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May 2016

Dear Friends,

Greetings and good wishes from Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel to Friends everywhere in Canada and to Canadian Friends serving beyond our shores.

As you probably know due to financial constraints CYM will not be holding the CYM Annual Gathering (hereinafter abbreviated as CYM-G) in 2017. This will be the first time that this has happened since the founding of the combined Canadian Yearly Meeting in 1955. To many who hold this event very dear in their lives, this will leave a void. Many Friends attend faithfully every year even when long distance travel is required, and even those who only attend when it is held in their part of the country will feel the void because they know it is not happening at all. Even when not present, Friends took comfort in knowing that it was taking place, and were there in spirit, and held the Meeting in the Light, knowing the work of Friends was being carried on.

The work of CYM will still go on in 2017 in committees and in session at two Representative Meetings, and at a number of Half-Yearly Meetings. The work and worship of Friends will continue in the different Meetings and Worship Groups through the spiritual will and efforts of many individuals and Meetings.

A fallow year does not mean an infertile or moribund one, but instead connotes rest and renewal. We can consider 2017 as a 'sabbatical'. From biblical times the idea of Sabbath, the seventh day, was a day set aside for the nurture of the soul, when the people were called from their own work to do God's work on God's day, which belongs to God. In working the land, the people were under obligation to obey this call in the same way for the fallow year – usually every seven years – which was also seen as a Divine message that the land should rest, ploughed and harrowed, but not planted. This early wisdom of respectful land use is still with us in good agricultural practice.

A wholesome change would thus be introduced every seventh year, and the people would be morally improved. The population would become more and more humane, and the whole community renewed thereby. Now in modern times there is the necessity of more time for pensive meditation and thought. The year 2017 may provide CYM with that time.

Query: How will we be changed by the absence of YM in 2017? Can we create in the sabbatical year the conditions necessary for greater thoughtfulness and reflection? Can we make it a year where we reconnect with F/friends, family or relatives with whom we have not had much contact because of time or distance? Can we make this fallow year a Jubilee year? Could this be the year to make peace with someone we are estranged from – a year to forgive something from the past – a year to overcome the barriers of the mind? Can we be generous in our support of all Friends in our Monthly Meeting/Worship Group?

If there is some support from Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel that you would find helpful during this time of change, please let us know. CMM&C has heard of many actions and activities that are being planned by Worship Groups, Monthly Meetings and Half-Yearly Meetings for 2017 and some of them are listed below. If you would like to share your intentions, please let us know.

- Make a Calendar and designate each month for a special action during 2017
- Attend CYM-G 2016 in Camrose AB this August – only 2 months away!
- Hold a Called Meeting to “Make 2017 a Jubilee Year”. Ask Friends what they would like to see and hear at your Regional Gathering
- Help organize and/or attend a Quaker Regional Gathering – and incorporate some of the well-loved features of CYM-G: The Experience of the Spirit in Our Lives, Remembrances of Friends dearly departed, Quaker Study, Special Interest/Actions sessions etc.. Write an Epistle; a letter from your gathering to CYM which can be displayed at CYM-G 2018
- Attend Quaker camp. Camp NeeKauNis in Canada and others in the US
- Write a letter or phone a friend you have not seen or heard from in a long time.
- Send a delegate to Representative Meeting so your Meeting is represented and we have input from all areas of the country.
- Be a regular attender at Meeting for Worship and Meeting for Worship for Business and a frequent visitor to Quaker.ca and local Meetings’ websites.
- Be pastors to each other and accept willingly love and kindness when it is willingly given.
- To all Meetings and Worship Groups – please share this letter with all Friends associated with your Meeting.

There is also a practical need to ‘Take Care of Business’. Keeping in mind that the usual Meetings for Worship for Business that would normally take place at CYM-G will not happen, it is important that Monthly Meetings which wish to have a concern supported by CYM send Minutes that have been discerned at the Monthly Meeting level in time for the Representative Meetings in the Fall or in the Spring (June and November 2017). Send the proposed Minute with the background context to the CYM Clerk – email directly from Quaker.ca.

The CYM Clerks and other committees will continue to meet and carry on the work of Friends and all Friends are encouraged to give input and ideas at any time – contact a committee Clerk or any member of a committee with your ideas and suggestions - particularly around what kind of gathering you want CYM to be in the future.

Share your news, views and celebrations - *The Canadian Friend* will continue to be published on Quaker.ca – read it to keep in touch! *The Canadian Friend* is delighted to receive any material for publication.

We belong to many communities – family, neighbourhood, workplace and others - but for most of us our Quaker community is our only spiritual community and through our Meetings we are connected to each other and to CYM. As humans we need to express the strong spiritual connection we share and we do this best by getting together, by talking and listening, by sharing food and stories. Continue to do this in 2017. This is the magic that happens at the CYM annual gathering so we must make sure that CYM-G happens in 2018 and every year thereafter.

In the Spirit of community and communication,

Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel

Laurel Beyer, Beverly Shepard, Lesley Read, Mel Earley, Peter Harkness