

# The Canadian Friend

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Summer 2017

PILGRIMAGE  
INDIGENOUS  
RIGHTS

praying  
with our  
feet

*Faith in Action*

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### EDITOR'S NOTE

I can think of no topic more profoundly meaningful than the ways in which we are called to put our faith into action in the world.

The experience of communing directly with God, as may be experienced through true worship, is transformational. It calls us into a new way of being, one that is not based

on society's norms or expectations, but on a deeper truth. Living this truth would have us love our neighbour, honour our mother earth, have mercy and care for the needs of "the least", and take the radical leap to follow God's leading.

To me, this speaks to the heart of the religious experience. It is the reason that I am a Quaker, a person of faith, and an activist.

So it was with great anticipation that I awaited submissions for this, the "Faith in Action" issue of *The Canadian Friend*. And Quakers did not disappoint.

The submissions in this issue are thoughtful, profound, and humorous. They share in honest and personal terms about the experience of worship, tales from the front lines of building a just and compassionate society, and about the ways in which Meetings around the country are building community.

Thus editing this issue has reminded me once again of why I love Canadian Quakers. It has been a beautiful homecoming after my seven years living abroad.

What I did not expect, when I took on the contract as editor, was for this first issue of *The Canadian Friend* to also be the last one I would edit solo for a while. But God works in God's time. My husband and I are thus very excited to be expecting the birth of our daughter at the end of October. (Someone's got to answer to the concern about dwindling numbers of young Quaker families!)

The next issue of *The Canadian Friend* that you hold in your hands will therefore be a joint collaboration between me and my maternity replacement – a fantastic Quaker and editor, Timothy Kitz.

Thank you for the joy of serving as your editor!

In Friendship,  
*Reykia Fick*



# AROUND THE FAMILY

## *Updates from Monthly Meetings*

### *Argenta Monthly Meeting*

Deborah Wilkins, Mimi (Marilyn) and Don Pollard organized the silent part of a vigil held on Sunday, February 5 to show support for those affected by killings at the Quebec City mosque. The vigil began with prayers and reflections at an Anglican cathedral, followed by a candlelight walk of four blocks to Nelson City Hall. About one hundred people were present, and silence was held for forty minutes total.

We rejoice at the birth of a son to Kate and Samuel. His name is Weaver Guthrie Stevenson. His family lives in Winlaw, with grandfather David nearby.

Madelyn MacKay continues her support for an Eritrean refugee woman who needs medical treatment and desperately awaits reunification with her children. Madelyn taught a two-week course sponsored by the Mir Centre for Peace, held at a Nelson campus.

Parfaite Ntahuba from Burundi attended the course. Pastor Parfaite belongs to an evangelical Quaker church. Her project, the Friends Women's Association, is supported by CFSC through Vancouver Island Meeting. Parfaite travelled there and to Western Half Yearly Meeting after giving a lecture on gender-based violence to a group in Nelson. Ellen Pye (VaMM) gave her hospitality and rides.

Dan Miles and Shelley Stickel-Miles frequent Tokyo Monthly Meeting while staying in Tokyo, Japan, where Dan works as a principal to "plant" the B.C. school curriculum. Kaslo is their home community.

Dottie Ross, a long-time Clerk, and widow of Jack Ross, had surgery for a fractured hip after falling.



Mimi and Don Pollard at the Doukhobor Discovery Centre in Castlegar. Mimi's dress was a gift from Parfaite Ntahuba.

*Photo credit: Larry Ewashen*

We gathered in Argenta for the celebration of the life of Imme Askevold, who lived in Creston.

The Pollards attended the Doukhobor celebration of the Burning of Arms in Russia 122 years ago. The event and worship service was held on Sunday, June 25 at the Doukhobor Discovery Centre in Castlegar, a museum built in the Doukhobor's customary communal village style.

### *Cowichan Valley Monthly Meeting*

Cowichan Valley Monthly Meeting welcomed with joyfulness Lana Robinson's transfer of membership from Vancouver Island Monthly Meeting in April. We sent a minute of support regarding Lana's continuing service to Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) as CFSC Personnel Clerk.

About six Cowichan Valley Quakers participated in a six-week 'Quaker 101' study group in April and May. Our Meeting has held several study groups over the years that have deepened our understanding and appreciation of Quaker history and values as well as strengthened our Meeting friendships.

With sadness but also with thanks for her life, we said goodbye to Vivien Abbott in May. Vivien had transferred her membership to Cowichan Valley in March 2016.

CVMM members Sarah, Rick, Galen, and Zekiah Juliusson returned home for a visit in June. Friends shared a potluck breakfast and then enjoyed a slideshow talk from the family about their experiences living, working, and studying at Monteverde Friends School in Costa Rica. It was wonderful to have the Juliussons back with us, if only for a short time. We look forward to the time when they return to the Cowichan Valley to live.

Cowichan Valley Quakers meet the first and third Sundays of each month throughout the year in the beautiful St. Ann's Garden Club Building at Providence Farm in Duncan, B.C. In addition to these Meetings for Worship, Friends also meet in worship on the fourth Sunday in the Gathering Room of 'Ts'its'uwatul' Lelum Assisted Living in Duncan, the home of Joyce Munn and her husband, Herb Strongeagle.

Friends and attenders are welcome to join us.  
Please visit our website for contact information:  
[cowichanvalley.quaker.ca](http://cowichanvalley.quaker.ca).

### *Edmonton Monthly Meeting*

As part of Edmonton Monthly Meeting's commitment to the Capital Region Interfaith Coalition to End Homelessness, members of EMM baked and delivered thirty dozen cookies for the Habitat for Humanity build.

We are holding intimate, shortened Meetings for Worship at a member's retirement home.

Some in our Meeting take part in the numerous activities in Edmonton in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

## *Hamilton Monthly Meeting*

We've been experimenting with Sunday lunchtime potlucks this year instead of our traditional Thursday or Friday evening supper potlucks. Our March potluck had Toronto Friend Elizabeth Block presenting information and leading a discussion on Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS), the political and economic actions designed to put pressure on Israel to end the practice of Jewish settlements in Palestine. The information was helpful and the discussion lively.

We held a one-day retreat at the Meeting House in April on "Images of the Sacred" and "Ideas of the Divine". Close to twenty Friends attended. Led by Paul Dekar and adorned with music, the day gently challenged us with the questions about our own images of the sacred, the God we DON'T believe in, and where and how we experience Divine spirit. Participants expressed great satisfaction in the feelings of community and closeness we felt over the course of the retreat.

One of our members is participating in the Two Row on the Grand paddle – as another Hamilton Friend and her young daughter did last year – to honour the 1615 Wampum between the Mohawk and the Dutch in which the two parties agreed to respect each other. The paddle is to remind us of the treaty and the intention of mutual respect. The Two Row on the Grand paddle is advertised as an opportunity to "polish up" the relationship between First Nations and Settlers. There are cultural events each evening. To find out more visit the website [www.tworowonthegrand.com](http://www.tworowonthegrand.com).

We provided the children's programme for Yonge Street Half-Yearly Meeting held at Camp NeeKauNis the first weekend of June. We're planning our own weekend there at the end of September, with an intriguing programme based on a book by Laurel Gugler, who has attended both Hamilton and Toronto Monthly Meetings. The theme is pacifism and conscience, and how to be true to both in the face of contrary pressures.

## *Kitchener Area Monthly Meeting*

Since we purchased our Meeting House over 30 years ago, we have considered it a part of our local witness to partner with local organizations who might share space with us during the rest of the week. We have partnered with many groups who have grown and moved to larger spaces, including the local John Howard Society, and Community Justice Initiatives (CJI).

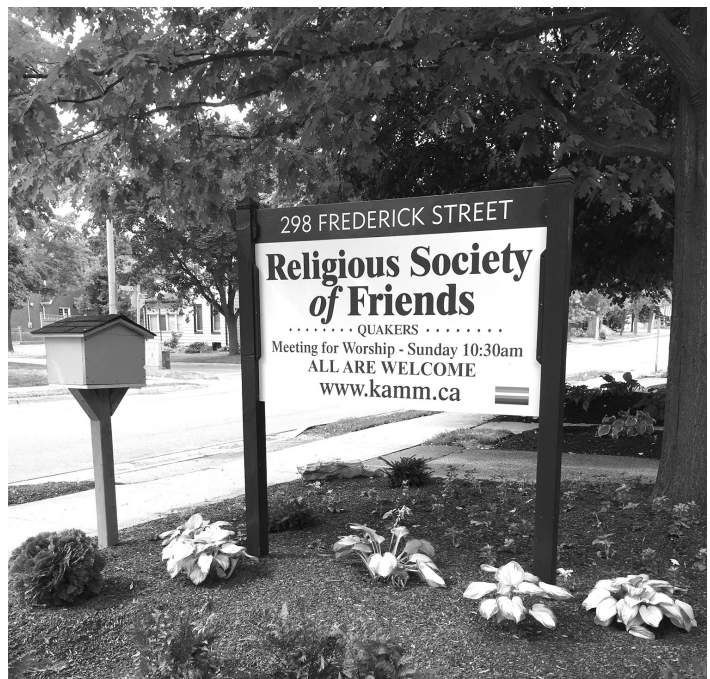
In March of 2016, after a year-and-a-half long search, we were ecstatic to partner with an Aboriginal cultural group, Maada'oonidiwag. Their purpose is to provide much-needed cultural programming for Aboriginal people in the local community.

Maada'oonidiwag is an Ojibwe word meaning "They share amongst each other." It is pronounced: *MA - da - oo - Ni - di - wag*, the first two "a" as in "father", and the "i" as in "finish."

Since moving in, they have held regular educational events for adults and children, hosted a powwow in the community, and worked alongside us as we revitalized our front and back gardens. At their invitation, one of our members was on the powwow planning committee. We hope to plant ceremonial plants with them. We look forward to building stronger connections over time.



Members of Kitchener Area Monthly Meeting  
with their revitalized front garden



## *Montreal Monthly Meeting*

Our Meeting was surprised at how popular potluck was on Easter Sunday. Those without families were not left out in the cold.

David Millar organized a visit from Gretta and Jacob Stone, from Vermont, to lead Quebec City Evangelical Quakers and our Meeting in singing. We really enjoyed the song about committees for committees.

At a conference organized by Pax Christi International, president Marie Dennis and Judy Coode launched the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative.

Our numbers have been growing. Thank-you [Quaker.ca](http://Quaker.ca) website.

## *Pelham Executive Meeting (Niagara Quakers)*

### **A Busy Fallow Year**

Niagara Quakers have been having a fallow, but busy year. Three events loom large in our 2017 calendar since March: our on-going membership in the Bridge of Hope, the annual FGC Gathering and the loss of a beloved friend.

Two Friends in our Meeting have been active in our partnership in the Bridge of Hope. The committee has grown from two founding groups, the Islamic Society of St. Catharines and Grace Mennonite Church, to include United Church partners and Niagara Quakers. Our first refugee family arrived last October, through the agency of the Mennonite Central Committee. The cooperative, interfaith effort has already shown us the great hope new Canadians bring with them to Canada. This family of four show remarkable talent at adjusting well to life in St. Catharines. We now have three families on a waiting list. One of these is the mother and siblings of our current family.

Ted Tennant, a beloved friend and attender of our Meeting passed away on April 16, 2017. We celebrated his life and shared our memories of him at our Meeting on May 7. We continue to feel his presence and influence on us as Friends in Niagara.

## *Peterborough Monthly Meeting*

After our monthly potlucks, we bring in a speaker or share concerns together around a theme. In April, we heard about a visit to a remote northern Indigenous community, and the friendships that were made there. In May, we sponsored an event about Gaza, with special attention to a family which some of us help to support there.

We undertook the simulation exercise concerning a possible split of our Yearly Meeting into two entities. We sent the results to those gathering responses.

We held a one-day retreat at the home of Bill and Rosemarie McMechan in June. Our theme was end-of-life matters. Much information was exchanged and also deep sharing.

Some of us also attended St. Laurence Valley Regional Gathering and participated in the discussion on Basic Income Guarantee.

We continue to offer an Earthcare curriculum to children once a month, with a less formal program on the other Sundays.

A member who recently visited Australia brought back a query they use there concerning the history of oppression in their country, and ours, in regards to Indigenous peoples. We studied and revised this, approved a version of it, and our representative forwarded it to Representative Meeting.

### *Prince Edward Island (PEI) Allowed Meeting*

Friends gathered in April for a Memorial Meeting for Worship for John Clement who had our Meeting for twenty years. John was well known in the wider community through his career as a music teacher, orchestra violinist, and founder (with his wife Jenet) of the Singing Strings youth orchestra that has toured in North America, Britain and Europe. His funeral, held in a United Church, included words from a Quaker representative and five deeply quiet minutes of Quaker silent worship. It was very moving.

### *Toronto Monthly Meeting*

After months of planning and waiting, members of the working group Toronto Friends Sponsoring Refugees met their first Syrian refugees, Abdul and Obada, at Toronto International airport on the evening of March 29. It was an emotional welcome and a joyful reunion for the two brothers with their older brother Moe.

Toronto Friends Sponsoring Refugees, with support from Toronto Monthly Meeting's (TMM) Quaker Committee for Refugees, held a well-attended potluck welcome luncheon for Abdul and Obada at Friends House on April 1. The two young men, after initially staying in Mississauga with Moe and his wife Karla, are now settled into their own apartment closer to the Meeting, are enrolled in school, and involved in the community. Abdul, Obada, Moe, and Karla are now assisting Toronto Friends Sponsoring Refugees with their plans to bring in a second Syrian refugee family.

The Quaker Committee for Refugees and the Salvadoran Canadian Association of Toronto sponsored the art show "Beyond Fear and Loss, Reaching for Hope", a presentation of visual expressions of refugees' experiences of flight from homelands and their journeys to new lives in Canada, on April 6-8. A book and CD sale held in conjunction with the art show raised funds for the Quaker Committee for Refugees.

Thirty members and attenders gathered for an all-day retreat held under the auspices of Ministry and Counsel on April 22. The idea arose from a concern for the nourishment of our spiritual life as a Friends' community. The facilitator was Lesley Read, a member of New Brunswick Monthly Meeting, and a visitor with Canadian Yearly Meeting's Visitation Program. Erika Koenig-Sheridan of Ottawa Monthly Meeting was her companion.

Lesley led us through periods of silent worship, personal reflection and worship-sharing based on queries. We found the experience enriching and fulfilling and felt that we had come to know one another better. There was enthusiasm for future events of a similar nature. We are appreciative of this program of Canadian Yearly Meeting that maintains a roster of seasoned Friends who are available to travel in the Ministry.

Toronto Meeting held a session to explore the process of Scrupling [Quaker practice to discuss concerns and difficult issues] after Meeting for Worship on Sunday, May 1. The session was in response to an inquiry from an individual seeking help for her interfaith and intercultural work. About twenty people came to the discussion "with hearts and minds prepared." There was a sense that Scrupling could be a helpful tool for our Meeting for discerning "way forward" when dealing with difficult, challenging, or complex issues. A working group is developing a kit to be available for our own Meeting and perhaps others.

### *Yonge Street Monthly Meeting*

Yonge Street Monthly Meeting has experienced joys and sorrows this year.

The Meeting welcomed two new babies to Meeting for Worship this winter – Graeme, son of Jeff and Katrina Little, and Sebastian, son of Lee Webb and Melanie Henry. This creates a total of five children who now participate in worship with us. It was grandparent-bonanza this winter, as several Friends treated us to a parade of announcements and photos of newborn grandchildren.

Anthony (Tony) Richmond, a long time Friend, noted author and professor, died after a lingering illness. While Tony had not been able to attend Meeting for Worship in recent years, we were continually in touch with Tony and his wife, Freda.

We also lost Fred Simons, who was with us only a couple of years, but who delved enthusiastically into assisting with the results of our 2016 retreat, *Deepening Our Spirituality*.

Yonge Street Monthly Meeting celebrated a Meeting for Worship for Marriage for Richard Kamus and Philip Dermott on June 17, a joyous, flower-filled occasion for family and F/friends.

We hosted a presentation by Matthew Legge, of CFSC, on synthetic biology, also in June. His presentation was well received and made a somewhat confusing topic much more understandable. Friends from local churches joined us and asked to be kept informed about future work on this issue and other presentations we organize.

We have exchanged visits with the Community Mennonite Church in Stouffville to worship together on Sunday mornings, arising from past collaborative work on peace issues. They are returning in August for a picnic and afternoon of sociability.

Yonge Street Friends organized the program “Spiritual Disciplines for Busy Friends” at Yonge Street Half Yearly Meeting at Camp NeeKauNis at the beginning of June. While the program was much appreciated, the attendance for the weekend was disappointing, leading to some re-thinking of the timing and location for future gatherings of Yonge Street Half Yearly Meetings.

Yonge Street Meeting finds that the new accessibility lift is making a difference – a number of Friends are now able to attend Meeting for Worship more easily. Though our “statistics” have not been reviewed, it seems as though our overall attendance is higher. We continue to give thanks for the financial support from Friends that helped our 200-year-old Meeting

House better meet today’s expectations for openness and accessibility.

### *Vancouver Monthly Meeting*

Vancouver Monthly Meeting hosted its first Annual Gathering at Greenhill Commons on Denman Island, B.C. – a time for fun and fellowship.

Brad Hornick, Heather Neun, Tim Bartoo and Ruth Walmsley hosted a holiday weekend gathering at their place on Denman Island over the Canada Day long weekend, June 29-July 3, 2017. This child and youth-centered weekend was attended by fifteen adults and seven kids. Activities included swimming at Graham Lake and in the ocean, an excursion on the sail boat, a trip to the farmers’ market, gardening, hot tubbing, building a bat house, catching newts, feasting, music, Meeting for Worship on Sunday morning and more. A good time was had by all!

### *Vancouver Island Monthly Meeting*

Victoria Friends hosted an all-Island gathering of Quakers on May 6. We are blessed with three Monthly Meetings on Vancouver Island: Saanich Peninsula Monthly Meeting, Cowichan Valley Monthly Meeting, and Vancouver Island Monthly Meeting in Victoria, with its Mid-Island Allowed Meeting in Nanaimo.

Friends gathered to learn about our Indigenous neighbours and the five requests from Canadian Yearly Meeting regarding implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Report. Our Victoria working group, which has been active since September, led an interactive sharing of questions and knowledge about our settler community and its relationship with the six First Nations in our immediate area. Ministry and Counsel facilitated a discussion about the ways in which we care for one another.



Another highlight in May was the visit from Pastor Parfaite Ntahuba from Burundi. She was in B.C. to continue her peace studies at Selkirk College, and added two weeks to her stay to visit Victoria Friends and then travel with us to Western Half Yearly Meeting. We have been helping to support the HIV clinic run by the Friends Women's Association in Burundi. Twenty-three Friends also attended Western Half-Yearly Meeting (WHYM), which was greatly enriched by the addition of Steve Fick's Sunderland P. Gardner Lecture.

Back in Victoria, we were delighted to learn that one of our members, Cameron Fraser, was hired as the new Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) Secretary. Cameron has been an active contributor to our Meeting, to WHYM and to CYM.

Along with the usual worship and business of a Monthly Meeting, our community is strengthened by various activities that happen on a weekly basis such as our Wednesday noon Meeting for Worship, which often attracts 10-15 people. We have monthly Soup & Stories after Meeting, Bible study group, Knitwits, singing before Meeting, a parents support group, spiritual friendship groups and planned visits to various First Nations events in the community.

Our 104-year-old Meeting House is well cared for by Resident Friends, who also care for our extensive food and native plant gardens with the help of our Ecology Group. We rent our Meeting House to a number of spiritually-oriented groups in town. We are the cheapest rent going in this very expensive city! All in all, it's a blessed community.

## *Winnipeg Monthly Meeting*

We've been quite busy at Winnipeg Monthly Meeting this past year. Some of our highlights include focussing on treaty relations (see our article this issue, "Treaty Relations: Our Seasons of Testimony"), and finishing the first phase of our oral history project, "What Canst Thou Say? A History of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Manitoba". As part of that project we have produced a podcast which we hope to share soon on our new website: [winnipegquakers.weebly.com](http://winnipegquakers.weebly.com).

We moved this July. Attendance at Winnipeg Monthly Meeting has increased such that we no longer fit into the much-loved space at the Centre for Christian Studies where we have met for several years. After a citywide search, we found an amenable space in a housing co-op just two blocks away. We look forward to settling in there over the months ahead.

## *News about Individual Friends*

### *Imme Askevold, Argenta Monthly Meeting*

We are very saddened to announce that our beloved mother, Imme Askevold, passed away on February 20, 2017 at the age of 96, in Creston, B.C.

Imme and Sigurd Askevold immigrated to Canada from Germany in 1951 with their young daughter Kirsten. They lived in Toronto in the Friends House on Lowther Avenue for the first year.

They moved to Creston in 1952 when Sigurd got his teaching job, and they connected with the Quaker community in Argenta. Imme and Sigurd remained lifelong members of Argenta Monthly Meeting, and spent time at Argenta as often as possible. They felt welcomed and accepted by the Quakers in the Kootenays and elsewhere in B.C. Imme treasured her friendships with the Canadian Quaker community after Sigurd passed away in 1998.

Imme will be remembered for her generous spirit, her dedication to family and friends, her endless curiosity and quest for learning, and for her numerous talents. She shared with many her love of gardening, nature appreciation, star-gazing, classical music, and the practice of medicine. She was a dedicated family physician for many decades.

A Memorial Meeting will be held in Argenta on June 28, 2017, and her ashes will be interred next to Sigurd at the Argenta cemetery.



*Imme*

Friends may be interested to know that the family has recently self-published the English-language version of Sigurd's wartime memoir "A Worm in the Apple." We were able to show it to Imme and read from it to her just weeks before she died. For more information or to order a copy, please contact Ingolf Askevold at: [iaskevold@gmail.com](mailto:iaskevold@gmail.com).

*In Friendship, Imme's family - Kirsten Walsh,  
Dee Keating, Ingolf Askevold*

### *Ruth Bishop, Halifax Monthly Meeting*

Ruth Bishop, a participant of Halifax Friends Meeting, has been accepted for a one-year volunteer teaching position with CUSO, starting in September. She will serve in Myanmar, teaching English to government officials. Ruth has several years' experience teaching English as a second language to new Canadians – immigrants and refugees to Canada. She has also served on our Meeting's Peace and Social Justice Committee, helping to promote peace and intercultural understanding.



Ruth

### *Junior and Babette Nzita, Ottawa Monthly Meeting*

Babette et Junior se sont mariés le 17 Juin dernier à l'église Mennonite de Winnipeg. Junior est un ancien enfant soldat, auteur du livre *Si ma vie d'enfant soldat pouvait être racontée* et fondateur de l'association "Paix pour l'enfance". Leur histoire a commencé il y a cinq ans en République Démocratique du Congo. Babette est résidente aux USA depuis Juin 2013. La distance n'a pas affecté leur relation, jusqu'à ce qu'ils se sont dit OUI devant les familles et amis, devant l'Etat Civil et devant Dieu. Nous sincères remerciements au QUAKER et tous ceux qui nous ont soutenu de près ou de loin.

Babette and Junior were married on June 17 at the Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. Junior is a former child soldier, author of the book *If my Life as a Child Soldier Could Be Told*, and founder of the organization "Paix pour l'enfance" ("Peace for Childhood"). Babette and Junior's story began five years ago in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Babette has been a resident of the USA since June 2013, but the distance has not affected their relationship. They said YES before family and friends, the state and God. The couple gives their sincere thanks to the Quakers and all who have supported them from near and far.



Junior and Babette Nzita

## *Dan and Shelley Stickel-Miles, Argenta Monthly Meeting / Tokyo Monthly Meeting*

Dan and Shelley Stickel-Miles (from Argenta Monthly Meeting) have been attending Tokyo Monthly Meeting for the past two years, as Dan is the principal of a new B.C. offshore school in Tokyo.

Through Meeting we have reconnected with Sachiko Yamanouchi. Sachiko, and her sister Masako (who lives in Los Angeles), are the children of Tayeko and Saburo Yamanouchi, who were active in the Shanghai Quaker Meeting during and after WWII. Some of you may know Tayeko Yamanouchi for her international Quaker work, including writing the pamphlet *The Ways of Worship* ([www.pym.org/publications/pym-pamphlets/ways-of-worship/](http://www.pym.org/publications/pym-pamphlets/ways-of-worship/)).

My father Frank Miles worshipped at the same Meeting with them while he lived in Shanghai and worked as the General Secretary for Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) in China. He enjoyed visiting the family and baby-sitting the two girls. My parents helped sponsor Masako to attend Bryn Maur College in the early 1960s, when she would babysit us quite regularly.

Seventy-five years later, it has been a real pleasure to reconnect, through Tokyo Monthly Meeting, with the family who knew my father when they were all in China and babysat me fifty years ago in Radnor, Pennsylvania!

Tokyo Quaker Meeting has a long history here, having been founded in 1892 along with Tokyo Friends School. All Meetings are in Japanese and though our Japanese is “evolving”, we appreciate the worship, the friendship and fellowship we can share in.

Meeting is always followed by a light meal and often singing. (We know most melodies so we sing in English while they sing in Japanese.) It is a very active Meeting with a youth program and historical or social activist education. We joined with the five Meetings and Worship Groups for Japan Yearly Meeting in Tsuchiura last November.

We met some great Friends from Seoul Meeting (South Korea) through the Japan Yearly Meeting. Then in March, on the way to visit family in Palau, we stopped and enjoyed a very interesting gathering with some members of the Seoul Quaker Meeting to hear about their activism, their projects and their outreach to North Korea. We were particularly interested in the man called “the Korean Quaker Gandhi” for his pacifism work ([www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/193/Ham-Sok-Hon](http://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/193/Ham-Sok-Hon)). He was the reason most of the members we talked with had joined Seoul Monthly Meeting.



It is a real pleasure to worship with Friends around the world and to feel the commonality of the Spirit among all of us, no matter what the language. We especially value Tokyo Meeting as a grounding place for our life in Tokyo.

*Love and prayers to all from Shelley and Dan, who are grateful to Friends everywhere.*



# CHILD OF A QUAKER ACTIVIST

*Joy Morris, Lethbridge Worship Group*

Being raised as a child of a Quaker activist isn't your typical upbringing.

I vividly remember the first time I saw a man with long hair. Although long hair on a man wasn't an unusual thing for the mid-70s, our neighbourhood was overwhelmingly middle-class Italian, and I was only five or six years old. The man was sitting on Mom's desk in our study, talking on the phone. (Sitting on a desk was also not something I was used to seeing.) I ran back downstairs.

"Mom? Dad? Who is that man?"

"Oh," Mom responded casually, "that's Pat. He'll be staying with us for a while, didn't I tell you? I bailed him out. He's charged with some drug offences." I relaxed. This, at least, was nothing new. Pat was the third or fourth man who had stayed in our home while awaiting trial.

I wouldn't be able to come up with an accurate count of the guys who stayed in our home when I was a kid. I don't think there were ever more than two at a time, over a period of about five years. Some of them Mom met through the Toronto Monthly Meeting's jail-visiting programs. In other cases, lawyers she knew asked her if she would stand bail for a client they'd met, or give him a place to stay. In return, those lawyers would represent some of the other guys she bailed out.

Some of the bail amounts she put up were as low as \$10 – a nominal amount that a judge had set without expecting it to be a barrier, and yet it was. One was \$40,000 and involved some court holding the deed to our house as surety for a couple of years while Glen awaited trial. Glen at least did have his own supportive family, and wasn't living with us; he just didn't have access to that kind of money.

I was the youngest child and took all of this very much for granted, since I didn't really know any different. Mom used to say the guys would tell her how much they appreciated the unconditional love and acceptance they felt from me. They had a hard time accepting the love they felt from the older members of the family; one of them said it was like he was inside a glass wall and could see all the love on the other side, but couldn't reach it. In some ways, he said, it was worse than not seeing love at all. But somehow, most of them found it easier to relate to a child of my age.

Mike and Terry took me trick-or-treating one year so my older siblings could do their own thing. Shane taught me how to riffle-shuffle, and taught several of us kids a bit of guitar. He also gave us drawing tips, as he was an excellent artist. They all ate with us, played games with us, and were treated as family. Mike kept in touch for several years through a number of stints in jail. He wrote me beautiful blank verse that I liked but didn't really understand. He also bought me my first "real" ring (that didn't come out of a gum ball machine).

My grandmother also lived with us for some of this time, as she progressed through the early stages of Alzheimer's. Most of the guys Mom bailed out were charged with nonviolent offences: drug use, breaking-and-entering, theft under \$200, etc., but one was charged with a much more serious offence, and in fairness Mom thought she had better tell her mother this. She later loved to tell the story of my grandmother's reaction.

"Mom, I should tell you about one of the guys staying downstairs. He is twenty-one years old, and is awaiting trial for first-degree murder."

“Really? He’s only twenty-one? He seems so much older!”

We didn’t really talk to our neighbours about the guys who were staying with us, although we knew many of the neighbours pretty well. They never talked to us about the guys, either, despite a humorous incident that Steve related to us one day. He had come home late, and had encountered someone prowling around our hedge. He had been suspicious, but she was equally suspicious of him. After some time, they convinced each other that they were in fact living next door to one another.

Steve was confused: “Then what are you doing out here?”

“Well,” our neighbour replied, “I forgot my key and I don’t want to wake my husband up. I’m trying to decide what to do.”

“Are you sure you live there?” asked Steve.

“Yes.”

“Well, I think I can help you.”

Steve, although young, was an experienced break-and-enter artist. He quickly jimmied a window, climbed in, and opened the door for her. Dad thought our neighbours never looked at us quite the same way after that night.

It wasn’t conventional by the wildest stretch. It isn’t how I have chosen to raise my own child. But I have always been proud of my upbringing. My parents lived what they believed. They took risks that many parents would see as unimaginable by taking these men into their home, often knowing little more of them than their criminal records and charges. They lived in faith, and with love.

Sometimes they were betrayed – one or two of the men stole from them; many were unable to break out of the cycle of crime and addiction. Mom was fired from two jobs because of the love and assistance she gave to some men who had been on the wrong side of the law. In one case, she had to hire a lawyer and attend a deeply painful inquest into the rape and murder of a young boy whose parents (among others) held her partially responsible because she had done her best to befriend the murderer before this crime. But to me, this living out of one’s values regardless of the cost is the truest form of the Testimony of Integrity. It’s something I aspire to.

Mom and Dad were among many shining examples of this sort of lived integrity we have in our Quaker communities. Now these experiences have led me to become a member of the Quakers Fostering Justice committee of Canadian Friends Service Committee. I know Mom would be proud.

*Joy Morris is the youngest daughter of Ruth and Ray Morris, formerly of Toronto Monthly Meeting. She is a member of the Lethbridge Worship Group of Calgary Monthly Meeting, and recently joined CFSC’s Quakers Fostering Justice Committee.*



# SETTLER ACTIVISM AND THE CALL TO LOVE

*Manuela Popovici, Ottawa Monthly Meeting*

“Let me ask you this: You were born here, on this land. You have parents who were born here, maybe even grandparents. Or, at the very least, you have been living here for some years now. *So why are you still settlers?*”

I’ve come to the beautiful sanctuary of the Ottawa Mennonite Church, together with about sixty other people, to listen to Mohawk Elder Rarihokwats talk to us about reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Canada. But his question startles me and sends my mind spinning so much that I can’t hear (or recall) anything else from his talk.

It’s December 2015, and the momentum for reconciliation is strong after the recent release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. Events like this are being organized across the city, and as I look around the sanctuary I recognize allies from several congregations around Ottawa.

We keep running into each other at these events. Many of us have come together in the Right Relations Network of Ottawa specifically to “encourage one another in our efforts to be conscious, abiding allies, and to undo colonizer conditioning.”<sup>1</sup> We work to recognize the privileges granted us as white settlers by a colonizing history and state, and to engage in reconciliation efforts with Indigenous peoples.

I’m so firmly positioned into this privileged/ally/activist settler identity that the Elder’s question feels like an attack, destabilizing and unfair, which makes me angry and sends me into self-righteous defensiveness. What does he mean,

why am I still a settler? I’m working hard each day precisely to remind myself that I’m not just an immigrant but also a settler, to educate myself, to contribute to dismantling the oppressive system that grants me settler privileges. What else should I be if not a settler?

Despite my efforts to send it away with various answers over the following months, Elder Rarihokwats’ question sticks to me like a burr. It is always there, at the back of my mind, poking and prodding and undermining my restless, at times guilt-ridden, at times angry, but by now familiar ally-ship. The question becomes an invitation, a portal that I move through in halting, reluctant steps over the following year, until eventually I hear another question underneath:

*“Why don’t you love this land you live on with all your heart, with all your being, with all your might?”*

Unlike the rational mind, which sorts concepts into neat *either/or* categories (settler/Indigenous, ally/oppressor, clear/unclear), the heart has no trouble holding seemingly divergent positions in a loving *both/and*. I slowly learn that I can hold the identity of settler both as politically necessary, and as something in need of shedding through love for and coming home to Mother Earth.

The position of settler is a necessary one for as long as colonialism, racism, and injustice remain interwoven in our social fabric. It helps us (settlers) understand the ways in which we benefit from and contribute to the oppression of Indigenous people(s) in Canada and the world. It can wake us up from complacency and ignorance and prod us into activism and ally-ship.

What the settler identity hasn’t done for me, though, is help me move away from anger, guilt, shame, responsibility or duty as the main fuel for my activism. It hasn’t helped me truly connect to the land I’m living on; and it hasn’t helped me understand that when my Indigenous friends

<sup>1</sup> Contact Manuela for more information on the Ottawa Right Relations Network (RRN) or if you want to join the RRN listserv.

call the Earth “our Mother,” they mean that quite literally. It was Elder Rarihokwats’ question that helped with that. It penetrated into my Christian, Quaker context and asked me to re-examine how I was relating to the unceded Algonquin land to which I had immigrated fourteen years ago.

My Christian context says God gave “man” dominion “over” Earth (and so much harm has been done in the name of having been given this dominion!). The word comes from the Latin *dominus*, which we translate as lord or master, but also, God. As in, “Ave Dominus, we pray to Thee”. And so Elder Rarihokwats’ question takes me all the way into: what do I believe to be at the core of God?

Through the portal of the Elder’s question I’ve arrived at Love. I’ve come to see – and feel in my body – that to be given and to have dominion over the Earth is all and only about Love. It means being in service to the Earth, being the service-giver, for no reason other than love. From this place I am finally able to hear the cry of Mother Earth<sup>2</sup> as a question addressed directly to me, a question from a Mother to her child:

*“Beloved, why have you forsaken Me? Where is your love?”*

“Only our love for the Earth can heal what we have devastated, redeem the inner and outer wasteland we have made through our greed and forgetfulness. It may seem too simple and idealistic, an inadequate response to the realities of ecological devastation. But love and prayer can reawaken the sacred within creation, make the ground under our feet both whole and holy.”<sup>3</sup>

I, too, believe in the power of love and prayer to heal and make whole. And I have also come to see how we settlers owe a tremendous debt to all the Indigenous peoples around the world, because they are the ones who never stopped loving and praying for our Mother Earth. If the Earth is still here and not completely ravaged, it is in no small measure due to them.

It took me a while, but I finally heard what Elder Rarihokwats was asking us all to do: love and pray for this land, for the Earth, our Mother. Love this land and act from that love, because love never settles, never stops, always serves, always gives thanks. Examine our vision of the world we’re building for the future generations: are we working for anything or just fighting against? What fuels our activism? What are we embodying and manifesting? Does it have its roots in love, and does it surrender to the imperatives of that love? Or it is still rooted in the old soil of separation, of either/or, individualism, us/them?

<sup>2</sup> For more on spiritual ecology and the cry of the Earth, see <https://spiritualecology.org/>.

<sup>3</sup> From “The Loss of the Sacred and a Prayer for the Earth,” by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee (Working with Oneness, September 2016), available at <http://workingwithoneness.org/articles/loss-sacred-prayer-earth/>.



Protest.

Photo credit: Reykia Fick

As I hold all of these questions, they stretch my heart to breaking point and I ask for help. I open the Bible and read, “Behold, all souls are Mine” (Ezekiel 18:4). My soul and your soul, and *anima mundi*, the soul of the world, we are all God’s, and when your soul hurts so does mine, and when the soul of the Earth hurts so do ours, and we can’t help but grieve, whether we are aware of the pain in our hearts or not.

When our Indigenous sisters and brothers say “All my relations,” they mean that literally, too.<sup>4</sup> With our hearts opened by love we grieve for all our relations, the children who take their own lives and the women who disappear, the clear-cut forests and the stripped mountains, the poisoned rivers and the stranded whales, and our tears make “room for the world to heal.”<sup>5</sup>

“Get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit” (Ezekiel 18:31), says God, and I hear echoes of the Elder’s challenge: don’t just settle on this land that is now your home and family. Open your heart to hear the cry and feel the love of the land, and your heart will be renewed and you will have a new spirit and new life, and the Earth will be made whole and holy once more.

Don’t just settle. “Turn and live” (Ezekiel 13:32) in full connection with Spirit and the Earth, make space for love again and again, for when you do so, people, trees, birds, the Earth and all our relations, we all live.

“Each moment from all sides rushes to us the call to love.”<sup>6</sup>

*Manuela Popovici is a first generation Romanian Canadian learning how to live and have her being on unceded Algonquin territory. She is a member of Ottawa Monthly Meeting. You can reach her at [amanuelap@gmail.com](mailto:amanuelap@gmail.com).*

<sup>4</sup> See “‘All my relations’ about respect,” by Richard Wagamese (Kamloops Daily News, June 2013), available at <http://www.kamloopsnews.ca/opinion/columnists/wagamese-all-my-relations-about-respect-1.1237759>.

<sup>5</sup> From *World as lover, world as self*, by Joanna Macy (Parallax Press, 2007). For more on Joanna Macy’s work on dealing with our pain and grief for the world, see *The Work That Reconnects* at <https://workthatreconnects.org/>.

<sup>6</sup> From *Call to Love: In the Rose Garden with Rumi*, by Jalaluddin Rumi (Sterling, 2007).

## WALK THE TALK:

# A PILGRIMAGE FOR INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

*Judith Brown, Ottawa Monthly Meeting*

From April 23 to May 14 2017, I walked 600km from Kitchener to Waterloo on a Pilgrimage for Indigenous Rights ([pfor.ca](http://pfor.ca)) organized by the Central Mennonite Church of Canada and Christian Peacemaker Teams.

Ninety other walkers participated because we felt that it is time for vulnerable and disenfranchised Indigenous Peoples to enjoy basic human rights such as clean water, culturally-appropriate education, decent schools, etc.

This opportunity was a perfect fit for my skillset (endurance sports), my comfort level (it was a walk for settlers), and my emergent leading to act, which grew out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) events of 2015. I received full support from my family, Colin Stuart and Jennifer Preston (my Quaker “elders”), Ottawa Monthly Meeting, and CFSC. After training for very long walks (up to 35km), I was “good to go”.

On the spiritual side, TRC action #48 calls all churches to formally adopt and comply with the principles, norms, and standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). However, to do this, churches must first know about UNDRIP. The walk was therefore designed around a series of nightly “teach-ins” at host churches. Very seasoned members of the group facilitated “circles” designed to help church members to continue to raise their awareness and collective will.

On the political side, TRC action #43 calls upon governments to *fully* adopt and implement UNDRIP, which Canada endorsed in 2010, and which Trudeau has said he supports. Member of Parliament (MP) Romeo Saganash’s private member’s Bill C-262, coming up for its second

reading in September 2017, would be an opportunity for Trudeau and other MPs to “Walk the Talk”. The Pilgrimage aimed to raise awareness of this important step Canadians could take towards reconciliation. We advised everyone to contact their MPs.

It was an amazing life-altering experience to be a part of this spirit-led venture. I have never felt more strongly that I was “walking in the light” (pardon the pun). We walked about 7 hours every day to a new host church. At each host church we received a warm welcome and a meal. In the evening we held a teach-in in their church hall. The teach-in circles were sometimes small (about 30 people), but near the end of our journey, the numbers increased to several hundred.

The teach-ins were very inspiring, with each person speaking their heart as they held one of Henry Neufeld’s talking sticks (he was an 87-year-old walker/elder sculptor). Patricia Makokis, a Cree woman and teacher at the University of Alberta, who was unusual because she was a non-settler walker, shed tears in the circle on one occasion because she could not believe she had lived to see the day that settlers would engage in this type of action for Indigenous Peoples. On another occasion, she challenged us to spend 20 years acquiring an Indigenous education.

It felt wonderful to be walking for hours, although I was bone-weary by the end of every day. The energy of my fellow walkers, the support of Friends and family, and the love received from churches en route, carried me through these event-filled, but love-infused days.

Highlights included walking with Romeo Saganash and Indigenous Rights organizer Leah Gazan, who joined us whenever they were able. Romeo won a place in all our hearts when, at one of the teach-ins, he delivered a speech which brought everyone to tears. We called this

talk his “I cannot sleep” speech; in it he explained the urgency he felt to make significant changes in Canada for Indigenous Peoples. Slowly we learned of his Cree childhood in the bush, how he came to be a lawyer, and then an MP, and how he is addressing issues facing Indigenous Peoples, including co-authoring UNDRIP over 20 years. We were humbled and inspired in equal measure.

Leah Gazan of Lakota First Nations touched us with her passion, energy and media skills; with her gifts, she created a “buzz” for the walk. In fact, each of us brought a unique gift to the pilgrimage. I was told that mine was being helpful; other gifts were singing, healing, speaking, facilitating, cooking, or being cheerful.

Meeting the Algonquin Peoples of Shabot Obaadjiwan was also a highlight. They offered us shelter in their community centre along Highway 7. There we learned about land struggles and hunting and fishing rights, and we experienced some wonderful drumming. This was a time for listening.

The final event, a rally at the Human Rights Monument in Ottawa and a visit to the Prime Minister’s offices, was a fitting ending as it supported both objectives of the walk.

I learned that walking for Indigenous Rights means upholding Indigenous spirituality, and Indigenous ways of being. As I walked, my fears decreased and my comfort zone expanded. I have experienced community at its best and been challenged to live to a higher standard because of my experience.

If you want to help Indigenous Peoples, contact your MP and ask them to support Bill C-262.

*Video about the Pilgrimage:*

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=0soSTguQ4IQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0soSTguQ4IQ)





## RAISING WALLS

*Keith Barber, Winnipeg Monthly Meeting*

At the Isaac Newton middle school where I work at in Winnipeg, a group of grade 9 students made pottery bowls for a fundraiser to help a Prince Albert, Saskatchewan food bank meet the need for clean water after the 2016 oil spill.

We had learned all about raising the wall of the cylinder to the right height before we shape the bowl. The idea of “Raising a Wall” has loaded meaning right now, and it seems the grades 9 students were very aware of it. We had quite a conversation while we practiced.

We talked about the figurehead of the American government and the fear and scarcity story he tells and acts from.

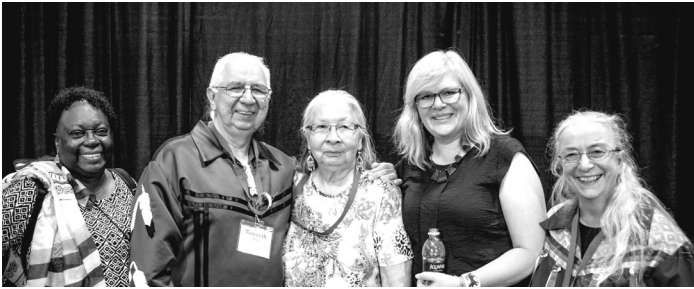
The conversation wandered to sandbag walls in Quebec and B.C., and how important it is to work together to take care of each other. Almost every adult Winnipegger has some memory of working in lines to build sandbag dykes, and tearing them down again, so I shared some of those stories. I told the story of a rich man who lived by the river near

Sioux City and decided he would use sandbags to circle just his one house and leave his neighbours in the lurch, and the conflict this caused.

A Syrian student had experienced how weak walls really are; this was affirmed by a Congolese student.

We talked about Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and the people that we were making the bowls to help – how some might not have walls, how important it is to support people to meet their needs so they can not just survive but thrive, and how good it feels to have a hand in that, by having a hand in clay.

Because of the economic demographics of the students in the catchment of our school, many of my students use the services of the food bank here – and just like Isaac Newton, we are very attuned to the idea of paying attention to the light.



## PHOTO ESSAY:

## KENNETH DEER ADDRESS TO FGC GATHERING

*Matthew Legge, Canadian Friends  
Service Committee (CFSC)*

Kenneth Deer's presentation at the Friends General Conference (FGC) Gathering on July 3, 2017 discussed the rights of Indigenous Peoples under international law.

Kenneth offered a fascinating perspective on the long struggle for the adoption of the *United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. He touched on the promises and on-going challenges around the world since the adoption of the Declaration, asking the fundamental question of why governments can't just share the wealth of the resources under Indigenous Peoples' feet with those Peoples.

Kenneth has been active in promoting and defending the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the UN system for thirty years. His presentation was facilitated by Canadian Friends Service Committee staff Jennifer Preston, who has known and worked with Kenneth for nearly two decades.

More information about the Declaration is available at [quakerservice.ca/UNDeclaration](http://quakerservice.ca/UNDeclaration).





## TREATY RELATIONS:

# OUR SEASONS OF TESTIMONY

*Alex Merrill, Winnipeg Monthly Meeting*

For the past couple of years, Winnipeg Monthly Meeting (WMM) has been seasoning a new (to us) way to live out our Quaker testimonies, to put our faith into action. Through the leadings of our Peace and Social Action Committee (PSAC), we have emerged with a practice we call “seasons of testimony.”

In each season of fall, winter, and spring, we focus our worship, education and action on a particular Quaker testimony that rises for us as a community. The summer season is fallow.

Each season of testimony is a time of integrating our learning about and practice of a particular testimony or testimonies. After dwelling on a testimony for a season, Winnipeg Monthly Meeting leaves that testimony in the care of a small group of keepers. We return to it in the next year’s cycle to explore it more deeply. Our interest and action on any given issue doesn’t end when that season ends, but we shift our group emphasis to the testimony of the next season. In this way, we hope to learn together how to live the testimonies that underpin our faith community.

Since 2015, our seasons of testimony have focussed on treaty relations, earth care, simplicity and non-violence/peace.

To show how a season can unfold, we can look at the two seasons of treaty relations we have experienced so far. We chose this issue in a time when many were looking at the meaning of reconciliation in Canada, after the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. The issue also resonates deeply with the Quaker testimonies of peace, equality, simplicity, integrity, and earth care.

With leadership from one of our members, Robert Miller, we held study sessions looking at the roots of suicide among Indigenous youth, treaties in Canada, the economic effects of colonialism on Indigenous Peoples, and how we can begin to live up to our treaty responsibilities.

Together with these studies, we have engaged in several actions related to treaty relations.

With the permission of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in Winnipeg, we formatted and printed 1,000 copies of a pocket-sized booklet of the 94 Calls to Action, the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation report. There was such a large demand after our first printing that we took orders for a second printing of 4,700, sharing printing costs with the Mennonite Church Manitoba, Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba, University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg High School, and Cambrian Agassiz area of Kairós.

We have distributed the *94 Calls to Action* to the Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, high schools, universities, churches, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, City of Winnipeg, local MLAs and MPs, and several other organizations. We have also posted the PDFs of the print-ready version on our website ([winnipegquakers.weebly.com/links-and-resources.html](http://winnipegquakers.weebly.com/links-and-resources.html)). All are welcome to download it for free and to print more booklets for distribution.

WMM’s PSAC also formed a subcommittee on treaty relations and sought someone to facilitate a sharing circle around what it means to be a Settler member of Treaty 1. A number of Indigenous Elders are encouraging to Settler people to do this. The sharing circle was led by Vincent Solomon in March 2016, an Indigenous Anglican clergy person known to some in the Meeting.

WMM participants felt an emerging sense of surprise, joy, gratitude and humility that, despite the physical and cultural devastation to Indigenous people wrought by colonialism, Vincent indicated that Indigenous people

continue to hold out a welcome to Settlers who seek to take up a proper place under treaty agreements, that is, to build relationships between Settlers and Indigenous Peoples. Words said later about the session included “blessing” and “grace.”

WMM, like others, sought ways to offer support to the community of Pimichikimak (Cross Lake), after it made national headlines due to the suicides of numerous youth last year. We supported the work of WMM member Robert Miller and his partner Frances Ravinsky in spring of 2016. They worked at a three-day gathering of local and visiting artists in Pimichikimak, to make art together with people living there.

Over the past year, members of WMM have been planning a “We Are All Treaty People Celebration” to celebrate the treaty area that covers much of southern Manitoba. We have been working with other groups, including Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba and Winnipeg Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Canada. This event will be held in Winnipeg on September 17, 2017 at The Forks, a historic meeting place for the Indigenous Peoples of the region before it became a meeting place of Settler and Indigenous Peoples.

There is keen interest in WMM to continue exploring how we can become present in treaty relationships. The opportunities keep on offering themselves as we open ourselves to a deeper understanding of what treaty relations mean, an understanding that has emerged both during and after our seasons of treaty relations.

## PICKING UP THE THREADS

*Penni Burrell, Annapolis Valley Monthly Meeting*

I’ve been a social activist off and on all my adult life – mostly “on”. My experiences with feminist groups, activism regarding poverty, peace, anti-racism, workers rights, and engagement through the political system were rewarding, and challenging. I burned out at times, and had to remove myself from active engagement – sometimes for years – to preserve my mental and physical health.

I identified as atheist for much of my younger adult life, but started a spiritual journey early in my 20s. My path followed Earth-revering elements, but did not have an activist aspect.

In my early 30s I saw a pattern in my union’s newsletter announcements of activists dying early from what could be stress-related factors, such as “sudden heart attack.” I realized I might end up in one of those notices if my activism continued as it had been. Change was in order.

I started to notice that older people at demonstrations were often Quakers. They seemed to have an ability to continue to be activists and yet not have it consume them. I collaborated with a woman who engaged deeply on social justice issues and yet radiated joy and hope. When I asked her how she did it, she told me about her membership in the Religious Society of Friends.

With these two models, I started to attend Meeting for Worship – more and more frequently. I moved often, and attended various Meetings for Worship. At 50, after a number of years of intermittent yet increasing commitment to Quaker Meetings and processes, I was led to apply to join this organized religion.

The following testimonial speaks to the initial brokenness between my social justice and spiritual roles, and to the use of Quaker faith for social activism:

*“Many new members are attracted to Friends because they resonate with the testimonies of peace, simplicity, equality, community and integrity. While this kind of attraction is not necessarily bad, the danger is that these testimonies come to be held as ends in themselves -- and thus become creeds. Testimonies embraced as ideals are without spiritual grounding. They may be ‘good’ notions but they remain mere notions. They will fade and be lost when brought to the test in an encounter with a world that has contrary notions. This danger is real because often Friends do not do well at making it clear to others that their testimonies are the \*fruits\* of their spiritual foundation, not the foundation itself. We are not Quakers because we have embraced the idea of pacifism or simple living or equal regard for both sexes. We are Quakers because we have encountered something within that convinces us that we can be and should be at peace, live simply, be loving toward all or live any other witness that may arise from this experience.”*

Robert Griswold, 2005, quoted in Canadian Yearly Meeting’s Faith and Practice

After becoming a Quaker, I initially wanted to keep my social justice and spiritual aspects separate. I savoured the feeling of “self-indulgence” when I went to Meeting once a week and was renewed spiritually, without hearing a social activism call. It fed a long-ignored hunger.

The annual request for Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) Nominations sent to Meetings always had spots to be filled for Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC). The requests called to me, but I knew I had to discern if I was being called to do the work of CFSC as a faith-based act, or if I was continuing to act like one of Pavlov’s dogs – show me a social justice committee, and I’m there!

I served other roles in my local Meeting. I listened for Spirit’s voice and learned how to develop a “sense of the Meeting” with others. After a while, it felt as if I had learned how to differentiate my inner spirit voice from my reactive activism.

“For the first time in my life, I felt everything came together, and I was integrated.” The first sentence in the Annapolis Valley Monthly Meeting outreach pamphlet speaks to the impact when I followed Spirit to do social justice work as a Quaker. Moving towards doing social justice work as a Quaker was Spirit-led from the outset, but did not lead me as I expected.

When the time felt right, I asked my Meeting to put my name forward to serve on CFSC. I believed I was being called to join CFSC to develop support for people incarcerated with mental health issues. This issue would link my current work for mental health organization and my first social activism experience volunteering at age thirteen for the Elizabeth Fry Society, where my mother had worked – it was meant to be.

I also believed that I was not being called to serve on the committee for Aboriginal Rights. I had worked with First Nations communities when I lived in Kenora over twenty years previously. My heart had gone out as a result of the horrendous conditions I had witnessed. Yet after being engaged in very poor attempts to address these wrongs, I concluded that there was no place for white people of privilege such as myself: too much historical baggage, lack of ability to implement the massive changes needed, too many mistakes made and continued.

I therefore “knew” I was going to be on the Quakers Fostering Justice Committee, and prepared accordingly. Well, no, actually not. Spirit had other plans.

The first time at CFSC, new members were asked to identify the committee in which they wanted to participate: Fostering Justice, Quaker Peace and Sustainable Communities Committee (at that time), and Aboriginal Affairs. It was like being a spiritual Goldilocks. To find out which bed/committee fit us, we attended each committee meeting as a sample. This Quaker process enabled us to listen to our inner spirit when considering our calling to service.

When I attended the first meeting of the Fostering Justice Committee, I was shocked at my inner voice's response. The activities being undertaken did not call to me. I felt uncomfortable in the room. To my complete surprise, the spirit of my Mother and my other experiences weren't leading me there. The Peace and Sustainable Communities Committee membership was very large, so I easily recognized that Spirit didn't need me there.

That left Aboriginal Affairs. Hmmm, how to deal with having closed the door to this issue decades ago? I decided to let Spirit guide me.

Jennifer Preston, the Aboriginal Affairs staff person announced to the meeting as a whole, "We're looking for members, particularly from the east." I was the only new member from the east: Spirit inside me awakened. It was possible that I was being called there. I struggled to put aside my memories of negative experiences about settlers and Indigenous people trying to work together. I opened up to being able to possibly contribute to the cause, and joined the meeting.

I listened to a vibrant discussion about a very contentious issue that I "should not" have an opinion about in relationship to Indigenous work. But the issue was one I've struggled with for decades in other aspects of my social justice work: how allies can authentically follow direction from the disadvantaged group. The opinion given was one I had heard before, and didn't agree with.

I asked myself, "Did CFSC pay my way here for me to keep silent, or to speak out and use my knowledge and views from other activist frontiers to this current one?"

I took a deep breath, and spoke out. My comment had a significant impact on the final decision, one that reflected my perspective. I realized my gifts had found their place. I felt at home, but voiced concern regarding my lack of knowledge or recent experience. I was offered support from both staff, and a committee member to mentor me.

Returning to the Maritimes, I was aware that I was following the footsteps of well-known and recognized Quakers. Betty Peterson's name came up so often (a long standing Quaker activist for Indigenous issues) and was spoken with reverence by Indigenous people and other activists I met. I felt intimidated, given my lack of experience with the issue. However, I received information and gentle support to follow my inner spiritual leading from the CFSC committee. I heard "You'll find your way." It gave me permission to take my time and fit my new role.

Doing social justice work as a Quaker, I have felt the most authentic and revitalized that I can remember. I take time to listen to Spirit, respectfully seek that of God in everyone, and build relationships. The difference in this approach, from seeking concrete actions as a measure of success, grounds me. Faith in spirit leading to action is now the only way I can become involved with social justice work.

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

This inspiring testimony by Peggy Hope Simpson, one of the founders of our Meeting and a strong voice for social justice, has given me direction and sustenance. The results are not mine to control. My path is now with a 400-year organization that has effectively created significant social justice changes. I am responsible to follow Spirit using Quaker processes. I do not feel at risk for burnout. Instead, I am continually renewed, knowing my work is in "right ordering".

# POETRY I

*Anne Noice, Kitchener Area Monthly Meeting*

After completing a year of cancer treatment I found myself writing poems. They would pop into my head usually during sleep. Eventually I put all the poems together in a book called *Through Cancer into the Light*. I would like to share two of the poems with the readers of *Canadian Friend*.

## A LAND OF HEALING

There is a land of healing  
Whose streams and rivers  
Are flowing with waters  
That restore my soul,  
Whose meadows filled with flowers  
Lift my spirit,  
Whose mountain tops give me  
A new perspective  
On the world around me  
And whose valleys offer me  
A place of abundance  
In which to nourish myself.  
In the land of healing  
Each dawn brings new hope  
And with each sunset comes  
A time of much needed rest.

## SUNRISE

As I awaken in the cozy log cabin that is ours for a week,

I see in the distance a brilliance above the dark tree clad hills across the lake.

This yellow glow announces the rising of the sun and the arrival of a new day.

Nearer to me, over the lake, the mist resembles whiffs of smoke as it swirls and rises heavenward.

The lake beneath the mist is glassy with gentle ripples.

Suddenly the sun bursts above the hills and its brilliance is dazzling.

On the water the sun's shimmering reflection blazes a path of light directly to me.

Even through the windows of the cabin I can feel the warmth of the sun.

In this moment I am overwhelmed with gratefulness that God has granted me another day.

*Inspired by the beauty of Algonquin Park, Ontario.*



## CAPTION CONTEST

What caption would you give to this photo of Nora the cat lying on *The Canadian Friend*?

Funniest, most insightful and otherwise best submissions will be printed in the Fall 2017 issue. Submit your caption to [editor@quaker.ca](mailto:editor@quaker.ca).

# WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

*David Newlands,  
Eastern Shore Allowed Meeting*

When our small group of Friends decided to hold regular meetings along the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia, we recognized that this represented the first step in a process to develop a community of people whose care for one another goes beyond the regular Sunday worship, and extends to sharing our happy events and supporting each other when problems arise.

As part of the formation of the group, it became clear that we needed to know whether we were able to build a community: did we have enough in common that we could learn from one another and support each other in our individual religious quest? This was not an idle question, as we realized that many Meetings struggle with community building because of differing understandings of the group's common values.

We also realized that from time to time we would be called upon to respond to the question, "Who are the Quakers and what do they believe?" Some of us had a decidedly Christocentric view of the Society of Friends (Quakers); others had a more inclusive view, embracing broader beliefs centered on the Light and Spirit.

The solution seemed to be an effort to describe whom we were and what we planned to do as a group. As part of the process, we would write a brief summary of our efforts. This was not seen as a creed or a fixed statement, but a "working document" that could and should be visited from time to time and discussed.

Over a period of time we arrived at a consensus and were able to support a statement. We call this statement "Who We Are and What We Do", as it reflects not only where we are in our religious life, but also our commitment to the natural and human environment. This is a statement that we feel comfortable to share with visitors to our meeting.

Here is our statement. We would welcome comments on this and examples of such statements from other Meetings.

## ***WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO*** *Eastern Shore (Nova Scotia) Quakers*

### **WHO WE ARE**

We are a spiritual community rooted in the Christian tradition, whose members care for one another and express their faith through love, working for peace, and seeking justice and reconciliation throughout the world.



## WHAT WE DO

We worship together in expectant waiting, seeking the presence of God to guide us. No one is designated to lead this worship; all may contribute to it by sharing in vocal ministry and prayer.

## HOW WE DO IT

We engage in activities based on simplicity and integrity in word and deed and the right use of the earth's resources. We experience the wonder of life forms throughout the earth and strive to live with respect and care for all creation.

## AN INVITATION

We invite all people to join us in our journey of faith.

*"It's Mine!"*

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# GIFTS OF LIGHT AND DARK AT WESTERN HALF-YEARLY MEETING

*LLynne Phillips, Vancouver Island MM at  
Victoria Friends Meeting*

Western Half Yearly Meeting (WHYM) met in its usual spring location, Sorrento Retreat Center in the Okanagan region of British Columbia. Nature was most gracious to the eighty-five Quakers who made the journey from Meetings in Argenta, Calgary, Cowichan Valley, Edmonton, Interior B.C., Prairie, Saanich Peninsula, Saskatoon, Vancouver, Vancouver Island, Winnipeg, Ottawa, and Burundi. The weather was sunny and warm for the whole weekend, trees and flowers in bloom, and greenness everywhere.

My last essay in the Canadian Friend discussed the possibility that darkness offers gifts from the dark side just as brightness offers its gifts from light. We daylight primates often find it harder to see the gifts of darkness. Not unexpectedly, the gifts of darkness and light emerged at WHYM as we engaged in business, conversations, worship sharing, special interest groups and our unusual and special gift of the Sunderland P. Gardner Lecture.

*Query: What is so unique and special about WHYM that pulls some of us for spiritual renewal year after year?*

Faithfulness was the first gift presented by the director of Sorrento Centre, who reminded us in our opening meeting about the long history of Quakers at the Centre. Quakers have met at Sorrento Centre for 47 years of the 54 years of its operation. Many Quaker families have seen their children nurtured in the arms of WHYM over the decades.

My husband Michael and I first attended with our children in 1969. We have missed only two years in all this time. We

have seen a lot of changes in the Centre and in the way WHYM has functioned. Almost all of the changes have been beneficial, growing out of collective experience and discernment.

One change that is worrisome is the steadily declining number of attenders. I don't have many statistics available but I did find Minutes for 2009. Seven years ago, 130 Quakers attended WHYM with thirty-eight Young Friends in 2009, compared with sixteen in 2017. A few years past, the WHYM registrar sent a survey to all western Meetings asking why fewer people were attending. The reasons seemed to be the obvious ones – time, distance, expense, concern over carbon footprint, family demands for the holiday weekend, etc. Yet when Quakers start chatting about holidays and travel, it appears that many of us do spend our resources on other kinds of trips.

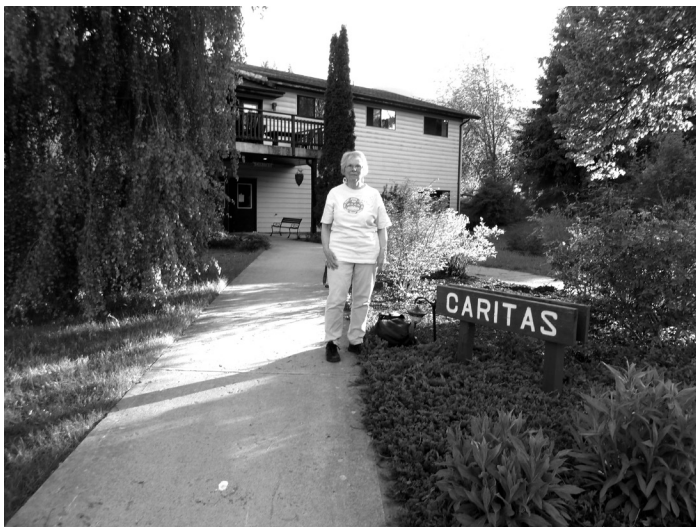
*Query: Can we make WHYM less expensive for people in the four western provinces? Can we make WHYM irresistible to western Quakers?*

The second gift was "Falling into Grace", Steve Fick's Sunderland P. Gardner (SPG) lecture presented to WHYM listeners on Saturday night. Steve's topic was death or, as more gently phrased by Steve, "making peace with the notion of my own impermanence." His reflections on death began, "I know that I am in my life's homestretch and that entails a big change in my job description." We responded to this ministry with more profound and open sharing in our worship and conversations due to our heightened awareness of mortality and the passing of all things.



Spes Bona house, Sorrento Centre.

Photo credit: Llynne Phillips



Llynne Phillips by Caritas building, Sorrento Centre

We are very grateful for Steve's gift of revelations from the Light. Yet our joy is tempered by the realization that we were a substitute for a wider Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) meeting. The SPG lecture has always been given at the annual gathering of CYM. Due primarily to lack of resources, the usual week for Quakers from across the country to attend an August CYM Gathering will not happen in 2017.

*Query: Has WHYM entered the "homestretch" of spiritual organizations? Do we need to change the "job description" of western Quakers? Of CYM?*

The third gift of light and dark was the perennial question: Will Canadian Quakers benefit from having a second Yearly Meeting in the west? This question was asked many years ago at WHYM and has reappeared again and again at Representative Meetings, at August CYM Gatherings, at WHYM special interest groups and in many Monthly Meetings.

This April, all Monthly Meetings were asked by CYM's committee of clerks to consider the question again through a structured discussion and report to CYM's Representative Meeting in June. It was a surprise to many that no one brought such a discussion to this year's WHYM. Given that WHYM has often been seen as the nucleus of such a western Yearly Meeting, people were eager to discuss it. A Friend volunteered to facilitate a special interest group and another took notes, which are available from the WHYM Clerk.

It's my sense that this group expressed the usual discernments that by now are well documented. There was again no clear sense of what is best and what is possible.

*Query: Do the frequent and devoted attenders of WHYM want to BE a yearly meeting with all the changes this would imply? Can we do it?*

As I reflected on WHYM, the word that united the three themes was change: the declining attendance at WHYM, especially the decline in attendance of children (meaning families); the inevitability of death; the continued re-examination of a question that so far has not had a definite answer.

How can we respond to the challenge of change?

Steve's ministry spoke to us about impermanence and death – nothing stays the same, nothing lasts forever, even on the material level. So where is our comfort? For Steve, it came through dreams and visions that brought a powerful feeling that “life and death are essentially one thing” and that death is “a vast aliveness.” Beyond his own personal realizations, he draws on the writing of mystics and the experiences of dying people to explain how we might prepare for death so that we can die in peace. (To fully appreciate his message of comfort, you will need to watch the video of the SPG lecture ([quaker.ca/resources/audio-video](http://quaker.ca/resources/audio-video)) and/or read the published version.)

As a summary statement for the infinitely complicated process of preparing our self for death, I liked the following: “Perhaps, however, the ‘infinite love of God’ that Fox experienced is a love that enwraps and enfolds everything into a mystery much greater than light and darkness, joy and pain, life and death. And maybe we cannot comprehend, nor do we need to comprehend, this mystery. Maybe in the end, all we can do is surrender into it.”

And on a practical level for daily guidance and decisions: “We can turn to the light of Love to guide our day-to-day lives, choosing the paths that in the eye of the heart appear most bright, and choosing activities that best use our gifts in service to others. In our private and corporate spiritual practices, we can be transformed by becoming naked to that Light, letting it permeate every corner within us – both the dark and painful corners, and the bright and beautiful ones.”

*Query: Can we take this advice of transformation to heart?*

## EPISTLE FROM WESTERN HALF-YEARLY MEETING

*May 2017, Sorrento, BC*

To Friends everywhere,

Greetings from all of us at Western Half Yearly Meeting, in Sorrento Centre in British Columbia, May 19-22, 2017. Here on the traditional territory of the Secwepemc First Nations we enjoyed four days of brilliant sunshine – a great relief from the rain we've experienced here in recent years. By Sunday we could smell the lilacs blooming, a scent that we associate with arriving here. All this beauty made the ‘boil water’ advisory easier to tolerate!

The weekend started with a balancing retreat, a practice that we treasure and are pleased that we can continue. We also delighted in our community gathering Friday evening.

Our attendance was a bit low this year, and while we missed many Friends who are often among us we also appreciated the intimacy of the smaller group. While some among us are facing challenges that have kept



The Fraser family waiting to board the ferry.

*Photo credit: Llynne Phillips*

them away, we feel blessed that others have found ways to be here with us in spite of those challenges, and we hope that we have given them the support they need.

The usual work project that engages our young Friends was not able to proceed this year, due to the wetness of the fields and a staff shortage at Sorrento Centre. Young Friends spent that time on the beach instead, strengthening their own community.

Much of our worship and discussion centered on topics of death, dying, grieving, and joy. We welcomed awareness of the full cycle of life with the presence of children from in utero to age 89. We were honoured to host the Sunderland P. Gardner lecturer, Steve Fick, from Ottawa Monthly Meeting. Steve's lecture, entitled "Falling into Grace", invited us to awaken to a deeper aliveness – a "falling into grace" that turns our mortality into a spiritual companion, available online: [quaker.ca/resources/audio-video](http://quaker.ca/resources/audio-video). We were brought closer together with tears shed and stories shared.



Michael Phillips by Caritas building, Sorrento Centre.

*Photo credit: Llynne Phillips*

We also welcomed Parfaite Ntahuba, a Burundian Friends' pastor who led special interest groups on the Friends Women's Association of Burundi (a group that addresses issues of women's health and gender-based violence) and on non-violent peacekeeping.

Family night brought us balancing displays, vocal and instrumental music, a new Quaker play (becoming a tradition for us), stories and fun antics.

As always, our times of worship with our extended spiritual family were what knitted us together, in worship sharing, business meeting, and our Sunday morning family worship.

We look forward to seeing each other again on Thanksgiving weekend at Shekinah in Saskatchewan.

# ACHIEVING BALANCE

*at Ottawa Monthly Meeting Retreat*

Photos by Reykia Fick



Noemi



Emmanuel and Christian



Erica



Bridget

## POETRY II

*Keith R. Maddock, Toronto Monthly Meeting*

### SANCTUARY I

I could barely remember what it was like  
to live in a world without fear;  
the hand of power, the thorn in the flower  
made me feel safe again –  
somehow I learned to love the bomb,  
the sword, the gun and the Law –  
felt safe from all but the peril unseen,  
a microscopic flaw ... when I sneezed  
the lights appeared to grow dim;

Then a power unnamed  
by the heralds of dread  
opened my eyes to the dawn –  
though all the lights of the city  
were dimmed – not so was the Light  
of the chamber within.

### A CYBER ODE TO RUMI

How strange it is electrons flourish  
even when the words go dry -  
all of cyber-space abuzz  
with noise enough to blow the mind;  
what a shame there is no space  
for silence in the teeming net  
when in the ocean depths of time  
there is a still point turning.

Turn off the power, wipe the screen,  
take a breath and close your eyes –  
polish the mirror in your breast  
as though it were your spirit-guide;  
there is another light inside  
that never crashes, never dies.

“Stop talking! What a shame you are not familiar with  
inner silence. Polish your heart for a day or more to mirror  
your book of devotions.”

Jalaluddin Rumi, Mathnawi VI

## GOING DEEP

*Brent Bowyer, Kitchener Monthly Meeting*

My major in university was in geology. Over the years, our family has ventured underground at various places: Mammoth Cave, Kentucky; the Springhill, Nova Scotia coal mine; Big Nickel in Sudbury; the Warsaw Caves near Peterborough; cenote caverns in Mexico; felspar caves near Madoc, Ontario; the Goderich salt mine; and horizontal shafts in an abandoned mine near Elliot Lake. It seems to me that the spiritual journey, the quest that we are on as Quakers, and especially Meeting for Worship (M4W), has many parallels with the experience of exploring underground.

There is a descent into the unknown, the unpredictable. As the darkness envelops you, it seems like another world, only remotely connected to that of everyday life. Outer sounds are stilled and you can hear more clearly your own heartbeat. Much like the deepening silence in M4W.

From time to time reminders of the outer world may intrude: wispy tree rootlets that have reached very deep in search of moisture or nourishment, a cool breeze from a distant opening, the fluttering of bats' wings on the ceiling, the sound of an underground stream flowing somewhere. As with audible and other distractions in M4W, these reminders of the external world serve to remind us of the world from which we have come and to which we will return.

Candles, headlamps, or flashlights are usually carried. Sometimes one person will shine a light for another person: to help her find a safe passage avoiding a projecting rock in the ceiling, to point out a spectacular stalactite or stalagmite, or just to reassure someone else that he is not alone. In like manner can spoken messages in M4W benefit those who listen. Sudden flashes of insight and intensely-felt presence in M4W are like the panoramas

suddenly revealed when lights illuminate breathtaking vistas underground.

The usual landmarks helpful in the world above are largely absent, maps may be very incomplete, and compasses will not work deep in the earth. But there may be signs of earlier seekers: arrows giving direction on the wall, footprints, rocks piled to block danger zones, ledges and niches carved out, and very rough maps showing what is already explored. Insights from those who have gone before, similar to the life-experience and wisdom preserved in Quaker journals, letters and our testimonies.

While a guided tour in an old mine will keep the group together on a predetermined safe path, there are some who will return later or take up spelunking out of an interest in exploring unmapped side passages. Worship in unprogrammed meetings would seem to resemble this more than the guided tour. There may be very narrow twisting passageways with hidden dangers. They may sometimes come to a dead end. They may also meander for miles but eventually end up connecting to the main passageway, just as all rivers flow to the ocean.

There are so many paths of experiencing God/Spirit/meaning in our lives, but none of them remain forever static to be passed on to someone else, just as the winding underground passageways carve new channels and tunnels as water seeks another level. How sobering it is to know that all truth, from whatever its source, leads us to the same SOURCE. Ecstatic and humbling – all at once!

There are moments underground that are especially poignant. Like when a group stops in one place on the edge of a very deep vertical shaft. All the lights go out. There is a deep silence and a deep listening. And then...the sound of a drop of water hitting an underground lake far below.



A realization that we are connected in space to other seekers who may be exploring that same ocean of darkness a great distance away. The realization that we are connected in time with earlier life forms that drank from that same aquifer millions of years ago, a great cloud of witnesses and fellow sojourners. Moments of awe, wonder and a mystical connectedness – to each other and to the Spirit of life.

*Inspired by M4W and discussions at the Friends General Conference (FGC) Gathering at Niagara Falls and in the Lucknow & Area/North Huron Worship Group of Kitchener Area Monthly Meeting*

## A FEW QUERIES:

*Do we need/have a GPS?*

*Is the journey just as important as the destination?*

*What happens when we meet others in a narrow tunnel who are moving in the opposite direction?*

# WHAT DO QUAKERS BELIEVE?

*A brief Special Interest Group  
at Atlantic Friends Gathering, 2017*

*Maida Follini, Halifax Monthly Meeting*

Michael Miller (New Brunswick Monthly Meeting) and I led the discussion “What do Quakers believe?” at Atlantic Friends Gathering out of our interest in exploring the meanings of Spirit, the Divine, God, and that of God within every person.

In a portion of his Journal, George Fox describes his epiphany: “When all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do, then, oh, then, I heard a voice which said, ‘There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition’; and when I heard it, my heart did leap for joy.”

This was Fox’s experience with direct communication with the Divine. Unlike some prophets and religious leaders who have felt in touch with God, Fox did not consider that this set him up above other people or that he was specially endowed with this gift. He was a villager, not a University graduate or important person. If a common man like himself had this gift, then, Fox held, it must be a gift that every person held.

Fox said: “Walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone.” (*The Works of George Fox*). Quakers consider there is that of God in everyone, all over the world, of whatever religion or race or condition, and that this has been so forever, not only in Christian communities, but in past times, before Jesus walked the earth, and in places that have never heard of Christianity.



*Photo credit: Reykia Fick*

These two beliefs lead to our Quaker testimonies, and ways of acting that express our faith. If each of us can receive Divine guidance, then each of us can minister. And if each of us shelters “that of God” within us, each person deserves respect. We should not consider anyone lower than ourselves because of being of a different religion, race or status.

Along with direct communication with the Spirit comes Continuing Revelation, the recognition that divine messages did not end with Jesus’s ministry, or revelations from ancient prophets or with the writing down of the Bible. The Spirit continues to act through people of all times, including our own, and in the future.

With this introduction, the question was taken up: What did we mean by God, the Divine, the Spirit, which was in every person, and which spoke to us?

It was helpful to compare traditional Protestant beliefs with often-different Quaker beliefs. In mainstream Protestant faiths, Jesus is the Son of God. God consists of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Humankind received redemption from their sins by Christ’s atonement on the cross. There is an afterlife of heaven and hell. Mainstream faiths do also believe in direct communication with the Divine – as evidenced by prayer, and answers to prayers, and in individual experiences with a caring Divinity. So there is overlap between Quakers and the mainstream, and there are also striking differences.

Our circle of about ten participants had many different words to describe God, or the Spirit. Some were comfortable using the term “God”, appreciating the idea of God as a caring Father. Others had trouble as the term “God” seemed to imply that God was a personage, with motives like a human being. Some of us solved this problem by translating the term God into a definition that matched our beliefs. Here are some other phrases that different participants used to describe God:

*One Divine Spirit – God is One*

*Creative Energy*

*Peace, Pacifism, Softness*

*A Force or Spirit in Everything*

*A Force of Evolution in the Universe*

*A Force in Human minds – Thinking*

*A Divine Presence Within*

*The Divine Otherness*

*A Powerful Spiritual Force*

*Something that can be described by different religions and holy books - the Bible, the Koran, Buddhists and Hindu works, Indigenous Spirituality, and more*

*An Attribute of the Universe for the Good, the Constructive, and the Life Affirming The Wellspring that causes everything that happens*

*God is Love – Compassion – with Jesus for an Example to us*

*God is What We Do, our Good Actions*

*The Terms, Labels and Stories about God are metaphors for an underlying Spiritual Depth*

We only had an hour – too short a time to really explore each individual’s thoughts on the topic of our beliefs. We just scratched the surface. But there was interest, and there was a recognition that Quakers have a wide range of beliefs, often far from the traditional.

As we seek our own paths, we are called to respect the different paths of others. As we find our own way to what speaks to our condition, let’s not be afraid to hold such exploratory discussions as were held at Atlantic Friends Gathering. This may be one way to deepen our own faith and understand that of others.

## EXPERIENCING WORSHIP

*David Summerhays,*

*Montreal Monthly Meeting*

At Friends General Conference (FGC) Gathering I learned what worship should feel like – but I didn’t learn this at worship. I took a sacred singing workshop; I sang sacred harp, from *Worship in Song*, and from *Rise Up Singing* with Annie Patterson and Peter Blood.

Quaker meeting is supposed to be more joyful than any music. Early Quakers believed they were experiencing the beginning of the Millennium of Christ – that’s how joyful their silence was: a silence that no music could surpass. All of our meetings at some moments are a silence of routine. We all have conflict and resentment, repression, and all our meetings occasionally reek the stench of spiritual stagnation.

But I think most often our meetings are like the eye of a hurricane – a welcome respite from our hectic lives. And perhaps this is the greatest danger of all.

The singing at FGC reminded me that our meetings shouldn’t feel like the eye of a hurricane. Catholic historian Karen Armstrong writes that the experience of God is like the satisfying silence after the last note of a symphony, before the applause begins.

Quaker silence should not be an eye in a hurricane but like the last note of a symphony, the culmination of the life of our community. Every other note, every act of our community, must be just right to make our worship a celebration, rather than a breather in a marathon.

What I learned at FGC is that singing, studying, eating, laughing, dancing, crying together – anything that helps us arrive at a state of blissful fulfillment and wonder of which the Biblical Jesus is a model – these are the ingredients for a rich and vibrant Quaker worship. These elements are like the notes of a symphony, resulting in that rich worship we all crave.



*Photo credit: Manuela Popovici*

## DAILY GRATITUDE PRACTICE

### *alouette lark*

Daily exercise: every morning, before you get out of bed, find at least five things that you are grateful for. Feel it. Your day will go better. They can even be the same every day as long as you feel it strongly, but they must be immediate. You can easily be grateful for big things, or things in the past – but this is not what this is for, these are actual small current things, in your day-to-day life.

As I have lived without running water, and with running but only cold water, many times in my life, this is always my first one – there is not a day in my current life when I am not acutely grateful for the plentiful hot and cold water that streams from my taps. (You try living alone with five small children with no electricity or running water!)

I am grateful for having enough money to pay all my necessities, with a little left over for extras, and this happens every month, without fail!! I am actively grateful to every tax-paying Canadian for my pension and the supplement that gives me such security and ability to live well.

My gratitude can range from a ripe mango to the kiss on the hand from the old man I found wandering the hallway the other day. He was unable to find his apartment, and wearing a blue dressing gown. He may have dementia, but his manners were impeccable – once we found his wife, he thanked me ceremoniously before entering.

You may repeat this exercise at any time during the day, and before you go to bed, if your life is giving you challenges. A calm and outward-looking mind enables you to think more clearly about difficulties and how to make the right decision.

It is entirely possible to designate this as prayer, but I so often hear people say “I pray for... this person, for this thing, for world peace, etc.” – but this is different, it isn’t taking or expecting, but keeping still and giving. It is simply saying thank you.

*alouette lark is a member of Vancouver Monthly Meeting, despite years of absence, and has been living in Montreal since 2002.*

# ARE MY THOUGHTS SPIRITUAL ENOUGH?

*Julie Robinson, Edmonton Monthly Meeting*

One Sunday morning this past March, the landscape partially covered in snow and entirely dull, I sat in Meeting for Worship unable to shake the desire for a new spring purse. Everything had turned to feeling excessively heavy—mitts, boots, bulky winter coat, the blanket I wrapped myself in at my desk—and as my body cried for physical liberation, my thoughts turned to aquas, fuscias, new greens, cotton, and summer heat. I wanted something that was bright and light.

The Spirit (it must have been the Spirit!) reminded me of some fabric I had stashed beneath my bed and I spent the next half hour mentally fashioning the pattern for a handbag—pocket, strap, lining, closure—deciding to make one for myself and another for a friend. When I returned home I immediately reached beneath my bed and like the bottomless jar of oil promised to Elijah's host, the widow at Zarephath in the Old Testament, the confirmation of plenty of material for this endeavour proved to be a Divine gift. Each bag took me an afternoon to sew.

Years ago, at Friends' Association for Higher Education, a gentleman confided to me that he often received a creative way forward in his business dealings (in other words, a way to make a lot of money) during Meeting for Worship. Part of me felt judgmental, but more of me was curious about his experience, and while we didn't talk further, I relegated the confession to my memory bank.

Recently, reading about creativity in *Scientific American Mind* magazine, I found this: "Creative achievement is associated with openness to experience, cognitive and behavioural flexibility and a tolerance for ambiguity and change."

Was there an element of creativity involved in being open to the Spirit? How much did openness depend on being flexible and tolerant of ambiguity? The phrase "openness to the mystery" came to mind. As did Caroline Balderson Perry's "living in the I-don't-know-place" (a Sunderland P. Gardner lecture that I highly recommend). Personally, I am a fan of mystery—the wonder of it, the seemingly inexplicable giftedness. But I am also interested in figuring things out, articulating our lived experience, as difficult as that is.

So, here is a scientific attempt at explaining why we have insights, perhaps some of which we are moved to share with others as vocal ministry: "During moments of insight, cognitive filters relax momentarily and allow ideas that are on the brain's back burners to leap forward into conscious awareness." I think that the carving out of time and place, the deliberate break from our busy lives, the collective agreement to support one another in the particular endeavour we call Meeting for Worship, allows for "cognitive filters [to] relax," enabling openness.

How, then, do we tell if our insights are of the Spirit, or of our own limited, human making, our own "back burners"?

Julia Cameron, an artist and writer, has done a lot of thinking about the human-Divine relationship. She firmly believes that we participate in a "co-creative bond with a power greater than ourselves," that we "are a gate for God to accomplish great things." I love her optimism: trust the Spirit to work through you, to use you to leave the world a better place than when you found it. This does not exclude dead ends, back-tracking, and using failures as valuable lessons.

One of my favourite gatherings at Canadian Yearly Meeting is the one where we share evidence of the Spirit in our lives. This is meaningful for me, in part, because it sharpens my perspective —like a master class in seeing and knowing. Sometimes I need to assure myself that the Spirit is there even though I am not seeing it, and sometimes I need to set everything aside in order to see afresh.

To use an analogy from visual art, we know that the road consists of parallel lines but what we see when we look at the landscape is that the road converges to a point in the distance. We must set aside one kind of knowledge in order to focus on an equally correct reality.

So, are my thoughts spiritual enough? Maybe it depends on how I look at it.

## IMAGES OF THE SACRED

*Paul R. Dekar, Hamilton Monthly Meeting*

“On a summer morning, I sat down... to think about God...”

Mary Oliver, “Song of the Builders,” *New and Selected Poems 2*

One Sunday, a Friend spoke of God during Meeting for Worship at Hamilton Monthly Meeting (HMM). After reflection, another Friend expressed dis-ease with such language of the Sacred. This led to a retreat at the Meeting House with the theme, “Images of the Sacred”. Accompanied by music and poetry, Hamilton F/friends discussed our own images of the Sacred, the God we do not believe in, as well as where and how we experience the Inner Light.

During the retreat, we undertook several exercises. One, adapted from *Western Friend* (September/October 2016), involved participants drawing an image of the Sacred

on a blank television screen. At the end of the day, we filled a second blank television screen, asking, has my understanding of the Sacred changed through the day?

F/friends shared many images. These included creative energy, sustaining energy, cosmos, reflection of all that is, Divine, connection to one’s true self, space within, *spiritus sanctus*, be still and know, forgiveness, love, and gratitude. As retreat facilitator, I shared other ways some have named the Sacred. For example, religious thinker Deepak Chopra wrote of the “mystery of mysteries;” Canadian pastor John Smith of the “one great soul of which all souls are a part,” and Christian theologian Paul Tillich of the “ground of being.”

F/friends also described sacred images we do not believe in. The following briefly summarizes my experience, which resonated with others.

I long held traditional ideas. I understood G-d (a word I now rarely use) as out there, or up there, an entity responsive, like Santa Claus, to requests. In 1960, for example, my Baptist Sunday school teacher called us to get on our knees to pray that “He” prevent a Catholic from becoming President of the United States.

I began to change, especially after the summer of 1965 when I participated in an Operation Crossroads Africa work camp in Fort Lamy (now N’Djamena), Chad. For the first time in my life (to the best I can recall) I met Muslims who raised questions that contributed to my decision to put aside plans to attend law school.

Opting for a trial year at seminary, I chose Colgate Rochester Divinity School in upstate New York in part due to its historic role in the social gospel movement. An American Baptist official cautioned that if I studied there, I might never get a church-related job. This was due in part to the school’s professor of theology, death-of-God theologian William Hamilton mentioned in the April 8, 1966 *Time* Magazine cover article that questioned, “Is God Dead?”

Another influence at the time was feminist thought. As early as the 60s, my partner and many others were raising concerns over language about the Sacred. Later, I read *Models of God* by Sally McFague who argued that multiple images, or metaphors, can and should enhance and enrich our understanding, help give substance to new ways of conceiving the Sacred, and engender ethical reflection about such urgent tasks as caring for an ecologically-fragile earth. In McFague's view, and mine, male images like Father, King, and Lord served too long in ways oppressive for all but a few privileged men.

As my image of the Sacred began to change, I discovered that not everyone agreed with this trend. At a Baptist retreat during which I was Bible study leader, I invited use of inclusive language when praying. A former student exploded angrily that this was not appropriate, and that he would not.

Where am I now? During our HMM retreat, I introduced the idea of panentheism. By this key image, I have come to understand that everything is G-d, who is both immanent and transcendent. The world is not separate from G-d but rather in G-d who does not act upon the world from the outside but from the inside, just as the soul gives purpose and direction to our being. Other scholars and thoughtful writers have developed this idea, for example Marcus J. Borg in *The God We Never Knew* (Harper, 1997) and Timothy Gates in *Reclaiming the Transcendent: God in Process* (Pendle Hill Pamphlet 422).

During the day, such input sparked vigorous discussion. Participants named sacred reality in many ways: G-d, Yahweh, Great Spirit, Shiva, Allah, Love, and so on. We all expressed satisfaction in the feelings of community and closeness we felt over the course of the day.

As we closed, I read a contemporary rendering of the Sh'ma (Deuteronomy 6:4ff) by Marcia Falk in *The Book of Blessings* (Harperone, 1996). It begins "Hear O Israel – the Divine abounds everywhere and dwells in everything: the many are One." Falk concludes by calling us to care for the earth. In this, she communicates ancient words that we are "to do what is fair and just to your neighbor, be compassionate and loyal in your love, and [not] to take yourself too seriously" (Micah 6:8, *The Message*).

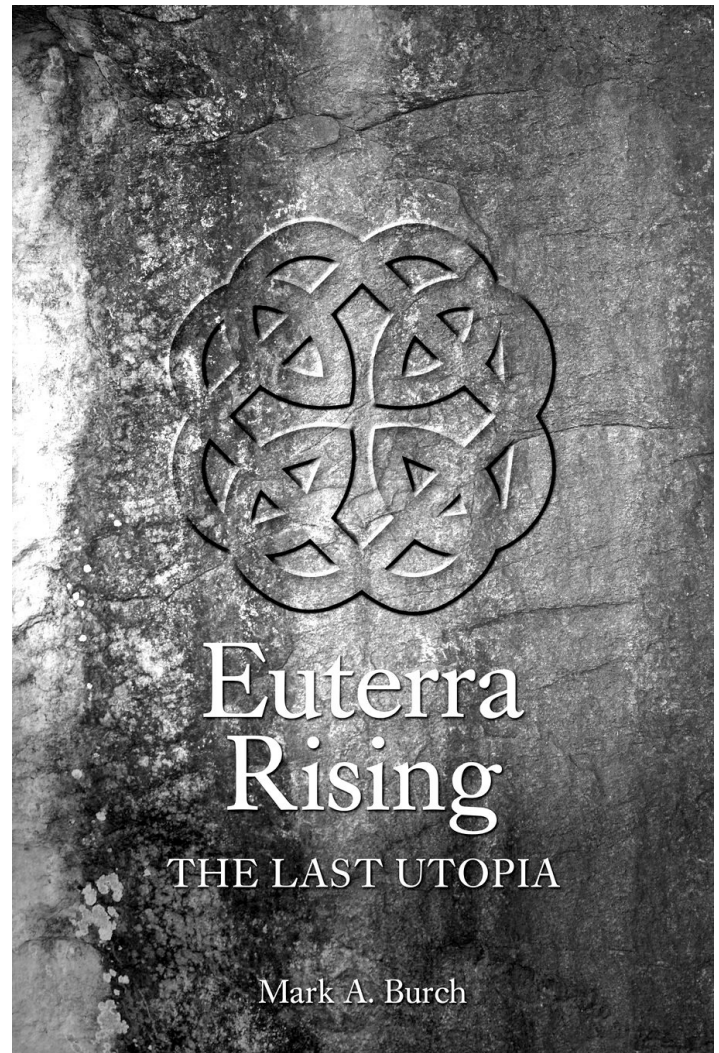
## SUMMER READING: *EUTERRA RISING: THE LAST UTOPIA* BY MARK A. BURCH

*Reviewed by Barbara Horvath,  
Yonge Street Monthly Meeting*

Set in the twenty-third century, *Euterra Rising* is the story of an emerging society organized after the “Ruination” in the twenty-first century and the destruction of the internet along with the rest of civilization. Much of the value system and the framework for the new society have echoes of Quakerism and Buddhism, offering a tantalizing picture of a way of life that has avoided consumerism and manages community conflict and growth. Their future is threatened by contact with the Brotherhood, a remnant group which violently represses dissent.

The author Mark Burch is a Winnipeg Friend and author of a number of books about voluntary simplicity and sustainable living. He was the Quaker Studies presenter at Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) in Winnipeg in 2014. His talk is published on [Quaker.ca](http://Quaker.ca) as a Canadian Quaker Learning Series Pamphlet.

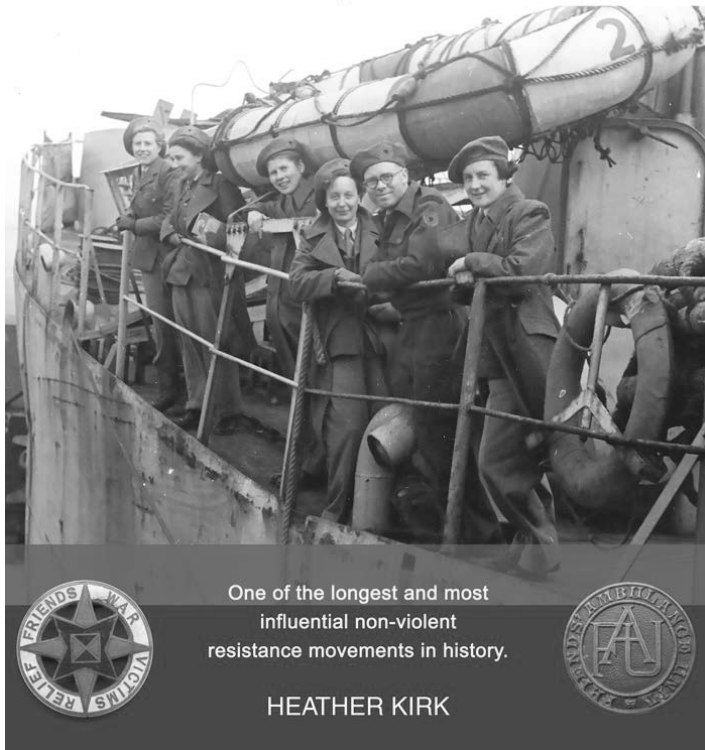
*Euterra Rising* is available from Amazon, or directly from Mark Burch.





# Seeking Peace

The Quakers



## SEEKING PEACE: THE QUAKERS BY HEATHER KIRK

*Submitted by Joyce Holwerda, Clerk of Archives Committee*

We at the CYM Archives are very pleased to announce the launch of a new book written by Heather Kirk. *Seeking Peace: The Quakers* by Heather Kirk is an “exploration of one of the longest and most influential non-violent resistance movements in history.”

For 365 years, from 1652 to 2017, the Quakers have been both pacifists and activists, expressing their unique religious beliefs through concrete actions. By opposing all forms of violence and working for peaceful change, this little group, also called Friends or Religious Society of Friends, has consistently dedicated itself to altruistic service.

Heather Kirk is a Canadian author and retired college teacher. *Seeking Peace: The Quakers* is Kirk's seventh published book. It is her second book about an important non-violent resistance movement. The first was *Be Not Afraid: The Polish Revolution, “Solidarity”*, which received excellent reviews.

Heather credits support from Jane Zavitz-Bond and the information available at the Archives in writing this book. The book has over 100 illustrations.

If you or your Meeting would like to purchase a copy for \$25, we could arrange to get copies to the next Representative Meeting to save on postage costs. Here is an opportunity to purchase books for yourself, your Meeting, new member gifts, your local library, etc. If you can't wait until then, the book can be ordered directly from Heather Kirk's website: [www.heatherkirk.ca](http://www.heatherkirk.ca).



Illustration by Steve Fick for 'Testimony: Faith in Action' section  
of Canadian Faith and Practice



Photo credit: Reykia Fick

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### *Call for Submissions for The Canadian Friend Fall Issue: 'Reflections on the Fallow Year'*

Canadian Yearly Meeting will not meet all together as a gathered community in 2017, choosing instead to have a “fallow year” from the annual CYM Gathering (CYM-in-session).

The decision was initially considered for financial reasons, but quickly took on deeper meaning: to take the opportunity for rest and renewal, to focus on nurturing community in its different forms, to explore new opportunities for Spiritual growth, to gain fresh perspective on our practices and ways of doing business.

The Fall 2017 issue of The Canadian Friend invites you to share your reflections on the fallow year, and the spiritual practice of taking time set aside for rest and reconnection:

*What can we as the Canadian Yearly Meeting community of faith learn from our fallow year?*

*Have you ever taken an intentional period of time set aside from daily life for the purpose of renewal – a sabbatical, retreat, or break due to burn-out? What was your experience, and what new insights did you gain?*

*What is your experience of community among Canadian Quakers, and what has this meant to you? Have you had a new or particular experience of community during this past year?*

*What can the Biblical practice of taking time for Sabbath, for sabbatical, or to lay fallow teach us today?*

*Have you had a new experience or discerned new awareness as a result of CYM's fallow year?*

**Deadline for submissions is September 25th**  
(note the revised deadline).

### *Fall Western Half-Yearly Meeting Gathering*

The 2017 fall gathering of Western Half-Yearly Meeting will take place on Thanksgiving weekend (October 6-9) at the Shekinah Retreat Centre north of Saskatoon. We invite all Friends and friends of Friends to join us in this warm, intimate gathering.

The usual items will all be included in the Half-Yearly Meeting schedule (worship-sharing groups, special interest groups, Meetings for Worship including Business Meetings, and the phenomenal Family Night sharing of talents and fun). Shekinah also offers us the chance to ride the fabulous “Flying Fox” zipline that has excited Young Friends of all ages (from about 4 to about 80) over the years.

This year’s gathering will have a theme of Truth and Reconciliation, and will include the interactive Kairos Blanket Exercise on Indigenous history on Saturday evening, led by Elder Josephine Worm and Dale Dewar. Jolee Sasakamoose, an Indigenous professor at the University of Regina, will lead Meetings for Healing on both Saturday and Sunday. We particularly encourage Meetings who have been working on the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action to send representation so that we can discuss how to continue and deepen our work together.

Friends usually try to arrive on Friday evening (and late into the night), with activities all day Saturday and Sunday, and depart after a short closing Meeting for Worship on Thanksgiving Monday.

Saskatoon Meeting typically provides soups and breads that registrants can eat for dinner on Friday night. Meals on Saturday and Sunday (and Monday breakfast) are cooked by Shekinah staff and shared in close fellowship. Accommodations are bunk-room style (with various numbers of occupants per room) in a lodge, or alternatively there are campsites available. Pillows, linens, sleeping bags/blankets, and towels are not provided.

We hope that you will join us in Shekinah for Thanksgiving 2017!

In Friendship,  
*Joy Morris (Clerk)*

Registration forms available at [quaker.ca/events/fall-western-half-yearly-meeting-gathering](http://quaker.ca/events/fall-western-half-yearly-meeting-gathering).

Please direct questions to Beth Curry [bassish@gmail.com](mailto:bassish@gmail.com).

### *Survey on Canadian Yearly Meeting Fallow Year*

Friends have approved using several surveys to help gather our experience of 2017 as a year without CYM-in-Session. We invite you to share your perspective, whether or not you have attended CYM's annual gathering in the past. Responses are anonymous; responses received by November 1 will be compiled into a report to Fall Representative Meeting (Nov. 25).

Individual Friends are invited to fill out the survey by linking to: [surveymonkey.com/r/K733NDZ](https://surveymonkey.com/r/K733NDZ).

Thank-you,

The CYM Committee of Clerks

### *Self-Study Pamphlet on Canadian Faith and Practice Now Available on [Quaker.ca](http://Quaker.ca)*

This electronic pamphlet explores the experiential understanding of Quaker faith and practice, as presented in our foundational book *Faith and Practice of the Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends*, first published in 2011.

There are six sections to the pamphlet, corresponding to chapters in the Canadian Faith and Practice book: (1) Quaker affirmations and practices; (2) Quaker worship; (3) Quaker worship with attention to business; (4) Testimonies; (5) Advices and Queries; and (6) Questions and references.

The material is a condensed version of the notes prepared in spring 2016 by Marjory Reitsma-Street, Gale Wills, and Catherine Novak for study sessions hosted by Outreach and Education and the Ministry and Council committees of Victoria Friends, Vancouver Island Monthly Meeting.

The self-study Pamphlet can be downloaded, printed, and shared. Go to [quaker.ca/resources/education](http://quaker.ca/resources/education) and open the third accordion titled 'Canadian Faith and Practice'. Or, request an electronic PDF copy by emailing to Marjory Reitsma-Street ([mstreet@shaw.ca](mailto:mstreet@shaw.ca)).

David Summerhays is currently preparing an online course using some of these materials under the auspices of Canadian Yearly Meeting Education and Outreach Committee. It may be available at [quaker.ca](http://quaker.ca) later in 2017.

## **“Falling into Grace”: 2017 Sunderland P. Gardner (SPG) Lecture by Steve Fick Is Available Online**

“Falling into Grace”, The 2017 Sunderland P. Gardner (SPG) lecture given by Steve Fick is now available on the Quaker.ca website ([quaker.ca/resources/audio-video](http://quaker.ca/resources/audio-video)) and CYM Vimeo channel ([vimeo.com/223900534](https://vimeo.com/223900534)).

About Steve’s lecture:

*Death will inevitably make us an offer that we cannot refuse—to surrender into the vastness of a power that is beyond our ability to comprehend. In the meantime, our daily life offers us ongoing opportunities to begin that process of surrender – to “die before we die,” and in so doing, to awaken to a deeper aliveness—a “falling into grace” that turns our mortality into a spiritual companion.*

*Our Quaker ancestors considered death to be a spiritual event that involved the whole community. When we hide death away, or treat it primarily as a medical event to be managed by professionals, we discourage the dying from doing the profound soul work they need to do as they prepare to enter into this great mystery. As well, the living are robbed of what the dying process might teach them.*

### **ADVERTISE IN THE CANADIAN FRIEND**

The Canadian Friend is published in print and online. Given the publication’s countrywide distribution, placing an advertisement in The Canadian Friend puts you in touch with all members and regular attenders of Quaker Meetings and Worship Groups across Canada.

### **RATES**

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### **CONTACT**

For ads, due dates, and technical enquiries: Canadian Friend Editor, [editor@quaker.ca](mailto:editor@quaker.ca)



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*The Canadian Friend* is one of many projects funded by Canadian Yearly Meeting. You are invited to support such activities by donating to CYM: donations of over \$10 receive a charitable receipt. This form enables you to donate in support of CYM's programs and services to Canadian Quakers through a variety of methods. Pre-authorized contributions can be changed at any time by a phone call to the office. You may even donate on-line if you prefer. CYM is very grateful for your support!

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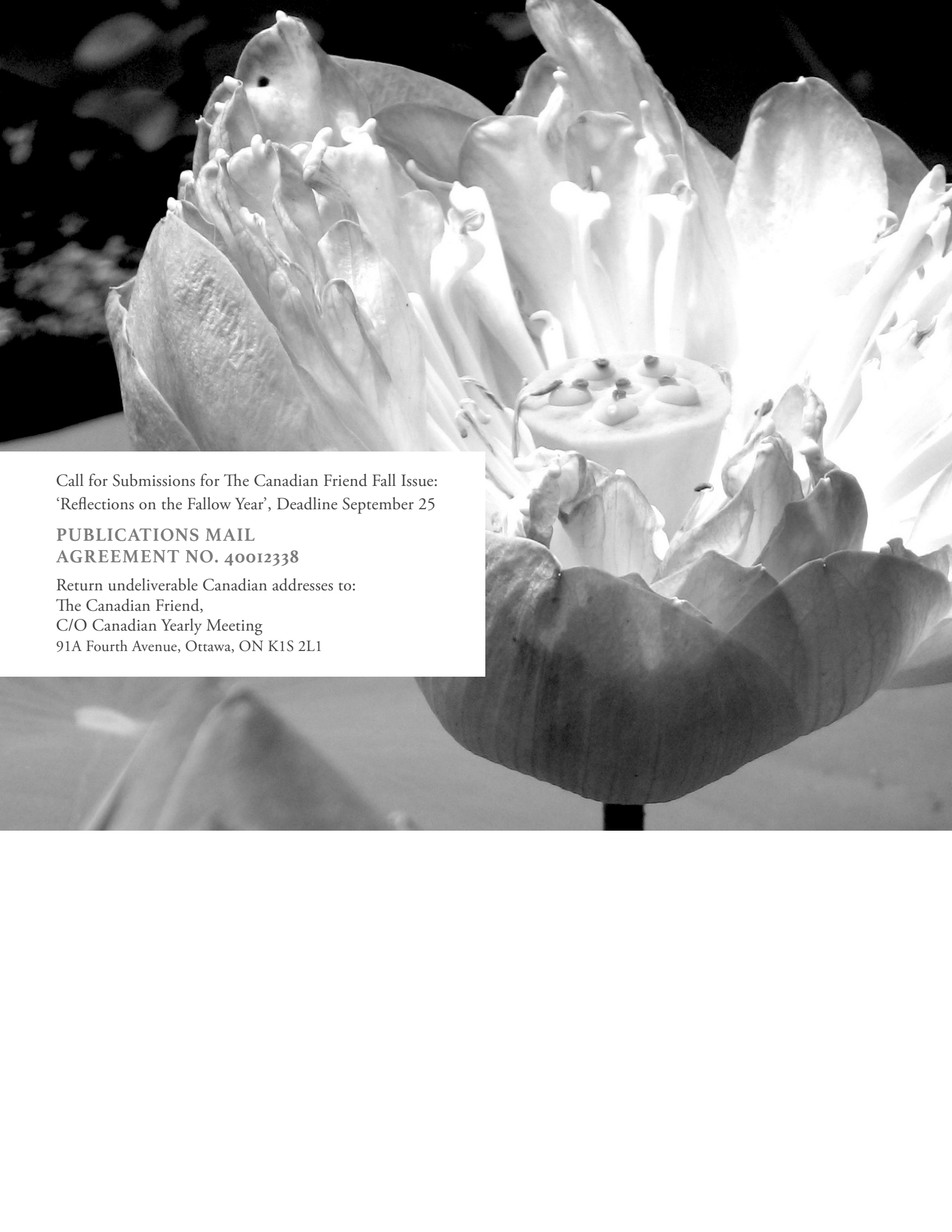
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- Contact the CYM office for any other donation inquiries.

Please mail this form and all relevant information to the address above, or go to [www.quaker.ca](http://www.quaker.ca) to follow the links to donate online.



Call for Submissions for The Canadian Friend Fall Issue:  
'Reflections on the Fallow Year', Deadline September 25

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