-gender marriage taken under the care of our meeting in September 2021 was truly a moment of celebration and joyfulness for Cowichan Valley Friends, including many in the Meeting traveling to Salt Spring Island for the wedding. 2022 offers our members another same-gender marriage celebration under our care. Beyond these more formal celebrations, the simple ability to once again gather for potluck socials together in person has also created the chance to build and strengthen our relationships.

In regards to creativity, this past year our Meeting has taken concrete steps to welcome new (to Cowichan Valley Monthly Meeting) seekers and to nurture our young. Two successes have been the work to establish a regular First Day School program and the addition of new faces in our circle despite the extra challenges presented by COVID-19 restrictions.

We experience gratitude when thinking about ways in which our new attenders have enriched our Meeting life. This gratitude is reciprocal. One recent attender has expressed gratitude for the welcome received since coming to Meeting for Worship and the various ways in which CVQs have contributed to her learning about Quaker testimonies, worship, and business.

We responded to the direct request of a parent in the Meeting to develop a First Day School opportunity for her children. This is one of our few standing committees and they wisely began the work with a call out to build a roster of members and attenders interested and willing to assist the FDS committee in setting up a simple structure that includes the due diligence of criminal record checks for any volunteers as well as exploring what the Meeting needs to have ready at hand for when, not if, the children come to Meeting.

In response to new seekers, as well as to support those already with us, we have initiated a Friendly Study group online that meets monthly to provide adult education and building community for those not so new to Friends as well as newer seekers. In late 2020, the meeting established a Thursday evening worship session, meeting the first and third weeks of the month, which has served us well as an additional opportunity to worship and share. As well, when we returned to gathering in person in fall 2021, the wish to meet weekly (previously twice monthly) at our rental space at Providence Farm was made and incorporated into the meeting budget. These are positive examples of our meeting stepping up when asked by our members.

Our Meeting is enriched by the Salt Spring Island Worship Group. Two of our members are instrumental in keeping the group strong. *[Their report is included below.]*

We are grateful for the work of individual Friends in the areas of nature stewardship, human rights advocacy, and supporting reconciliation initiatives with the local Cowichan First Nation. Salt Spring Friends participated in a Remembrance Day event which offered an opportunity to engage with general public and found this meaningful way to answer questions about Quakers and our beliefs.

More public outreach remains a challenge as we know it does for many Quaker meetings. We hope to explore ways Friends could better inform each other of the community level justice work they may be undertaking as “A Quaker” and establish a better mechanism to increase our meetings’ public identity in the Cowichan Valley.

We have remained flexible and adaptable as a meeting while endeavouring (mostly with success) to respect and trust each other as we have weathered the challenges of the pandemic. One Friend described our approach to the work of maintaining a monthly meeting and caring for a community of seekers as faithful and with enthusiasm. And we were reminded that “enthusiasm” means to be led by Spirit or God. The work of Cowichan Valley Monthly Meeting and the current state of its society is indeed *enthusiastic*. We trust that together we can continue to help the Truth prosper among us and be Friends in peace and unity as we move forward into 2022.

Salt Spring Island Worship Group 2021

COVID precautions encouraged us to meet in each other’s gardens, which has been a great delight. When the weather and lack of daylight drove us indoors, we rented a large room, but the cost of the rent meant that if any of the three couples who normally attend were missing, it was not economically sensible to meet there. We felt our houses were too small to accommodate a suitably spaced meeting. A fourth couple had been attending but was prevented by a family crisis quite early in the year.

One other couple had the road to their house washed out and so were unable to drive after dark. We suspended meetings for a while after that and the rest of us satisfied ourselves by joining Cowichan Valley’s Zoom/hybrid meetings (and found them remarkably satisfying). We were especially pleased to welcome our Cowichan Valley Friends to one of our garden meetings.

Another event that necessitated a trip to Salt Spring Island by our “parent” meeting, was a wedding of two of our (elderly lesbian) members in September. This was a simple and joyful occasion, which included a number of Anglican friends among whom was a retired priest, who, at the couple’s request, pronounced a simple blessing on them. Contributions of flowers, food, kind words, and generous presence made it clear that the relationship of the couple was heartily approved. We look forward to easier meeting arrangements in 2022.

Halifax Monthly Meeting

The State of Society report provides our Meeting with the opportunity to reflect upon our collective spiritual health and wellbeing. It is intended to be “a searching self-examination by the Meeting and its members of their spiritual strengths and weaknesses and of the efforts made to foster growth in the spiritual life.” (“Report on the State of Society,” 7.8 in *CYM Organization and Procedure*)

The spiritual strength of Halifax Monthly Meeting and its members has been apparent in 2021. We have shown ourselves to be adaptive, resilient, and community-minded. Virtual Meetings for Worship were held via Zoom from Jan-June and then again from September to December.

This format allowed Halifax Meeting to welcome in visitors, sojourners, and f/Friends who returned to Quaker Meetings after a period of absence. Given the lack of travel required, members of the local Worship Groups were more easily able to worship together with us. When public health restrictions allowed for it, Friends opened up their homes for intimate opportunities to worship together in person. Weather permitting, a group of Friends met outside at the Halifax Public Gardens, which was a notable source of joy for many. A group of Friends went for (socially distanced) Quaker walks together at the Auburn Golf Club. Late in the year we experimented with hybrid Meetings for Worship. We remain hopeful that at some point we will be able to return to The Ecology Action Centre for in-person Meeting for Worship.

Certainly 2021 has had its challenges, as the global pandemic continues to impact our ability to meet in person and to plan for the future. Although efforts have been made, it has sometimes been difficult to meaningfully connect with one another, especially with those who are the most impacted by pandemic-related isolation measures (for example, Friends living in long-term care residences). It has been a source of sorrow that we are not able to show our physical affection or to conclude our Meeting for Worship by holding hands in a circle.

With the guidance of our Clerk, Halifax Monthly Meeting reviewed and approved a new procedure for how we conduct Meeting for Worship for Business so that those Meetings can truly be “where the spirit of the Meeting is put into practice.” Among a number of changes in procedure, we now have the practice of beginning our Meetings for Worship for Business with a Land Acknowledgement. A new role of Assistant Clerk was approved and Erik Königer is currently serving. Meeting for Worship for Business is an opportunity for collective spiritual growth. We hold our Clerk, Lucky Howard, in The Light and are grateful for their presence.

There has been active involvement in the Committees of Halifax Monthly Meeting. The Peace and Social Justice Committee hosted a presentation by Laura Sodero (of the Elizabeth Fry Society), collaborated with KAIROS on a “No One is Illegal” project, and hosted a Specially Called Meeting to discuss Bill C-15. A book club was established for discussion both fiction and non-fiction book around the themes of the Quaker testimonies (SPICES: Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, and Stewardship). They will start meeting in early 2022.

A Communications Committee was also established and has met several times. The Site Committee oversaw the shifting landscape of where we were able to meet. The Program Committee is once again active. Members of Halifax Monthly Meeting were on the organizing committee for Atlantic Half-Yearly Meeting, which had a successful virtual gathering in May.

The pandemic has impacted our financial situation, as we have not had to pay rent for a meeting location. This saving allowed us to provide financial support to other meaningful causes, such as the Monteverde Friends School in Costa Rica, demining efforts spearheaded by Woodstown Monthly Meeting in New Jersey and Birmingham Monthly Meeting in Pennsylvania, The Canadian Friend’s Service Committee, Friends General Conference, and the New Horizons Church restoration project.

Since we were not using the earmarked travel budget, Friends were encouraged to attend online Quaker learning opportunities. Our Clerk shared with the Meeting some of what they learned from a workshop on Clerking, offered by Pendle Hill. We are reminded that how we use our financial resources is an opportunity to practice our faith.

Truro Worship Group

The Truro Worship Group was formed under the care of Halifax Monthly Meeting in May 2019. From a humble beginning with only two Friends, we have grown to six adults who meet regularly in a donated cottage in North River, a short drive from downtown Truro. The cottage (cabin) is located off grid in a beautiful, rural, wooded setting that lends itself to peaceful and reflective worship and is much appreciated. Complete with 12-volt solar power and a composting toilet, it has become our Meeting House. Attenders have assembled a library of Quaker publications, and Quaker posters of about our faith and history have been placed there along with personal items to support our spiritual journey.

We hold Meeting for Worship every Sunday at 2:30 pm. Despite the challenges of COVID, we have managed to maintain spirit and joy in our Meetings for Worship. We give thanks to Halifax Monthly Meeting for their support with Zoom Meetings when we are unable to meet and we continue to support each other in our various needs. Our biggest challenge is to grow our membership and our beautiful Meeting House is an incentive for seekers as well as a peaceful respite for each of us.

We are active in wider Quaker community with members serving on various committees of both Atlantic Half Yearly Meeting and Canadian Yearly Meeting. In 2019 we helped found the Cobequid Interfaith Council, a group of several faiths who meet monthly to learn about each other's faith and annually host an event in Truro during the United Nations Interfaith Harmony Week. Also in 2019, we attended the Millbrook First Nation Powwow where we set up a display booth and passed out copies of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

We take great pleasure in meeting with other Friends. We have visited Antigonish Worship Group, Halifax Monthly Meeting, and the Annapolis Valley Monthly Meeting. We have also welcomed many visiting Friends. The occasional potluck meal, the gift of art and music, the beautiful rural setting of our Meeting House, and the ever-present Quaker SPICES all contribute to our spiritual wellness. We look forward to 2022.

Antigonish Worship Group

For quite a number of years Antigonish Worship Group held an annual Worship Sharing meeting to reflect on the queries related to the State of Society report. It was a lovely exercise and brought us closer as a community. Currently, however, our meeting place is unavailable to us. Information about online meetings for worship has been circulated. Some of us have embraced the technology, but others have not found what they need spiritually in the virtual world. In-person Meetings for Worship have been off and on, depending on the changing restrictions and protocols related to COVID.

When able to meet, average attendance has been about four. At one point we had not felt able to accommodate visitors or newcomers, which was very painful, but this fall we did have an inquirer who was able to attend some Meetings for Worship. During the first summer of COVID we met outdoors in people's yards and really appreciated the fellowship. This past summer that didn't seem to happen. I think we are just tired.

Three of us were involved in supporting long time member, Barbara Conway, who at age 100 had been living in a supported living apartment, but suddenly in August could no longer manage on her own. Barbara died in October, not quite six weeks past her 101st birthday. Barbara had a great gift for touching peoples' hearts.

We held a memorial meeting in November which thankfully was possible at that time. More than one non-Quaker expressed gratitude for the Quaker manner of the gathering. We were also very grateful that Maida Follini took the trouble to come from Halifax to join us.

Some of us have been able to serve on Yearly Meeting, Atlantic Half-Yearly Meeting, and Halifax Monthly Meeting committees, and to engage with CFSC activities. We were also able to form a Committee of Care that met twice with a member who was experiencing a very difficult emotional time, and who reports that care as an experience of the Spirit for her.

South Shore Worship Group

The South Shore Worship Group, under the care of Halifax Monthly Meeting, has been a Quaker presence on Nova Scotia's South Shore for more than 40 years, and despite COVID-19 and the extreme weather events associated with climate change, we have persevered. During 2021, we gathered in person for Meeting for Worship whenever COVID guidelines allowed. When groups were restricted from gathering, several folks connected with Friends in Meeting for Worship in different parts of Canada, at Pendle Hill, Pennsylvania, and Tampa, Florida in the United States, and also at Woodbrooke in England.

The largest change for our Worship Group during 2021 has been a move from meeting in Friends' homes to holding Meeting for Worship in a spacious room at the Mahone Bay Centre, a community multi-purpose building. Many of our members appreciate this arrangement, which allows us has allowed us to continue our bi-weekly Meetings and maintain social distance in a large, barrier-free space purposely renovated to meet the needs of seniors. Friend Sharon Driscoll suggested this idea and she meets monthly with the manager to pay our rent which is drawn from our donations. Any surplus rent money is put aside and donated to the Mahone Bay Food Bank, which operates out of this space during the week. We plan to share surplus donations in 2022 with other local Food Banks.

Friend Susan Holtz continues as a member of the Atlantic Half-Yearly Meeting of Ministry and Counsel. Marion Moore, co-chair of the South Shore chapter of the Council of Canadians continues her tireless work for change and social justice in Nova Scotia and Canada and keeps us informed and inspired. She also attended the Atlantic Friends virtual Gathering for most of the weekend.

Ed Schrieber has been organizing our growing resource library. Ed was injured in a fire in December and will be in hospital until February 2022, recovering from burns. His work is sidelined for now, but he will continue when he is able. Members have agreed to send him details of any materials they would be willing to share with others.

We are welcoming back several former participants in the South Shore Worship Group who have either returned to the area or have missed our Quaker Meetings for other reasons. One of our newer participants is interested in learning all she can about Quaker traditions and thought, so it was good for some of us to find materials to review and contemplate with her. We have received several requests for more information about our Meetings and Quakerism in general from people who are interested in attending Meeting. We look forward to meeting with them in 2022 when COVID allows.

Our group continues to grow and to change when change is needed. Our membership remains robust, despite health and weather challenges. We continue to thrive on the silence and reflection of our Meetings and support each other in our desire for deeper understanding and knowledge. The Queries read to open Meetings for Worship have helped us to reflect on our beliefs, actions, and responses in our everyday lives.

Most of us have experienced “gathered stillness” and found Meeting for Worship our anchor in the stormy challenges of 2021. Several people expressed feeling calmer and strengthened after we sat silently together. Meeting for Worship has been a blessing to our members. We look forward to getting together with Halifax Monthly Meeting when this becomes possible, and thank them for their good work, leadership, and inspiration to us.

[Note from CYM Clerks: The report from Halifax Monthly Meeting and its associated Worship Groups included four photographs. The photos were removed from the CYM Interim Reports so as to limit the file size, but will be restored when the complete CYM Reports for 2020 are compiled in January 2023.]

Hamilton Monthly Meeting

“Worship is at the heart of Quaker experience. For God is met in the gathered meeting and through the Spirit leads us into ways of life and understandings of truth which we recognize as Quaker.”

Hamilton Friends, along with everyone else, dealt with the second year of COVID-19 and its variants. Federal and Provincial laws were designed to protect the health of Canadian citizens. Three common sense rules had been mandated to prevent infection and illness: wearing masks, social distancing, and frequent hand washing. People were asked to work from home, engage in online schooling from home, and refrain from attending large gatherings including social and religious occasions. Hamilton Friends followed and exceeded Ontario provincial guidelines. It is noted that some members and attenders of Hamilton Monthly Meeting (HMM) may have had COVID-like symptoms, which thankfully did not become fatal. We did not have to cancel a single Meeting for Worship in 2021.

Online Meetings were held from January to April. Online, outdoor, and some indoor Meetings were held from May to the end of November. The exception to this pattern was necessitated for three weeks from mid-September to early October, when a family of newcomers sponsored by another group were quarantining in the Meeting House. Online Meetings for Worship in December completed the year. Several Friends made it their mission to learn the technology necessary for electronic communication capability, so Friends could interact.

Significant activities included regular online Meetings for Worship for Business and a greatly appreciated Memorial Meeting. There were presentations on climate change, penal abolition, and the legacy of the Residential Schools. A seminar on the idea of “The Gathered Meeting” was convened. More informal activities included the book club and light-hearted gatherings called *frivols* to lift the spirits.

As part of our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, we hosted several book club sessions. The books read were Richard Wagamese’s *Embers* and *One Drum*. The rich discussions arising from these writings have served to deepen our appreciation and understanding of Indigenous culture and teachings. This has also been a wonderful way to connect with each other as well as enquirers, and Friends who live at greater distance.

In October, we were saddened by the death of a beloved Friend whose kindness, warmth and long service to the Meeting motivated our meeting to host a memorial meeting despite all the related organizational challenges. The family worked with a committee to make preparations. As numbers in the Meeting House were limited, there were two in-person meetings, and the second included a link via Zoom for those unable to attend in person. These were well-attended.

Although Hamilton Meeting's official financial responsibility for the newcomer families we sponsored ended, we will continue to provide support for medical and dental expenses. It is noted with profound appreciation and great respect that individual members have been generous and supportive, and have maintained continuing personal relationships with these newcomer families.

Hamilton Monthly Meeting's First Day School activities were curtailed in 2021 due to COVID-19 and Zoom fatigue. The Junior group of up to five children experienced outdoor time together, read *Silence*, by Katrina Goldsatto, and enjoyed the YouTube presentation of *Thy Friend, Obadiah*, by Brinton Turkle, about a 19th century Quaker child in New England. The Teen group of four young people focused its attention on racism and the history of racial injustice between whites and blacks, and between whites and indigenous people. The Quaker Testimony on Equality was included as part of the discussions.

Both groups thoroughly enjoyed hikes in the Dundas Valley on several occasions. An attempt was made to start a Games Night for the teen group, which met with a mixed reception. The Christmas program was a presentation of its 2020 video re-telling of the Christmas Story, for the enjoyment of all followed by carol singing. The pandemic was met with a desire to make the best use of activities and presentations that were of interest.

Hamilton Meeting has been blessed by members and attenders who expressed in myriad ways the spiritual value of gathering for Meeting. The quiet witness of Friends, as well as the spoken ministry, were observed with appreciation. Both are invaluable forms of spiritual communion, whether on-line or in person.

Care for the Meeting House was significant as the building sat unpopulated during much of the year. It was by no means a dry or empty space. Routine matters had to be attended to from security to maintenance. Regular checks were made, gardening continued, mail was processed, bills were paid, and snow was shoveled. One Friend lovingly held the space for First Day worship. Indoor plants were cared for and watered. Curtains and windows were opened to welcome in the sunlight and let fresh air circulate.

Images of the indoor and outdoor worship space were relayed "live" via Zoom to share the worship space with others. Hamilton Monthly Meeting extends profound gratitude to those who served as "bridges" between the various needs, combining worship and service.

Hamilton Friends keenly felt the absence of personal contact. We missed the happy energy that First Day School children bring to the Meeting House. Friends felt the loss of informal interactions after meetings or pot luck meals, especially with respect to getting to know and making new attenders feel welcomed and engaged.

Friends felt heartened by the broad attendance by those who did attend the Zoom Meetings for Worship and committee meetings, such as Ministry and Counsel, Peace and Social Action Committee, and ad hoc requests for help. The sense of the spiritual and material well-being of Hamilton Monthly Meeting was enhanced by multiple forms of communication, by recent bequests, and by regular donations.

Hamilton Monthly Meeting looks forward to the time when Friends may once again meet in person. We are heartened as a spiritual community by our willingness to explore various means to encourage the Seed to flourish even as we hold each other in the Light.

The **Cambridge Worship Group (CWG)** met regularly for most of the year. Typically, Friends and attenders would worship in their own homes and then be linked by Zoom for fellowship. The Cambridge Worship Group is grateful to the person who set up the Zoom connection. Members of this group found the time together enriching and supportive. A still place of refreshment in the midst of the pandemic!

Kitchener Area Monthly Meeting

This year, like last year was overshadowed by the COVID -19 pandemic. Kitchener Area Monthly Meeting continued to meet online via Zoom. This virtual format can be spiritually rich for some, but others find it limiting at best. The technology or the format also presents barriers for some members, particularly families who miss the personal contact.

Ministry and Counsel has been attempting to keep in contact with those for whom virtual connection is not viable. The use of mid-week outdoor meetings during the warmer months have been enriching for many attenders. Members have also connected with each other in person in small ways such as walks and driveway meetings.

Kitchener Area Monthly Meeting has continued to support the community with clearness committees and committees of care as they navigate various physical and emotional struggles. In addition to these we have had monthly Worship Sharing meetings after Meeting for Worship, and two discussions. We continued to host weekly drop-ins over Zoom where people can chat and connect informally. We've also been in connection with our local community in small ways such as our little library, supporting the red dress campaign of our neighbour (The Healing of the Seven Generations), and sharing lavender from our garden.

Members of Kitchener Area Monthly Meeting look forward to a time when we can meet in person and share food as we once did. We are also developing ways to use the current technology to keep our Monthly Meeting accessible for those who aren't ready or easily able to attend in person.

Lucknow Worship Group

Perseverance is the word that comes to mind as we consider this past year of continuing COVID uncertainty, changing public health restrictions and increasing polarization in our society. We have continued to meet regularly, twice a month, by zoom and in person, inside and outside, masked and unmasked as conditions dictated. Our worship group is one of the human contacts that has carried on when many other activities have been curtailed.

Our Meetings have been a safe space in anxious times where Friends can speak honestly without being attacked. Our check- in before worship has helped maintain a sense of connection. We have been compassionate and supportive with each other as we have dealt individually and collectively with the changing public health recommendations and requirements around COVID-19. We value the shared wisdom and spiritual depth of our discussion Meetings. A Friend has written a synopsis of several of these discussion Meetings and forwarded them to *The Canadian Friend* for wider sharing.

Continuing support has been appreciated by a Friend who suffered a bereavement in the preceding year. Friends have been able to continue volunteer efforts including helping at a local food bank and supporting farmers concerned about a Deep Geological Repository for high-level radioactive waste. We are a committed group but have not been doing outreach to the larger community. We miss our singing and potluck meals. We have persevered in sustaining a time and place for spiritual nourishment in worship and community.

Montreal Monthly Meeting

Reflection on 2021

2021 was a Spirit-filled year for Montreal Monthly Meeting. While the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges to our meeting, it also provided opportunities for growth. As the year began our meeting met in an online only format, with post-worship programming provided by our committee of Ministry and Counsel to deepen our connection to Quakerism and each other. Later, as vaccines became more available and the pressures of the spring wave of COVID receded we were able to resume in person meetings for worship on First Day. Rather than converting completely to in-person meetings, however, we maintained our online worship, and after a few weeks of separate online and in-person worship we created hybrid meetings. Unfortunately, the end of the year brought a return to online only worship as the omicron wave precluded in-person meeting, but this transition was eased by the ongoing nature of our online meetings.

We continue to be grateful for the ability to worship online as it has permitted our meeting to sustain worship despite restrictions on in-person gatherings, and has allowed us to worship with Friends outside of the Montréal area. In particular, we are grateful for the ability to worship regularly with Friends from our Québec city worship group. Their regular presence has been a great joy, and we are grateful for their leadership in helping us foster a welcoming environment for francophone Friends across Québec and around the world. For further details please consult the report from our Francophone committee.

Our meeting seeks to provide Spiritual nourishment and community for Friends outside of worship, and one of the primary avenues for this is our newsletter which publishes both original content from Friends in Montréal and reflections from the broader Quaker world in both English and French. For further details, please consult the report from our Newsletter committee.

2021 also brought change to the Friends serving in roles in Montréal Monthly Meeting as our Nominations Committee set out on an ambitious project of committee renewal. Starting from a point of departure that accepts committee service as a Spiritual gift that can be offered to Friends, our Nominations Committee has asked the meeting to discern on replacing all committee positions in the relatively close future.

Finally, we note the year has been a busy one for f Ministry and Counsel. Through much of the year the Ministry and Counsel has sought to maintain contact with isolated Friends, to help the meeting safely navigate the pandemic and to foster the Spiritual growth of Friends by offering programming outside of worship.

In conclusion, while 2021 provided challenges, it was also a year in which the Spirit moved among Friends in Québec. We have sought to speak to and welcome new Friends, to keep our processes and practises vibrant and grounded in Quaker tradition, and to maintain community even when we must be apart. In this year that brought hardship and loss for so many, Montréal Monthly Meeting has striven to be a guiding light.

Réflexion sur l'état des assemblées 2021

2021 a été une année remplie par l'Esprit pour l'Assemblée mensuelle de Montréal. Bien que la pandémie actuelle de COVID-19 ait posé des défis à notre assemblée, elle a également fourni des opportunités de croissance. Au début de l'année, notre assemblée s'est réunie uniquement en ligne, avec une programmation post-culte fournie par notre comité du ministère et des conseils pour approfondir notre connexion avec le quakerisme et les uns avec les autres. Plus tard, à mesure que les vaccins devenaient plus disponibles et que les pressions de la vague printanière de COVID diminuaient, nous avons pu reprendre les assemblées en personne pour le culte le

premier jour. Plutôt que de nous convertir complètement aux assemblées en personne, nous avons maintenu notre culte en ligne, et après quelques semaines de culte en ligne et en personne séparés, nous avons créé des assemblées hybrides. Malheureusement, la fin de l'année a apporté un retour au culte en ligne uniquement car la vague omicron a empêché les assemblées en personne, mais cette transition a été facilitée par la nature continue de nos assemblées en ligne.

Nous continuons d'être reconnaissants pour la possibilité de tenir les cultes en ligne car cela a permis à notre assemblée de maintenir les cultes malgré les restrictions sur les rassemblements en personne, et nous a permis d'y participer avec des Amis de l'extérieur de la région de Montréal. En particulier, nous sommes reconnaissants de pouvoir tenir notre culte régulièrement avec des Amis de notre groupe de Québec. Leur présence régulière a été une grande joie, et nous sommes reconnaissants de leur leadership afin de nous aider à créer un environnement accueillant pour les Amis francophones à travers le Québec et dans le monde. Pour plus de détails, veuillez consulter le rapport de notre comité francophone.

Notre assemblée cherche à fournir une nourriture spirituelle et une communauté pour les Amis en dehors du culte et une des principales avenues pour cela est notre infolettre qui publie à la fois du contenu original des Amis à Montréal et des réflexions du monde quaker plus large en anglais et en français. Pour plus de détails, veuillez consulter le compte-rendu de notre comité de l'infolettre.

2021 a également apporté des changements aux Amis occupant des rôles à l'Assemblée mensuelle de Montréal alors que notre comité des candidatures a lancé un ambitieux projet de renouvellement du comité. Partant du que l'on reconnaît le service à un comité comme un don spirituel pouvant être offert aux Amis, notre comité des candidatures a demandé à l'assemblée de discerner le remplacement de tous les postes de comité dans un avenir relativement proche. Pour plus de détails, veuillez consulter le rapport de notre comité des nominations.

Enfin, nous notons que l'année a été chargée pour notre comité du ministère et des conseils. Pendant une grande partie de l'année, le comité a cherché à maintenir le contact avec des Amis isolés, à aider l'Assemblée à naviguer en toute sécurité à travers la pandémie et à favoriser la croissance spirituelle des Amis en offrant des programmes en dehors du culte. Pour plus de détails, veuillez consulter le rapport de notre comité du ministère et des conseils.

En conclusion, si 2021 a apporté des défis, ce fut aussi une année où l'Esprit s'est déplacé parmi les Amis du Québec. Nous avons cherché à parler et à accueillir de nouveaux Amis, à maintenir nos processus et nos pratiques dynamiques et ancrés dans la tradition quaker, et à maintenir la communauté même lorsque nous devons être séparés. En cette année qui a apporté son lot de difficultés et de pertes à tant de personnes, l'Assemblée quaker de Montréal s'est efforcé d'être un phare.

Francophone Committee

In response to a request from Canadian Yearly Meeting for a "State of Society Report," here is a following summary of the comments we received from francophone respondents. Everyone on our mailing list was invited to comment.

- Everyone agreed that the French online course on Quakerism facilitated by David Summerhays was a major factor in uniting the French group. In fact, the vast majority of those who participated in the course have attended our subsequent meetings.
- For the Quebec City worship group, moving our meeting place to a café in Levis was an important moment that allowed us to worship "in the world." Spiritually, this experience proved to be significant and gave our worship a different but very positive dimension.

- Francophones meeting monthly on Zoom in French has allowed for a quality of exchange that would otherwise have been difficult to achieve.
- Visits from members of the Montreal Quakers always help to strengthen our sense of unity with the larger meeting community.
- Francophones who have begun to join the Zoom worship service with the Montreal Assembly are unanimous in emphasizing the quality of the welcome given to them and the efforts of this group to facilitate their integration.
- Few people have participated in the business meetings and it is difficult for them to comment on them. However, the issue of language and understanding of the topics discussed seems to be a significant challenge; finding solutions to this will be the next step for our committee.

Le comité francophone

Afin de donner suite à la demande de l'Assemblée quaker du Canada concernant le « State of Society Report » (que nous traduirions librement par « Rapport sur l'état de la Société religieuse des Amis au Canada »), voici un résumé des différents commentaires qui nous sont parvenus de la part des francophones consultés. Cette consultation a été menée auprès de toutes les personnes inscrites à notre liste d'envois.

- Tout le monde est unanime pour dire que le cours en ligne en français sur le quakerisme animé par David Summerhays a été un facteur déterminant pour l'unité du groupe francophone. En effet la très grande majorité des personnes qui ont participé à ce cours sont demeurées présentes à nos rencontres subséquentes.
- Pour le Groupe de Québec le déménagement de notre lieu de rencontre à Lévis dans un café a été un moment important qui nous a permis de vivre l'expérience du culte « dans le monde ». Spirituellement, cette expérience s'est avérée être très significative et a procuré à notre culte une dimension différente mais très positive.
- Le démarrage de rencontres mensuelles sur Zoom en français a permis une qualité d'échanges qui aurait difficilement pu être atteinte autrement.
- Les visites de membres de l'Assemblée de Montréal contribuent toujours à affermir notre union avec l'assemblée à laquelle notre groupe est affilié.
- Les francophones qui ont commencé à se joindre au culte sur Zoom avec l'Assemblée de Montréal sont unanimes pour souligner la qualité de l'accueil qui leur est donné ainsi que les efforts de ce groupe pour faciliter leur intégration.
- Peu de personnes ont participé aux assemblées d'affaires et il leur est difficile de les commenter. Toutefois, la question de la langue et de la compréhension des sujets abordés semble représenter un défi auquel nous devons trouver des solutions.

David Summerhays, Sébastien Garant, Jean-Louis Demers

Newsletter Committee

In the past year, a team of Friends took over responsibility for producing our newsletter. To the team, our work together has been a source of inspiration and delight. We publish the newsletter every two months. Our stated goals are to build community; to inform re events; to stimulate spiritual reflection; to share contacts; and to share ministry with each other. When a new newsletter is ready, we announce its availability in an email message to members, and direct them to where it is posted on the meeting website.

It is our hope that the newsletter has contributed to the spiritual growth of our members, both to readers and to writers. Our contributors are for the most part our own members, who have generously shared their life experiences and spiritual insights.

We took the decision early in our collaboration to translate the entire newsletter into both French and English, as a support to both language groups in our Meeting. In a time when COVID has limited our direct contact, and when new attenders have joined us through the internet, the newsletter has helped us to get to know each other, and to grow closer in our friendship.

In Friendship: Shere Ochoa, Jean-Louis Demers, Wendy Sturton

Comité de l'infolettre

Au cours de la dernière année, une équipe d'Amis a pris la responsabilité de produire notre infolettre. Pour l'équipe, notre travail ensemble a été une source d'inspiration et de plaisir. Nous publions l'infolettre tous les deux mois. Nos objectifs sont: Créer une communauté; Informer des événements à venir; Stimuler la réflexion spirituelle; Partager des contacts; Partagez le ministère les uns avec les autres. Lorsqu'un nouveau bulletin est prêt, nous annonçons sa disponibilité dans un message électronique aux membres et les dirigeons vers l'endroit où il est affiché sur le site Web de l'Assemblée.

Nous espérons que le bulletin a contribué à la croissance spirituelle de nos membres, tant pour les lecteurs que pour les participants à sa rédaction. Nos contributeurs sont pour la plupart nos propres membres qui ont généreusement partagé leurs expériences de vie et leurs idées spirituelles. Nous avons pris la décision au début de notre collaboration de traduire le bulletin dans son intégralité en français et en anglais en tant que support aux deux groupes linguistiques de notre assemblée. À une époque où la COVID a limité nos contacts directs et où de nouveaux participants nous ont rejoints via Internet, l'infolettre nous a aidés à nous connaître et à nous rapprocher en amitié.

Nominations Committee

2021 was a fruitful year for Nominations Committee. In March Ministry and Counsel, and then Monthly Meeting, asked us to review the meeting's committee appointments with an eye on how long Friends had served on committees, given that the sharing of responsibilities strengthens a meeting and keeps it dynamic. Following this, Nominations welcomed a new Friend onto the committee to bring a fresh viewpoint and then we oriented our discernment towards the mandate that we had been given. The results of that discernment included a new sense of how to envision nominations – instead of nominating Friends who could “do the work” we sought to nominate Friends to whom a committee position could be an opportunity to grow spiritually and flourish in the meeting, in short, a gift.

With this mindset, we returned to business meeting in June with a proposal to rotate of all the meeting's roles in the near to mid-term future. The meeting accepted our leading, and we began in earnest in the summer to reach out to Friends currently serving on roles to express gratitude for their work and to let them know we would be asking them to lay down their positions in the coming months. Simultaneously we discerned on which Friends could benefit most from the opportunity to serve on committees. In the six months that followed the business meeting's approval of our mandate Montreal Meeting joyously celebrated the accomplishments of outgoing Friends, and welcomed the arrival of new Friends, in the following roles: Clerk, Assistant Clerk (new position), Francophone Committee, and Ministry and Counsel.

Looking forward, 2022 has already announced the formation of a Communications Committee and our work remains ongoing. Our sense of the changes so far is that they have been welcomed by the meeting and have brought a new sense of vitality, as long-serving Friends are able to redirect their energy while other Friends are thriving in new roles.

Comité des nominations

2021 a été une année fructueuse pour le comité des nominations de. En mars Ministère et conseils, puis l'assemblée d'affaires, nous ont demandé de revoir les nominations des comités de l'assemblée en tenant compte de la durée de la présence des Amis dans les comités, puisque le partage des responsabilités renforce une assemblée et la maintient dynamique. Suite à cela, le comité des nominations a accueilli un nouvel Ami au sein du comité pour apporter un regard neuf puis nous avons orienté notre discernement vers le mandat qui nous avait été confié. Les résultats de ce discernement comprenaient un nouveau sens sur la façon d'envisager les nominations - au lieu de nommer des Amis qui pourraient « faire le travail », nous avons cherché à nommer des Amis pour qui un poste au sein d'un comité pourrait être une opportunité de grandir spirituellement et de s'épanouir dans l'assemblée.

Dans cet état d'esprit, nous avons repris l'assemblée d'affaires en juin avec une proposition de rotation de tous les rôles de l'assemblée à court et à moyen terme. L'assemblée a accepté notre direction et nous avons commencé sérieusement cet été à contacter les Amis qui occupent actuellement des postes afin d'exprimer notre gratitude pour leur travail et leur faire savoir que nous leur demanderions de définir leurs positions dans les mois à venir. Simultanément, nous avons discerné sur quels Amis pourraient bénéficier le plus de l'opportunité de siéger à des comités. Dans les 6 mois qui ont suivi l'approbation de notre mandat par l'assemblée d'affaires, l'Assemblée quaker de Montréal a joyeusement célébré les réalisations des Amis sortants et accueilli l'arrivée de nouveaux Amis, dont les rôles sont les suivant: animateur, animateur adjoint (poste créé), Comité francophone, Ministère et conseils

Pour l'avenir en 2022 nous avons déjà annoncé la formation d'un comité des communications et notre travail se poursuit. Notre sentiment des changements jusqu'à présent est qu'ils ont été bien accueillis par l'assemblée et ont apporté un nouveau sentiment de vitalité, car les Amis de longue date sont capables de rediriger leur énergie tandis que d'autres Amis s'épanouissent dans de nouveaux rôles.

Ministry and Counsel

Finding ways to sustain and foster community and spiritual well-being among Friends was the priority of Ministry and Counsel over the last year. Changing public health guidelines over the course of 2021, ranging from curfews to allowance of public indoor gatherings to renewed restrictions, presented many challenges and we appreciate the flexibility, openness, and creativity that Friends in our meeting have shown. Their commitment to Meeting has shown clearly how dearly we hold this sacred space with each other, wherever we meet.

Ministry and Counsel has made continuous efforts throughout the year to stay in touch with isolated Friends through phone calls, emails, and practical assistance such as driving Friends to in person meetings where possible. We made particular effort to reach out to Friends who attended regularly in person, but who found additional screen time uninviting after long work hours online. We also took initiative to reach out to Friends who have moved out of province during the pandemic and are delighted to hear that some have found spiritual homes in other Quaker meetings.

We continued to hold Meeting for Worship online throughout 2021, which has allowed us to connect to Friends across Québec. When public health guidelines allowed, we also reopened Meeting for Worship at the Green Centre. Welcoming families and young children while protecting the health of senior and immunocompromised Friends posed a challenge for our meeting. We opted to make one Sunday a month open to young children who are not eligible for vaccination and Friends were warmed by their presence during Meeting for Worship.

We are also grateful for the support of Friends in facilitating hybrid meetings through taking on the role of greeter online and in person and setting up appropriate technology throughout those precious few weeks.

For online meetings, we developed a rotation of after-meeting activities: meeting for worship for business, break-out rooms for small group discussions, a go-around where each person could share something about their week, and an open discussion on a theme related to Quaker practice. The structure of these sessions allowed us to socialize and learn from each other in new and fruitful ways on Zoom.

Friends also took initiative to create spiritually-led activities outside of Meeting for Worship. One was a series of *Quaker Speaks* video screenings, followed by guided discussions amongst newer and more seasoned Friends. Another was a nature walk, where Friends met online to listen to a reading together, walked outside independently, and then returned to the online forum for worship sharing. Friends joined for this activity once per season. Friends also gathered online to listen together to articles related to activist work on civil disobedience for climate action and abolition of policing and prisons, followed by worship sharing and discussion. We are grateful to the many Friends who have tended to the spiritual well-being of our meeting over the last year through sharing this space with each other.

Ministère et conseil

Trouver des moyens de soutenir et de favoriser le bien-être communautaire et spirituel parmi les Amis a été la priorité du comité du ministère et conseils au cours de la dernière année.

L'évolution des directives de santé publique au cours de l'année 2021, allant des couvre-feux à l'autorisation des rassemblements publics en salle en passant par les restrictions renouvelées, a présenté de nombreux défis et nous apprécions la flexibilité, l'ouverture et la créativité dont les Amis de notre assemblée ont fait preuve. Leur engagement a montré clairement à quel point nous tenons à cet espace sacré les uns avec les autres, partout où nous nous rencontrons.

Les membres du ministère et conseils ont fait des efforts continus tout au long de l'année pour rester en contact avec les Amis isolés par le biais d'appels téléphoniques, de courriels et d'une assistance pratique, par exemple en conduisant les Amis à des assemblées en personne lorsque cela est possible. Nous avons fait un effort particulier pour atteindre les Amis qui assistaient régulièrement en personne, mais qui trouvaient le temps d'écran supplémentaire peu attrayant après de longues heures de travail en ligne. Nous avons également pris l'initiative de tendre la main aux Amis qui ont déménagé hors de la province pendant la pandémie et nous sommes ravis d'apprendre que certains ont trouvé des foyers spirituels dans d'autres assemblées quaker.

Nous avons continué à tenir des cultes en ligne tout au long de 2021, ce qui nous a permis de nous connecter à des Amis à travers le Québec. Lorsque les directives de santé publique l'ont permis, nous avons également rouvert les assemblées de culte au Centre Greene. Accueillir les familles et les jeunes enfants tout en protégeant la santé des Amis aînés ou immunodéprimés a constitué un défi pour nos rencontres. Un dimanche par mois, nous avons choisi de faire un culte ouvert aux jeunes enfants non éligibles à la vaccination et les Amis ont été réconfortés par leur présence lors de ces cultes. Nous sommes également reconnaissants du soutien des Amis afin de faciliter les assemblées hybrides en assumant le rôle d'hôte en ligne et en personne et en mettant en place la technologie appropriée tout au long de ces précieuses semaines.

Pour les assemblées en ligne, nous avons développé une rotation des activités après le culte: une assemblée d'affaires, des salles pour tenir des discussions en petits groupes, un tour de table pendant lequel chacun pouvait partager quelque chose sur sa semaine et une discussion ouverte sur un thème lié à la pratique Quaker. La structure de ces sessions nous a permis de socialiser et d'apprendre les uns des autres de manière nouvelle et fructueuse sur Zoom.

Les Amis ont également pris l'initiative de créer des activités spirituelles en dehors des cultes. L'une était une série de projections vidéo Quaker Speaks, suivies de discussions guidées entre des nouveaux Amis et d'autres plus expérimentés. Une autre fut une promenade dans la nature à la suite de laquelle les Amis se sont rencontrés en ligne pour écouter une lecture, sont aller marcher dehors (marche méditative), puis sont retournés sur le forum en ligne afin de partager le culte. Des Amis se sont joints à cette activité une fois par saison. Des Amis se sont également réunis en ligne pour écouter ensemble la lecture d'articles liés au travail militant sur la désobéissance civile, pour l'action climatique et l'abolition de la police et des prisons, suivis d'un partage, d'un culte et d'une discussion. Nous sommes reconnaissants aux nombreux Amis qui ont veillé au bien-être spirituel de notre assemblée au cours de la dernière année en partageant cet espace les uns avec les autres.

New Brunswick Monthly Meeting

The year was again filled with challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and New Brunswick Friends were hard pressed to maintain connections with the restrictions of in person gatherings. As Quakers are wont to do in the face of challenges, measures were taken to maintain connections through the use of technology whether by email, webinar, zoom, phone or snail mail. New Brunswick Monthly Meeting is made up of five constituent Worship Groups, and they all rose to the challenge of maintaining their group connections. Through the year, all groups came together through Zoom to conduct Meetings for Worship for Business.

The status of **Eastern Shore Allowed Meeting** was laid down during the year due to a family moving out of province, and the death of one of its members. The group will return to Worship Group status. The remaining four members, one of whom has experienced a cognitive decline, will sustain their own patterns of spiritual nurture that include attending Meetings for Worship with other groups and attending a local church service.

The year saw the leading of a member to answer the call to chaplaincy, and we welcomed a new member to our meeting. Other members sustained the loss of loved ones. One member's partner was lost to cancer, another member lost his son-in-law. One Friend who had spent many years with New Brunswick Monthly Meeting lost her battle with cancer. Other members who experienced illness were held in the Light and supported by Friends through prayer.

A rich time of spiritual nurture was gained through the virtual Atlantic Friends Gathering. Although we could not share food together, the Spirit was present through times of worship, conversations, and presentations by outside speakers on the topic of food security.

Other actions from the Monthly Meeting consisted of letters to government officials regarding Bill C-15 in support of the UN Declaration on Indigenous Rights, and actions on the part of the provincial Attorney General on language use re Indigenous lands. The Monthly Meeting continues its support of the federal government recognition of the Peskotomuhkati (Passamaquoddy) as a people and negotiations for resource management.

Sackville Worship Group

2021 was a year of constant change for the Sackville Worship Group. At the beginning of the year we were unable to meet in person. Some of us were connecting with others in New Brunswick Monthly Meeting via Zoom. By late spring our Worship Group was able to gather in person, and we did so on Tuesdays at noon in the downtown United Church.

In the fall, we began to gather at a lovely rural United Church on the outskirts of town. At this point, we changed our meeting time to Sunday mornings right after the United Church service and enjoyed the lingering warmth from the two woodstoves that had been lit earlier! We found that Sunday mornings also included several people who were unable to attend on a weekday. When the church turned its water off for the winter, we moved to the Mount Allison Chapel, a space we had enjoyed for many years pre- COVID.

By December, pandemic restrictions were such that we were unable to get together in person again, and our worship group decided to try meeting by Zoom. While all agree that we miss the in-person aspect, Zoom has allowed attendance by a member living in Nova Scotia, and a Sackville member who had to avoid in-person gatherings due to health concerns. Once we are able to gather in person again, we will consider having a hybrid meeting in order to include everyone. This will depend on the available technology where we meet.

For the first half of 2021 our group had four members of New Brunswick Monthly Meeting and about five attenders. Through the year progressed, several attenders dropped away, but two others, who are a couple, began attending faithfully, and the Friend from Nova Scotia has been joining us.

Our Worship Group is vibrant and caring. We have been holding one of our beloved members in the Light since the summer as she is undergoing cancer treatments. Another dear member, for whom we have established a Committee of Care, he reports that it is helpful. When allowable, we met for a bagged lunch once a month after worship. This has helped to foster our community. While we continue to have little spoken ministry in Meeting for Worship, there has been much deep reflection during the Worship Sharing period afterwards.

Several of our members attended the New Brunswick Monthly Meeting business sessions throughout 2021. Two of us serve in Monthly Meeting positions, and one member serves on a CYM committee. We do not partake in social justice issues as a group at this time, but many of us do carry a concern and are involved in our own way or with other groups.

Fundy Friends

We are grateful for the guidance of Continuing Meeting of Ministry with their thoughtful queries to aid this year's State of Society Reporting process. We chose to focus on Query 3 as it seemed the most applicable to our small Worship Group. *[These queries are printed on page 11.]*

Through 2021, like other local congregations, we continued to modify our gatherings as a result of COVID guidelines and lockdowns. In good weather, we met at one another's homes, outdoors for the most part - on decks and patios and in fields, socially distanced and masked as needed.

With the arrival of cold weather, we resorted to Fongo, as we had in 2020. Some members and attenders are not comfortable meeting in person while others are not comfortable meeting over the phone. By using both platforms we can include everyone at one time or another and keep each other safe as possible from infection. This year our Meetings continued most weeks through July or August, maintaining our customary quorum of three to gather. One Friend left for her Florida home in December, but we look forward to her return in the Spring.

The Continuing Meeting of Ministry queries inspired us to discuss outreach in the local community. In the past, we have submitted articles to the local newspaper and maintained a weekly presence on the churches page with a contact phone number for seekers to find us. We discontinued the newspaper listing some years ago, but we are still recognized as a religious presence in the community (for example, we join in the Women's World Day of Prayer) but we have not done any active outreach for our Worship Group. People occasionally "find" us through online references. Generally these are been fortuitous encounters with visitors to the area.

It may be that we are over-conscious of Friends' reluctance to proselytize. Another factor could be a painful rift some years ago that resulted in the angry departure of two long-time attenders from our Worship Group. The Monthly Meeting as a whole was enormously helpful and supportive, enabling us to stay together and go on.

The evolution of our group has combined the original Quaker Worship Group participants with "House Church" members, Roman Catholic women who created their own "mass" based on Peace, Justice, and Equality; the similar principles were evident!

Query 3 led us to consider our small Worship Group in the larger community. Do we want to make our presence known as we did in the early days? How does the COVID pandemic play into this? In the past we used print media (newspapers and bulletin boards) but today most people get their information online. Are there online listings of local churches that we could use? Should consider writing short articles on Quakers to be included online locally?

We also were prompted to consider Quaker educational resources. In the past we distributed pamphlets describing Quaker Meeting for Worship and testimonies to new attenders. The several newish attenders in our group today who have not received such information. The pamphlets are a bit dated and since we do not currently meet in person an online source would be preferable. We will recommend the resources on the New Brunswick Monthly Meeting website.

2021 has been another deeply challenging year for our global society. In our small corner of rural New Brunswick we are grateful and blessed to have Friends to share our joys and sorrows with each Sunday morning. Meeting for Worship is a lifeline in times of isolation necessitated by the pandemic.

Fredericton Worship Group 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic continued through 2021 requiring virtual rather than in person meetings for our worship group. When case numbers dropped in the summer, and we were able to meet in-person a few times, socializing outdoors. Otherwise, all meetings were held via Zoom. Online meetings every week or two have provided a lifeline. Meeting for Worship was often rich and supportive, and nurtured new and long-standing relationships. We have welcomed new seekers and look forward to getting to know them in person in 2022. On several occasions isolated members attended who would otherwise have been unable to. However, the online platform has also excluded several members and attenders who, for various reasons were not able to attend. We have missed their presence.

Late in 2021 we were saddened by the death of one of our attenders, Chris Adam, husband of Marilee Reimer, following a long illness. We will arrange a Memorial Meeting for Chris in the spring of 2022. Other members have been coping with advancing age and illnesses – both their own and those of family members. In 2022 we hope we will find ways to meet again facing each other in a circle while adapting our practices to the ongoing presence of COVID-19.

Woodstock-Houlton Worship Group

The second year of the COVID-19 pandemic required the use of technology to gather for meetings, but Friends in Houlton were able to gather in person once vaccines became available. Two Meetings for Worship in the summer were attended by a family of three who had moved away but had returned for a stay at their nearby camp –a joyous reunion for all.

During a brief period in December the Helmuth's were able to cross the international border to travel to Houlton for the Christmas celebration, provided another joyous time of reuniting. It was the first time since March 2020 that the group had met in person. A meeting of gathered worship, followed by a marvelous potluck and music were enjoyed by all, rekindling the bonds of a faith community in being present to one another.

For most of the year, however, our activities have been on an individual or household basis due to pandemic restrictions, reflecting on how our spiritual lives have been enhanced in our own spheres of practice.

For one, this isolation meant a deeper dive into books of spiritual nurture, or connecting via Zoom with far flung groups examining online worship practices, or attending other Friends meetings, or online Pendle Hill classes or Canadian Yearly Meeting events – a means of staying connected and overcoming geographical distances.

For another, isolation has provided opportunities for research and writing on topics of interest; or reading books that have been on the waiting list for many years; and gratitude for reduced carbon footprint brought by travel restrictions.

Service projects and ecumenical activities were suspended, but virtual events brought added inspiration and motivation to continue work in related fields.

The practice of daily meditation was of great comfort as we spent time deepening our experience of silent worship and for holding each other in the Light of support, comfort, or healing. We seek to increase the ways of being connected in the Spirit in the face of not being able to be present with one another in person.

Saint John Worship Group

In many ways the Saint John Worship Group is both new and growing. This past year has been full and meaningful. Our presence at Villa Madonna made our meeting accessible to several sincere seekers. They have read of Friends and viewed programs such as *Quaker Speak*, but of course lack the experience of worshipping and working in a wider Quaker community.

At present we have four members and six or seven committed attenders. Although our in-person meetings have been interrupted by COVID, when we gather we often have 8 to 12 people. We have taken steps with New Brunswick Monthly Meeting to rent meeting space. This important step forward will provide a safe and public space for others to join with us.

This past year we lost Nancy MacCharles, a loved and valued Friend who had been part of our worship group for more than 45 years. Her memorial service was attended by a wider community of Friends in the area.

A great need of our small meeting is to have meaningful face-to-face contact with the wider Quaker community, both regionally and nationally. We hope that when things open up, experienced Friends will be led to visit with worship groups such as ours. For many new Friends, a Zoom meeting is an uncomfortable experience. We all need the deepening experience of building community and worshipping and working together.

Prince Edward Island Allowed Meeting

In reflecting on the spiritual condition of our group over 2021, Friends in our small meeting have a range of opinions. Our ability to meet in person, within our Meeting or with our parent Meeting (New Brunswick Monthly Meeting), was sometimes frustrated by the shifting governmental responses to the coronavirus. The pandemic has lingered longer than most of us anticipated, and it has altered attendance at Meeting for Worship.

Some F/friends prefer only to meet in person; others have found it more convenient to attend via Zoom due to distance from our Meeting location. The changing health guidelines and restrictions have reduced the seating capacity at the home of the hosting Friends. Despite the frequent changes in how we can meet for silent worship, PEI Quakers have persisted in adapting to the circumstances.

The COVID pandemic has certainly had an impact on the ability of PEI Quakers to reach out to the larger community who may have an interest in learning more about the Religious Society of Friends. In the past year we have had several new enquirers. The inability to gather in person for Meeting for Worship has affected at least two of these interested parties, as they have not wanted to participate via Zoom alone. It remains to be seen whether they will pursue their desire to learn more once in-person gatherings can meet more freely again.

For those F/friends who regularly attend Meetings for Worship, there is a sense that the silence is comforting, clarifying, and unifying. We conduct Meetings for Worship for Business only occasionally, as we are not a particularly activist group, and we do not find that the structure of a formal, scheduled meeting is needed to conduct most of our affairs.

In regard to the conduct of business meetings, mixed feelings have been expressed regarding whether or not our formally scheduled ones follow in the proper manner of Friends. While some F/friends believe that those attending try to find the “sense of the meeting,” others note that we do not conduct such meetings under a truly prayerful spirit. Many in our group are attenders who choose not to participate in the Meetings for Worship for Business, and some do not seem to have much interest in deepening their understanding of the Quaker process for decision-making.

While there is limited participation in business meetings, the winter Quaker discussion sessions serve as a thriving centre in the spiritual life of our meeting. These sessions focus on topics relating to Quaker spirituality and current/moral issues from a Quaker perspective. Several members have mentioned these study/discussion sessions as a positive force towards developing a larger sense of warm fellowship in our Allowed Meeting.

As noted in the queries posed by Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel, there is a diversity of belief and experience within our community, and this contributes to a sense of comfort and openness expressed by some Friends. Most of us, as individual Friends, try to incorporate the Quaker Testimonies into our personal and community lives. We each do our part in letting our lives speak in whatever way the Light guides us, and despite the constraints that the pandemic has imposed, Prince Edward Island Allowed Meeting has found ways to continue to nurture each other and to strengthen our spiritual and social bonds as a community.

Ottawa Monthly Meeting

Our Meeting has deepened its spiritual life, even though we continue to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to hold First Day Worship, Meeting for Worship for Business, mid-week Meeting for Worship, retreats and other events via Zoom. Public health regulations have not allowed us to resume use of the meeting house.

During Zoom Meeting for Worship, we have found that reserving the Zoom texting function called “chat” for tech support keeps the Meeting well centred. There have been two beneficial effects of worshipping via Zoom. First, it has enabled persons connected with Ottawa Monthly Meeting (OMM) to rejoin us, though they may live far from Ottawa, are not well, or do not drive. Second, it has allowed Friends at very great distances (i.e. other countries) who love our Meeting to come worship with us. It has led to a beautiful spiritual relationship between OMM and worshipers at Pendle Hill (Quaker Study Centre) in Pennsylvania, USA. As a substitute for in-person post-meeting teatime, we have used Zoom’s “breakout rooms” after Meeting for small group get-togethers. The unforeseen benefit of this has been to shake up the usual social groups. We are surprised each First Day by who is in our breakout room, with the result that we have gotten to know each other much better.

We have continued the practice of reading a short inspirational passage of Quaker writing at Meeting, but now it is read out of the silence rather than at the very beginning. Meeting for Worship continues to be followed by a time to share “joys and sorrows.” Ottawa Monthly Meeting does need to improve, though, in keeping up better with newcomers and inquirers, being aware of those who seem to be stepping away from Meeting, and uncovering any barriers that hinder their continued involvement.

In March of 2020, OMM began offering mid-week Meeting for Worship from 7pm to 8pm. Over the last two years, this practice has evolved in ways much loved by Friends. On the first Wednesday of each month, we have Meeting with a Special Focus (this is not a worship sharing). There are four focal items that we have rotated: gratitude, healing, grieving, and humour. We begin at 7:00 pm and continue for as long as Friends are led. On the other Wednesdays, Worship is followed by the continuation of the popular “Things of the Eternal” series in which individual members take one evening to share something of importance to their spiritual journey. This has deepened our understanding of, and appreciation for one another. It has also been an effective instrument of outreach and inreach.

Our Meetings for Business start out well, as we jointly seek the guidance of the Spirit in our discernments. Agendas and committee reports are well-prepared and presented. Practical matters are handled in a prompt and orderly manner.

However, when the agenda is long, or when we lapse into a conversational mode, fatigue can lead to impatience. At times such as these, we endeavour to be aware that what is offered at Meeting for Business is ministry. When we speak, may we draw from our spiritual wells, being mindful of the words we choose, and the way we address each other, remembering to use clear and plain language. May we listen from the heart to all that is said striving to understand and adhere to Quaker practice in Meeting for Business, and seeking the sense of the Meeting in all decisions. We wrestle with the idea of “weighty Friends.” It can be difficult to seek the balance between the need to treat all as equals, and the need to honour the special expertise a Friend may have, all the while seeking guidance of the spirit. We need also to trust committees’ judgment when there are needs for privacy and confidentiality. In the words of one Friend *“confidentiality is a recognition of consent NOT given, and consent is everything.”*

We expressed our belief in translating truth into action in many ways in 2021. We repeatedly encouraged Canada to sign onto the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which came into force on January 22, 2021. We wrote to Prime Minister Trudeau urging Canada to stop sending war technology to Saudi Arabia for use against the people of Yemen. Our Peace & Social Concerns Committee organized an event in support of the Al Salam School for Syrian Kids living in Turkey.

Our Meeting hosted a nation-wide event to pray for peace and for Canada not to buy 88 fighter jets, but to use that money to better the lives of people in Canada. OMM was an integral part of the Commemoration Committee which hosted Ottawa's annual lantern ceremony on Aug 6 to remember the 1945 atomic bombing victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In addition, the Meeting supported financially, emotionally and socially, two young men who left Afghanistan for the United States and found their way to Canada. We celebrated the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in June, and many attended memorial events for the Indigenous children found in unmarked graves at Residential Schools. We also continued to support grassroots peacebuilding in El Salvador. As individuals concerned about environmental changes, we supported events to protect water (World Water Day), the trees slated for destruction at the Central Experimental farm in Ottawa, and the bee populations. We continue to support work of the Ottawa Water-Study Action Group to eliminate single-use plastics, especially plastic water bottles. Throughout, we sought to connect ourselves with our spiritual roots, following our leadings, and seeking to promote nonviolence in ourselves and in our world. The biggest challenge this year was the sheer number of issues arising.

St Lawrence Regional Gatherings were held in Spring and Fall of 2021. In Spring, the theme was Water, with specific focus on the St. Lawrence watershed. In Fall, the theme was Trees, with specific focus on the trees slated for destruction at the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa. Each session was conducted only on Zoom but included ample free time. Friends were encouraged to spend some of that free time outdoors and then bring back their experiences for us to share and reflect upon. Sessions included a Friday night activity, Saturday morning and afternoon program with videos and discussion of possible actions, plus a short business session for evaluation and future planning. At the Spring gathering, there was great concern expressed about the lack of activities that would engage children. This was addressed in the Fall gathering by an afternoon reading of "The Lorax." This drew the engagement of many children.

Outreach has been greatly limited by the pandemic. Such things as "friendly eights" get-togethers, the coffeehouses with entertainment to draw people in, and in-house retreats and workshops have had to be suspended because of public health regulations. Outreach is also hindered by the challenge of conveying the richness of Quaker worship to a culture that expects ministers, music, singing, and a form of programmed worship. We pray for an end to the COVID-19 pandemic, and a resumption of our many in-house offerings. We also seek to improve our outreach to children, young people, and families with young children. One thing that did increase OMM's public visibility is that we replaced our banner which we take to approved events. The banner was used on three occasions in 2021, making Friends known to the activist community. It reads 'Ottawa Quakers, peace, justice and unity with creation.'

St Lawrence Valley Friends Allowed Meeting

St. Lawrence Valley Friends Allowed Meeting continues to meet for unprogrammed worship on Sunday evenings at 5:00 pm. After more than a year of checking in with each other and having "Meeting for Discussion" we returned to an unprogrammed gathering in the Reading Room of the Christian Science Church in Potsdam in September, wearing masks and forgoing our customary potluck supper. We welcomed two regular college student attenders, from New York Yearly Meeting. Because we valued online visits from others, we decided to have a hybrid Meeting in-person and on Zoom on the last Sunday of the month. In December we also welcomed a member of Kenya Lugulu Yearly Meeting, as a regular attender.

Pelham Executive Meeting

Pelham Executive Meeting meets on the first and third Sunday of the month. At the moment these meetings are being held virtually. This has opened the (virtual) door for people to join from a distance. The Meeting met on 12 March 2022 to discuss our State of Society during the previous year. Here is a look at what came out of the discussions.

Significant Activities or Concerns of the Local Meeting

The restoration and maintenance of a local Quaker cemetery is our tangible way of remembering the history of the people who migrated here and started the Meeting and who have cared for this burial ground for so long. It adds to the family community feeling and one of continuity for Meeting members; not just those active now but those who have come before us and what they have been through. Also, the support that has come forward in response to an appeal when wind damaged a large tree showed us that others also want to care for this land.

Formation of a Meeting of Ministry and Counsel is a significant change. They are still feeling their way but gathering to reflect on the State of Society was a good step with positive results. M&C initiated a “check-in” time at the end of Meeting on the third Sunday of each month. This is an opportunity for each member or attender to share personal concerns. The caring shown to each other and interest in personal trials, tribulations and triumphs is much appreciated, bringing us a valuable feeling of family and closer community. Ministry and Counsel noted many losses and travels with dying friends and family, so we held a Memorial Meeting where we could remember the long gone “cloud of witnesses” integral to the fabric of the Meeting. It was found to be meaningful, touching, a satisfying experience. There is seldom an opportunity to talk about those people and this became such an opportunity.

The virtual space provides an opportunity for an active Anti-racism Committee. Their events and shared resources led us to attend webinars and to be aware of other learning opportunities. This committee also welcomed people from other meetings, and has continued to enrich our Meeting with regular reports.

Welcoming BIPOC attenders into our Meeting has enriched us spiritually, enhanced our understanding of their challenges, the cultural wisdom they bring and our responsibilities as active anti-racists. They have expressed how important our meetings are to them. Using the World-Wide Virtual Forum of Friends, the BIPOC community has met through Worship Sharing for Friends of Colour (FoC) and FoC Meeting for Worship. Having a Métis elder in our meeting brings richness and education.

Relations with the Wider Community and Other Religious Groups

The Meeting continues to help sponsor people through the Bridge of Hope Community (BoHC), which has brought six Syrian families to St Catharines since 2016. Bridge of Hope have shown steady guidance in the settlement process. The Bridge of Hope secretary is one of our members, and shares regular reports with us. There is a generosity of donations from our small Meeting and from the wider community. Bridge of Hope, working with the Mennonite Central Committee, has launched an additional fundraiser to sponsor a second Sudanese family who had been living in a Ugandan refugee camp for many years. Through Bridge of Hope, Pelham Executive Meeting has an active connection with the local Mosque and the Mennonite and United Churches. We also updated our website <https://niagaraquakers.org/>.

Connections and ongoing events with local Indigenous Friendship Centres continue. Several Friends and attenders participated in a September weekend called Celebration of Nations, the Niagara Region's gathering of Indigenous Arts, Culture and Tradition. On Saturday mornings, some of us tune into *One Dish, One Mic*, an excellent Indigenous radio show. We feel fortunate to have this broadcast of information and teachings originating from Niagara.

Letters of support: We wrote to the London Mosque, regarding the deaths of four of its members in a terror attack; and to Rosanne Casimir, Chief, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, Kamloops, copied to the Indian Residential School Survivors Society, regarding the discovery of unmarked burial sites on the grounds of the Kamloops Indian Residential School.

Members attended a vigil to witness to the acts of hatred and violence against the Afzaal family of the London Mosque. Several Friends visited the Niagara Regional Native Centre to participate in a Sacred Fire to honour the children who died at Residential Schools. The British Methodist Episcopal Church in St Catharines was the home of Harriet Tubman for ten years. The Meeting made a donation to the Church to help restore a statue of Tubman that had been vandalized.

Quality of Worship, Silence and Vocal Ministry within Our Meetings

Virtual attendance at our Meeting has brought a feeling of connection and community to attenders who live at a distance in a community with no Quaker connections. Friends also attended other virtual Meetings for Worship, such as Pendle Hill, Friends of Colour and CFSC, bringing enrichment and insights back to our Meeting. Rich Afterwords are shared by many – sometimes about ministry shared during Meeting for Worship, allowing a continuum from worship into expressions of our lives.

Our Meeting is regularly blessed with the **powerful sounds of song** sweetening our hearts. Quaker Speak videos on the first Sunday of every month have become a part of our Meeting's religious education, leading to insights and conversation. Reading one of the *Advices and Queries* at each Meeting for Worship gives a gentle focus to our minds. Listening is the other side of the coin of silence – knowing to listen for the still small voice in the silence – helps when it is time to dialogue with others. Silence allows a dialogue with God.

Participation in general activities of Friends

Friends feel spiritually enriched by the ability to virtually attend Canadian Yearly Meeting, Friends of Colour, Canadian Friends Service Committee (especially the monthly celebration of 90 years of service), Pendle Hill worship, and numerous other meetings and gatherings that expand a feeling of closeness, community and connectedness.

Members have taken advantage of the virtual offerings of the Canadian Friends Service Committee series "Only Way Forward-Shifting Punitive Perspectives" and a Pendle Hill Webinars series focused on First Nations issues. We have found attending Wednesday morning CFSC Meetings for Worship valuable and nourishing.

The Friends General Conference gathering last summer had a pay-as-you-can feature allowing more to attend. A member of the Meeting participates in Archives Committee as a member emerita. Two Pelham Executive Meeting Friends are active on Camp NeeKauNis Committee. Courses taken by some are shared in meeting, providing spiritual guidance. Courses include the CFSC course, "*Are We Done Fighting,*" *Hope as a Practice*, and the Woodbrooke series of seminars on small meetings.

Some Friends continue to participate in the “Friendly Fridays” discussion of George Fox’s journals. Several Niagara Quakers attended the virtual 2021 CYM-in-session. An attender, who is our delegate to Representative Meeting, has found it both educational and hopeful to see how good Quaker process is helping Canadian Yearly Meeting as it makes significant changes.

How has your meeting dealt with conflict among members and what would help the meeting to deal more constructively with conflict? A conflict involving certain members of the Meeting remains unresolved. The conflicted member’s choice and direction in dealing with the conflict was honoured. Friends in the Meeting have continued to stay in touch with the member. Either that member’s return to participation in the meeting or their formal resignation would constitute resolution of the conflict. We hold in the light all concerned.

Community building – Having fun together, including our Holiday Season Party in December, and showing up even when we aren’t all that interested – shows each the caring we have for each other.

Peterborough Monthly Meeting

Peterborough Monthly Meeting met regularly in 2021, caring for one another and making sure to keep connections strong. We continued to use our telephone network whose members are each tasked with staying in touch with a short list of members and attenders.

In addition to challenges of the pandemic, this year has seen an additional stress in that we still did not have a “home” and therefore met most of the year on Zoom. However, during the summer of 2021 we met in members’ gardens and in the fall, we rented temporary space at a local community centre and, when they closed down due to COVID, we were able to rent space at a local theatre. Having enjoyed on Zoom the fellowship of people at a distance, we were united in the desire to continue holding hybrid meetings. These presented some technical challenges, but we were able to overcome these with the assistance of several technically savvy Friends.

Our Clerk kept us up to date on changing local COVID protocols as we negotiated contracts with local venues and provided an electronic Meeting newsletter and announcements of upcoming events of potential interest.

Some of us participated in wider Quaker gatherings such as Canadian Yearly Meeting, and were able to learn about other online worship opportunities, workshops and talks. Zoom has been very successful in helping us attract a number of members and attenders who felt more comfortable in meeting on-line. One attender and two members living at a distance regularly attend. Since most of our members and attenders are seniors, the recent addition of several young attenders, one of whom became a member, has been very welcome. Several of our members attended the memorial meeting of the wife of a long time Friend and current attender at our Meeting.

Programs put on by our Program and Outreach Committee included: worship sharing on poverty concerns; Community First tiny homes; Quaker identity; and queries on reconciliation. These helped to foster growth in our individual spiritual lives and in the life of the Meeting. More members and attenders participated in events organized by our Indigenous neighbours and have been enriched by the experience.

We maintained links to the wider community by creating a formal liaison with Trent University’s interfaith group; this resulted in an interview about Quaker ways on Instagram. The monthly peace vigil, which involves members of other like-minded groups in the city, continued as a regular event.

In 2021 we did not run our usual children's program. However, Peterborough Monthly Meeting was responsible for the children's program at the virtual St Lawrence Regional Gathering. Three of us were instrumental in organizing it and one attendee facilitated it at the event.

In Meeting for Worship for Business, we try to let spirit guide our discernment. Our aim is to reach the sense of the Meeting as equitably as possible. In general, Peterborough Monthly Meeting continues to be a vibrant Meeting with many activities and sessions that enrich our spiritual lives as individuals and as a group.

Saskatoon Monthly Meeting

During 2021, Saskatoon Monthly Meeting met by Zoom twice a week: our regular one-hour Meeting for Worship followed by 30 minutes of visiting time, and our Midweek 30-minute Meeting for worship followed by up to an hour of visiting time. Zoom allowed us to include Friends in our time together who live at a distance and cannot always attend meetings in person. Zoom also allowed us to join in the gatherings of Canadian Yearly Meeting, Western Half-Yearly Meeting, and Britain Yearly Meeting in larger numbers than during the time of in-person gatherings. Many interested newcomers to Friends joined us for varying lengths of time.

During the time of in-person meetings, we would share some pamphlets about Quaker ways and beliefs with seekers and inquirers; we did not do this with Zoom. This area of encouraging and supporting seekers to learn more about us may be something we would like to consider. During the time of pandemic, we miss our connections with multifaith and interfaith groups, especially since our local multifaith group has been laid down. Some members are active in the larger community in our name, for example during Pride Week and meetings of ecological groups.

During our Meetings for Worship for Business, we strive as a community to arrive at the "sense of the meeting." We value all who are gathered together and many of us have known each other for several years. We tend to be tolerant and collaborative. During our occasional times of conflict or disagreement, we try to find an appropriate level of confidentiality when discussing ways forward. Within our meeting, we seek to collaborate and communicate as we are a close-knit group.

Gathering by Zoom has strengthened our meeting for many of us, although we miss the ones who cannot join us. For some of us, this technology allows us to attend meeting more regularly and consistently. We continue to be a small and strong meeting, grateful to be with each other.

Toronto Monthly Meeting

Toronto Monthly Meeting gathered interested Friends and attenders for Worship Sharing in early February to consider the four queries proposed by Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel of Canadian Yearly Meeting in preparation for the annual report on State of the Society of the Religious Society of Friends during the previous year. *[The queries are printed on page 11.]*

This altered our previous annual practice of worship sharing to collect thoughts about our Meeting during the previous year. We found that the queries provoked good discussion, but they focussed on topics that we would not ourselves have chosen. Replying to these queries – and this resulting report on the State of our Society – often narrowed our attention to issues about Meeting for Worship for Business, rather than on issues of the Spirit, the broader spiritual health of our Meeting, and the activities that many of us found meaningful during the past year.

The continuing disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic have dramatically affected our world and our Meeting, although there has been a different sense of “pause” in this second year of restrictions. We maintained our pattern of Meeting for Worship every Sunday morning and usually a smaller gathering on Wednesday evening, through the Zoom platform. This was augmented by a hybrid Meeting for Worship, when pandemic permitted for several weeks in the Fall, with a limited in-person gathering in the Meeting Room. We have averaged 50 people on Sundays and 6 to 12 people on Wednesday evenings. Maintaining the central focus of worship, we have tried to sustain mutual support and reaching out for connection, as well as a pattern of Sunday afternoon programs online. Typically, the first Sunday of the month is hosted by Ministry and Counsel, the second by the Religious Education Committee. The third Sunday afternoon is for Meeting for Worship for Business, and the fourth for social action and justice concerns.

With civil society moving to reopening, we have begun to look forward with hope and energy – despite COVID-fatigue – and to consider how we will live and act intentionally in better accord with Quaker principles and precepts.

Query 1: We recognise the need to review our stewardship of time for the Meeting, beginning with a longer time for silent worship and pauses for worship during the Meeting for clarity and discernment. We recall Ursula Franklin’s comments that stewardship of resources includes stewardship of other people’s time, and that time is a non-renewable resource. We are reminded to come to meeting prepared. We need time to search for leadings in order to come to a decision and to recognise also, by the sense of the Meeting, whether a matter is continuing or should be laid down.

Attendance has changed: some new attenders are coming and some long-time Friends have stopped attending on-line Meetings. A number of us do not fully understand the purpose of the Meeting, Quaker process and how to participate – not in the “sense of fitting into the box” – but in our relationship with the spirit, being spirit-led. We learned that some associate the term “corporate” with a legal process of “incorporation” and with bureaucracy, thus losing the historical meaning of corporate, which refers to the body of believers.

We need to acknowledge different approaches to communication – written, oral, and experiential. The necessary information and knowledge needed for Meeting for Worship for Business can be presented in multiple ways to make it more accessible and allow better participation, including the formation of agenda, reports on the website, informational programmes and through mentoring. Such mentoring should occur before rather than during Meeting.

Query 2: We felt that the quotation in this Query represented a particular era and did not resonate with our belief that there is that of God in every person. We strongly felt that every person has wisdom to bring to the decision-making process. No one person can be “weighty” in every area. What counts as wisdom? We have great respect for Quaker history and traditions, for the experience of well-seasoned Friends. New people may have new and exciting ideas and insights, and we seek to encourage opportunities for everyone to speak. The gifts of new attenders were evident at the onset of COVID restrictions, and we appreciate the willingness of young attenders to provide their time, energy and expertise to the Meeting and its members, for the management of the meeting and the House during the continuing pandemic.

Query 3: There is resistance to the idea of proselytizing. The most compelling public witness for Quakers is to be seen as living according to their values, with courage and conviction. “Their life is their message.” This may be seen as setting a very high expectation to follow, and several spoke about their initial reluctance to take out Membership because “Quakers seemed so good that I could not match them.”

We need courage and the strength of our convictions in order to respond to our world and its needs today. How do we recognise and welcome values and gifts which others bring and that we may bring? How do we communicate with young people and let them know that they are valued and welcomed?

We have been impacted by COVID in “being made disembodied,” meeting virtually, not in person. We are thankful for the technology that has enabled us to continue worship, conduct committee and business Meetings, “gather” for memorials and celebrations, learn and share. At the same time, it has presented a real challenge to communicate nuances in our spiritual life, as in the transition from silent worship to verbal communication, moving from the “Meeting Room” to conversation in the virtual “Dining Room.”

Nonetheless, Members and attenders have been deliberately building community during the pandemic, Signs of spiritual vitality occur in outreach to the LGBTQ+ community, work with and for refugees, holding people and their needs in the Light through the new Light List (a group of Friends and Attenders willing to respond to requests for such spiritual support from people facing challenges), presentations by Ministry and Counsel and the Religious Education Committee, the series of “cameos” (spiritual autobiographies) presented after Meeting for Worship, and our renewed focus on *Advices and Queries* by reading one each Sunday.

The Meeting needs to have greater awareness of the work of Friends in the world, and of the spiritual significance of Friends House to the outside community.

Query 4: We acknowledge the need for balance between openness and confidentiality, in the “spiritual housekeeping” involved, and the grave consequences which may follow a breach of privacy, however unintentional and inadvertent.

We value the work undertaken by committees on our behalf and should avoid re-doing their work in the Meeting, but we should expect items for the agenda to be seasoned. The meeting can send a report back to a committee for further work when that seems necessary.

For some, there are perceptions that undermine trust and participation: they express concern about what seems like a “concentration of decision-making power” in Friends who hold positions in this “Quaker bureaucracy” (as some regard Monthly Meeting, Representative Meeting, and the Canadian Yearly Meeting leadership). In fact, we have a very active and thorough Nominating Committee working throughout the year, but there have been increasingly fewer people available (as the Society of Friends ages and decreases in members) who are willing to take on an increasingly heavy workload.

Trust is increased where there are clear directions and wide agreement about the terms of reference of all committees, when they are established, which set out the scope of responsibility, delegation of authority, decision-making capacity and expectations of consultation beyond the committee. The whole meeting should be reminded of these terms of reference from time to time (and review and revise them as necessary). People joining any committee – and especially Personnel Committee, Trustees, and Meeting of Ministry and Counsel and its Visiting Committee – should be oriented to these terms, highlighting the obligations of trust required in their position.

For many, perhaps most, participants in Toronto Monthly Meeting, there is a deep appreciation for the work of our committees. There were many references to the experience of working together on a committee as a way of getting to know more about the Meeting and about Quakers, and of the “joy of getting to know one another.”

*Some issues have no apparent solution and require everyone to find a way forward.
“Love grows in work together.”*

Vancouver Monthly Meeting

“The Kingdom of Heaven did gather us and catch us all, as in a net ... and drew many to land. We came to know a place to stand in and what to wait in ...” Francis Howgill, 1618–1688 [from the Introduction to *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 5th edition, p. 14, Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain, 2013]

After another year Meeting remotely in a very different manner than we customarily had, this quote could still reflect how Friends in Vancouver might see their experience. One challenge presented itself during the long illness of a much-loved Friend, during which the care and help she received was rooted in our sense of communal interdependence, which in turn gave her the strength to continue her loving service to the Meeting for much longer than could have been predicted. Two other Friends who very actively participated in peaceable protests against the TransMountain Pipeline Expansion were able to do so with the wholehearted support of the Meeting, both spiritual and otherwise.

The Spirit moved members of our community like tides pulling us together across great distances, and apart through isolation. We felt these conflicting movements and gently held them in the Light. We were grateful to have Friends join us electronically while traveling and after moving away, and rejoiced in the removal of barriers to their presence. We felt the absence of Friends who were unavailable through those channels and we continue working to remove barriers in our Meetinghouse so that our Fellowship may become more accessible.

In this polarizing world full of barriers and discord, we honour and seek to deepen inclusivity in our community across racial, class, education, physical and gender bounds by gratefully embracing the universal nature of the Light Within. Quaker values and practices have prepared us well for these times.

Slowly but surely, the renovations to the Meeting House have come close to conclusion, with many Friendly hands and minds contributing to the work. The new lift will allow anyone with physical disabilities to access our Meeting room, a long-term goal finally realized after many decades of planning.

Many new faces appeared on our screens as the year progressed, some of those who continued with us while others faded out of the picture” over time. Sadly, many Friends of long standing found the technology involved a hindrance to joining our worship in this manner. They are missed. Occasionally, they still connected with our fellowship in smaller events, such as picnics whenever the weather obliged.

At times, the visual of the screen might be a distraction, turning one’s attention outward more than inward, but at the same time, seeing the faces of those attending joined together in one picture, could make one feel closer and more directly engaged with one another.

As a community, we are entering a stage of recovery. Community building has been complicated by the tenor of our times. How will we stitch our Meeting together again once we are able to join together for regular Meetings for Worship in our Meetinghouse? The community that we've worked so hard to build is dependent upon the Spirit, the Seed, the Light of Christ. We need to wait for it and rely on it to rebuild and recreate a spiritual environment where we feel at one and gathered in the Spirit.

While we lay the groundwork and do things to avoid disrupting our spiritual community, we must trust in God as we reengage in the loving embrace of the Light Within. We find encouragement in Isaac Pennington's words, recorded in a 1678 letter:

“There is that near you which will guide you; Oh, wait for it, and be sure ye keep to it

Yarmouth Monthly Meeting

Yarmouth Monthly Meeting holds Meeting for Worship at the meetinghouse every First Day from 11:00 to noon. The number of Friends coming to Meeting varies from as few as two or three up to twenty. Winter is the season when numbers tend to dwindle. We offer First Day School every week for two or three children.

During this second year of the coronavirus pandemic, Yarmouth Meeting followed the provincial guidelines for faith-based gatherings at all times. For most of the year, therefore, Friends were asked to mask and to socially distance during Meeting for Worship. There was no singing, and no hand-shaking at the end of meeting. When we were unable to worship at the meetinghouse, Friends gathered for virtual meetings for worship.

Whether we met in person or virtually, Friends found solace and support from the peace and tranquility of silent worship. During the fall of 2021 Ministry and Counsel scheduled one virtual Meeting for Worship per month for Friends who were unable to attend Meeting for Worship in person due to health concerns or because they live far away. Ministry and Counsel will probably continue online worship times after all COVID restrictions are lifted if Friends make use of it.

Ministry and Counsel meetings have continued to take place using virtual technology. The pandemic made in-person visiting difficult, if not impossible, and older friends who were at greater risk of complications from the coronavirus experienced greater isolation. Telephone calls and virtual visits were good way to stay in touch.

Friends benefit from and encourage vocal ministry. When Friends are moved to share, we are truly enriched by their words. We are considering ways to encourage more people to speak and share their thoughts and prayers during Meeting for Worship.

By the end of March 2022, the Ontario government lifted all vaccine mandates and mandatory masking so Yarmouth Meeting decided to make mask-wearing in the meetinghouse a personal choice. The meetinghouse is large enough that people who wish to continue socially distancing are able to do so.

In spring 2021 we restarted our monthly potlucks on the first First Day of each month. This has always been a special time for Friends to share food and visit. In keeping with COVID restrictions Friends were asked to bring their own food, dishes, and utensils, and we ate outside. A few people chose to come but these events were not well-attended. Potlucks were discontinued through the winter but we are planning our first potluck for the first First Day in April. Friends will have the option of eating inside or outside and the option of wearing a mask.

The issue of vaccination has caused some discomfort and division across Canada. The choice to be vaccinated is a personal one. Friends have demonstrated love and respect for each other no matter what choice was made. Ministry and Counsel have organized a sharing circle where Friends will be invited to tell the story of how they experienced the pandemic. With open hearts, and minds we will share our stories and grow our compassion.

The pandemic interrupted the close connections Sparta Friends enjoyed with many organizations throughout the community, but with the lifting of health restrictions, we will re-establish those important relationships and once again offer one another the nourishing love and support that is the basis of strong communities.

Yarmouth Monthly Meeting suffered the unexpected loss of Louis Charland in May 2021. Louis, who was a member of the meeting for nearly 10 years, died suddenly of an illness involving a heart condition. Yarmouth Meeting, with the help of Graydon Laing, worked with Louis' friends and family to create a beautiful end-of-life ceremony using virtual technology. Louis' warm and welcoming presence is greatly missed. During the last months of his life the meetinghouse was not officially open but Louis often made his way to Sparta from London so he could enjoy the peace and quiet of the empty meetinghouse.

Our growing and gathering of the herbs used to make Quaker Calm Tea continues. With the tea and other fundraising efforts, we were able to offer financial support to the local food bank, youth at risk, and the youth program at the Sparta Community Centre. Funds have also been earmarked for a future Indigenous Blanket Exercise at the meetinghouse.

Instead of meeting together at a local park, The annual Hiroshima and Nagasaki Memorial lantern-floating was spread out over a larger area. Friends were invited to hold lantern-floatings at dusk on 6 August 2021 at their homes or with a small group of friends. Friends from London, St Thomas, Port Stanley, Sparta, and Port Bruce borrowed lanterns and, in some cases, made their own tissue paper covers. Photos were taken and shared on social media.

For the last regular Meeting for Worship before 25 December 2021 a local violinist joined us. After silent worship concluded, he played Christmas carols. Although we were not able to sing along, some of us couldn't help humming. The meetinghouse has excellent acoustics!

Every month the *Sparta Quaker Newsletter* shows up in our inboxes and we are grateful. We get news about our Friends so that we can offer light, love, and support for them during troubled times, or hear of their good news – the birth of a grandchild, the marriage of a son! Happenings in the wider Quaker world are also shared in our Newsletter, be it news from Canadian Friends Service Committee, Canadian Yearly Meeting, Pendle Hill, or the wider world.

Changing COVID restrictions has meant changes in protocol for Meeting for Worship, and our Newsletter kept us up to date. The Zoom link for joining our virtual Meeting for Worship was also included in the newsletter when needed. There's no doubt the Newsletter has been invaluable in keeping us informed and spiritually nourished during these challenging times.

Our winter discussion group met online for six weeks during the early months of 2022: Margery Post Abbott's *Walk Humbly, Serve Boldly: Modern Quakers as Everyday Prophets* was the focus of our discussions for a second year. Each member of the group chose a chapter and led the discussion for that week. The division and controversy among Canadians over vaccination mandates and masking protocols highlighted by three weeks of protests in Ottawa were of great concern to the discussion group.

The chapters for final week – “Finding Our Own Demons” and “Just Another Angry Guy” – gave the group a much broader perspective, and also provided ways for participants to examine when and how anger can serve us, or set us in directions that are not helpful.

The people who took part commented that they appreciated having a relatively new attender join the discussion, and this individual appreciated the experience of learning more about Sparta Quakers. Participants shared aspects of the spiritual growth they experienced. These included a better understanding of spiritual “leanings” and the value of prayer. Another friend was refreshed and felt sustained by the discussions, noting that it was easy to feel isolated during the pandemic, but that the Zoom meetings confirmed her in her faith and also pointed out the different ways in which faith can be practiced. All participants enjoyed getting to know each other better.

The **Otterville Worship Group**, which has been running for three and a half years, has developed into a small but strong group. One attender writes “Meeting in person will be welcome when weather and COVID allow. Virtual, although an amazing technology, seems awkward, impersonal to some. The few times I have been able to attend in-person meetings I certainly have enjoyed the learning and different approach to a spiritual, contemplative side of life. That alone is valuable to me...to see another path.”

The challenges Friends have experienced in the past few years, and those we will likely face in the future, are formidable. The love and support of our community and the beauty, simplicity, and sanctity of our beautiful meetinghouse have been a blessing to all. We will work to maintain this community to ensure that it continues to provide the strength and comfort necessary for Friends going forward into the future.

Yonge Street Monthly Meeting

“We should not belittle the impact the pandemic has had on our Meeting.”

In 2021, Yonge Street Monthly Meeting’s joys and sorrows were experienced through the lens of a second year under COVID-19 pandemic conditions. Our focus this past year has been on the exploration of community and technology.

Yonge Street Monthly Meeting continued Meeting for Worship via Zoom. Holding Meetings for Worship virtually has enabled some members from greater commuting distances to attend with more regularity. We are delighted by the weekly presence of children. Our website has also attracted several newcomers.

While some Friends feel it is impossible to have a Gathered Meeting via Zoom, others have glimpsed that deep, spirit-filled silence. Arrival on the Zoom platform is abrupt. To foster a sense of community within the virtual setting, a member of Ministry and Counsel acts as a convenor at each meeting, greeting people as they arrive, usually sharing a reading during worship, and overseeing the check-in after the close of Worship. This time of fellowship at the end of worship has become very important to the fabric of our meeting, enabling members to get to know each other more deeply. There are others within the meeting who remain reluctant, unwilling, or who are unable to attend Meeting for Worship online, preferring to wait for in-person opportunities.

Practical realities held sway over spiritual needs when the Meetinghouse opened for in-person worship every second week, starting mid-July. Our roster of committees now includes an Ad Hoc Health and Safety Committee that reviews public health regulations. The committee instituted safety protocols for in-person worship, which included a seating plan. An Ad Hoc Tech Committee was also formed to explore and implement requirements for quality visual and audio connections for the Meetinghouse.

We initially held separate, but simultaneous, in-person and Zoom Meetings for Worship. Eventually, we successfully held fledgling blended or hybrid Meetings for Worship. By mid-December, the Meetinghouse was once again closed and we returned to online only Meetings for Worship because of concerns about the Omicron variant.

In response to the continuing isolation of members and the fragmenting effect this had on our sense of community during the lockdown early in the year, we held a virtual discussion group. It was a wonderful opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of Quaker Faith and Practice, while discovering that of the eternal in each of us.

We were the host meeting for the Spring Session of Yonge Street Half-Yearly Meeting held in early May. On a practical level, we adopted a few different strategies to accommodate the online platform. The local planning committee included a tech team to handle the technological challenges of a full day workshop via Zoom. We also purposely expanded our definition of community beyond the three member meetings to invite meetings across southern Ontario and Quebec. Finally, the virtual venue allowed us to prioritize our resources and engage Wess Daniels, the William R Rogers Director of Friends Center and Quaker Studies at Guilford College as our speaker.

Our topic: *Where Does My Life Go Now? Discernment in the Shadow of the Pandemic* grew from a leading to connect the program to the ways in which Friends have incorporated Quaker practice or the Quaker community into their experience during the pandemic and envisioning their future. Seventy-two Friends, including children, attended Wess Daniels' talk, *In a Time of Transition: Seeds of Change, Roots of Strength*, engaging in lively discussions during the breakout groups and the Q&A.

In spite of our efforts to redefine community within a virtual space, we are challenged by divisions and differences. We recognize that communication by email, rather than the personal conversations we were used to, can lead to misunderstandings. Sadly, a continuing unresolved conflict is creating ongoing tensions which is affecting the life of the Meeting and undermining how we do business together.

When we first come to Quaker worship, we are taught ministry is not our voice, but rather listening to what we are asked to say. We need to keep reminding ourselves that it is the same in business meeting. Technology and Zoom protocols further hamper Quaker process, which works more effectively when we are present in a physical space. We have found this challenging as Friends have been unable to reach unity on such issues as the use of meeting funds, meetinghouse expenses, and vaccine mandates and protocols.

Still, we did find ways to recognize the spirit in all of us. A Threshing Session was held with the assistance of an outside moderator to discuss queries brought forward by our active PESAC group. Friends came away with fresh perspectives, new ideas, and greater support for the committee's efforts. Inn From the Cold, a local charity that supports homeless and other disadvantaged individuals, has now acquired two pieces of land directly to the north of us. They plan to build a new facility and the Meeting has granted their request for an easement along the mutual property line.

Yonge Street Monthly Meeting is, perhaps, being challenged with our own transformation. Our meeting is in a precarious position with a declining membership and an aging population spread across a wide geographic region. Our desire to continue to hold hybrid Meetings for Worship will take energy and commitment. Many meetings only open for in-person worship every other week. There are similar concerns about the operation of the meetinghouse. A break-in in

December created extra work for the House and Premises Committee, extra financial expenses, and concerns about safety.

Canadian Yearly Meeting Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel asked each meeting to reflect on four queries. In general, these queries did not speak to the issues faced by our meeting this year. Some reflections are included in the above overview; further thoughts are shared below. [Note: the queries are printed on page 8]

Query 1: This is a challenging query as it requires everyone's participation. It was felt that there was confusion distinguishing the meanings of the terms *consensus*, *unity*, and *sense of the meeting*. Not meeting in person has been a huge obstacle, and made an enormous difference in our ability to place our meeting under the guidance of the Spirit. We are not sure if this can happen over Zoom.

Query 2: Many Friends were saddened and even shocked by this statement, which goes against our understanding of the Quaker view of equality. It seems important to be open to new Light wherever it comes from. Often, newcomers ask questions that are helpful. Nevertheless, it can happen during CYM in session that new people seem to dominate business meeting, leading to lengthy explanations of right procedure in lieu of fulsome discussion.

Context of this concept is important. While it may be fair within the context of Canadian Yearly Meeting in session, where one cannot reasonably be expected to speak to each issue, at the smaller, local meeting level, this practice could be ruinous to the Meeting's decision process.

It was noted that a problem with conducting Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business via Zoom is the necessity of putting up the hand icon and thus creating a line up of speakers. This wouldn't happen if we were sitting together in the meetinghouse where discussion is more free-flowing.

Query 3: Our website has attracted several inquirers and seekers to our Zoom Meetings for Worship, and a few of these newcomers have become faithful attenders. Two of these newer attenders are now active committee members. The habit of convenors often reading from *Faith and Practice* led to the bulk purchase of copies of the book for the library and for purchase by attenders seeking greater knowledge of Quaker practice. While some families with children regularly attend online worship, we have not continued First Day School during the pandemic.

Query 4: This question did not resonate with our meeting.

REPORTS FROM HALF-YEARLY MEETINGS

Atlantic Half-Yearly Meeting

In preparation for writing the first State of Society Report for the Atlantic Half-Yearly Meeting members of Ministry and Counsel communicated by phone and by email. We want to remind Friends that Atlantic Half-Yearly Meeting is still in a state of formation and clarification regarding the needs and leadings of Friends in the Atlantic region. We remember concerns of some Friends that becoming a Half-Yearly Meeting would create more layers of bureaucracy and place burdensome responsibilities on Friends. That being said we recognize the joys that come from working and worshipping together. We reviewed the description of Half-Yearly Meetings in *Canadian Yearly Meeting Organization and Procedure* guide us.

“The Half-Yearly Meetings of Canadian Yearly Meeting are composed of the members of the constituent Monthly Meetings, Worship Groups and individual Friends in a geographic area. *They are designed to bring together Friends from a wider area in a bond of fellowship for inspiration and counsel, and to provide an opportunity for united consideration of matters that concern the Society. Their purpose is to strengthen the life and work of Meetings and Friends’ groups in the area and to facilitate communication between Friends in that area and the Yearly Meeting.* In a country as large as Canada, the Half-Yearly Meetings perform a valuable function of creating and sustaining the bonds of fellowship. The foregoing does not preclude the possibility of regional gatherings.”

Atlantic Half-Yearly Meeting State of Society Report

Since the formation of the Atlantic Half-Yearly Meeting in 2018 much has been accomplished both in practical ways and in opportunities for fellowship. A Clerk, a Treasurer, and a Recording Clerk were named. Atlantic Gathering planning committees were appointed each year. A nominating committee was formed and in November 2020 names were approved to serve as Ministry and Counsel and as Peace and Justice Committee. Our clerk presently represents the Half-Yearly Meeting at CYM Representative Meetings.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted in-person gatherings at all Quaker levels. We experience a loss of nurturance from the lack of casual visitation. Zoom or virtual meetings and gatherings have changed our reality and there are mixed reactions from Friends regarding virtual meetings.

We regret cancellations of in-person AFG gatherings at Camp Geddie for the past two years due to COVID-19. These annual in-person gatherings have been a strengthening and energizing influence for our Friends community. There were also opportunities for children and grandchildren to meet one another or reconnect while participating in excellent children’s programs in a relaxed, spiritual, inter-generational Quaker presence.

Nevertheless, in the midst of COVID-19 restrictions virtual technology has helped Atlantic Quakers stay connected. We had an amazing virtual gathering this past May on the topic “Food Security, Sufficiency, and Spirit.” The planning committee gathered inspiring presenters with participants registering from across the country. Friends were grateful for the opportunity to come together in a focused way. Ministry and Counsel oversaw worship and assisted where needed. We also had opportunity to come together virtually with sessions on “What do Quakers Believe?” and a facilitated afternoon reflection on “Leadings.”

Ministry and Counsel reviewed the State of Society reports from Halifax, New Brunswick and Annapolis Valley Monthly Meetings and their associated Worship Groups. Meetings are functioning with regular worship, attention to business and care for their members and attenders.

They have adapted to COVID-19 restrictions and have drawn new attenders to their meetings. Meetings have also had dear Friends pass away who were important to the spiritual life of their Meetings. Friends are grateful when able to meet in person for worship and social times. They are engaging with their wider faith communities as well as educating and taking action on social injustices and concerns.

Nominating committees do encounter some difficulty in finding Friends to serve in positions and on committees. We encourage Friends who are able to consider such service.

Many individual Atlantic Quakers are actively working on concerns such as climate, Indigenous affairs, poverty, homelessness, racism, violence, the economy, prison work, the environment. Way may open for Atlantic Friends as a group to be involved in some way.

Ministry and Counsel has not yet been able to arrange visitation among Friends in our region. We recognize the importance of visitation and are seeking communication with the Meetings of Ministry and Counsel in Monthly Meetings.

We sense strongly that for Atlantic Quakers, their Meetings and communities are an important part of their lives, providing challenges as well as joy. Worshiping together strengthens and guides us. We look forward to meeting in person again as a Half-Yearly Meeting.

Yonge Street Half-Yearly Meeting

Yonge Street Half-Yearly Meeting) consists of three southern Ontario meetings: Toronto Monthly Meeting, Hamilton Monthly Meeting, and Yonge Street Monthly Meeting. We meet together once in the Spring and once in the Fall for a combined social, educational, and business gathering. We share Testimonies to the Grace of God in the Life of departed Friends, and Monthly Meeting State of Society Reports. Yonge Street Half-Yearly Meeting met twice in 2021.

Yonge Street Monthly Meeting convened an all-day session via Zoom on Saturday 1 May with Friend Wess Daniels of Guilford College, Greensboro, North Carolina. Wess addressed the pandemic-inspired issue, “A Time of Transition: Seeds of Change, Roots of Strength.” In a combination of lecture and small group discussion, participants examined ways of opening toward growth and preparing for change in our lives. Wess noted how Friends’ practices can turn a time of transition to a time of “great potential and renewal.”

On Saturday 16 October we met again via Zoom, to consider “Clear and Peaceful Communication within Meetings.” This event was organized by Toronto Monthly Meeting. Matt Legge of the Canadian Friends Service Committee, along with facilitators Christina Tellez and Trevor Chandler, presented ways to strengthen clear, effective and peaceful communication skills within our Meetings. We gathered in small groups to examine how discussion of controversial issues could be done in a productive manner. More than 20 Friends participated in the Meeting for Worship for Business which followed the presentation.

We appreciate the opportunity to reconnect with Friends in our region at Yonge Street Half-Yearly Meeting and look forward to meeting again in person when this is possible.

submitted by Jane MacKay Wright, Clerk of Yonge Street Half-Yearly Meeting