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Polarization

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Re: Quaker Study on Palestine-Israel, Nonviolence, & F/friends

Dear *Canadian Friend*,

I was so gratified to read the thorough coverage of October's Quaker Study on the subject of Palestine-Israel, Nonviolence, and F/friends in the Winter 2018 issue of *The Canadian Friend*.

I especially appreciated the inclusion of feedback from a couple of participants in the weekend, links to videos from the weekend, and a partial list of recommended resources – and especially the contextualization provided by the reproduction of CYM minutes on Palestine-Israel from 2008, 2009, and 2014 (along with considerable background).

One minute was missed, however, perhaps because it did not relate specifically to Israel – although both Israel and Saudi Arabia were mentioned by name. That is the minute brought by Canadian Friends Service Committee to Representative Meeting, and approved by that body at its November 2016 session. I have highlighted below the portions of that minute that refer to Israel's military occupation and human rights violations, and Canada's military relationship with Israel:

Minute approved by Representative Meeting, November 26, 2016

We note with sadness that arms sales are an increasingly lucrative industry for Canada, which has become the second largest supplier of arms to the Middle East.¹ Canadian arms have found their way to upholding many of the world's deadliest conflicts, including in South Sudan and Libya, where our arms were supposedly

prohibited by sanctions.² This cannot be accepted by people of conscience.

Canada is arming countries which make a regular practice of violating basic human rights and human dignity. In Saudi Arabia human rights defenders are regularly arrested, prosecuted, and imprisoned with unfair trials, torture is widespread, the death penalty is common, and discrimination against women and the Shi'a minority is enshrined in law. Saudi Arabia is leading a coalition which may be responsible for war crimes in Yemen.³

Israel, whose on-going occupation of Palestinian land Canada acknowledges is illegal,⁴ has increasingly in the past decade engaged in unlawful killing of Palestinian civilians including children, repressed nonviolent protests, regularly used torture, imprisoned conscientious objectors to military service, and imposed collective punishment, in particular on the people of Gaza by maintaining a military blockade that has made life there increasingly unbearable.⁵

Canada has a particularly close military relationship with Israel. This includes both countries purchasing large amounts of military equipment from each other, and a formal agreement, the Canada-Israel Strategic Partnership, mandating ongoing military and defence material cooperation and joint training, as well as maintaining "Military Attaché Offices" in both countries.⁶ We are deeply troubled that the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board invests in companies directly involved in militarism, including benefitting from the illegal occupation of Palestinian land.⁷

War making is a business. As long as some can profit from producing and selling the weapons of war, they blindly seek to do so, regardless of the consequences. In an increasingly interconnected global community,

1 Steven Chase. "Canada now the second biggest arms exporter to Middle East, data show." *The Globe and Mail*, 14 June 2016. www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/canada-now-the-second-biggest-arms-exporter-to-middle-east-data-show/article30459788.

2 Murray Brewster. "Canadian company accused of 'knowingly' breaking Sudan arms embargo." *CBC News*, 13 September 2016. Retrieved from www.cbc.ca/news/politics/streit-un-arms-report-sudan-1.3758670.

3 Amnesty International. "Saudi Arabia 2015/2016." www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/saudi-arabia/report-saudi-arabia.

4 "The Fourth Geneva Convention applies in the occupied territories and establishes Israel's obligations as an occupying power, in particular with respect to the humane treatment of the inhabitants of the occupied territories. As referred to in UN Security Council Resolutions 446 and 465, Israeli settlements in the occupied territories are a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention." — Global Affairs Canada. "Canadian Policy on Key Issues in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." www.international.gc.ca/name-anmo/peace_process-processus_paix/canadian_policy-politique_canadienne.aspx.

5 Amnesty International. "Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories 2015/2016." www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territories/report-israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territories.

6 Global Affairs Canada. "Canada-Israel Strategic Partnership: Memorandum of Understanding." January 2014. www.international.gc.ca/name-anmo/canada_israel_MOU-prot_ent_canada_israel.aspx.

7 American Friends Service Committee. "Investigate Occupation Screen (Israel/Palestine)." investigate.afsc.org/screens/occupation. This page listed many companies but highlighted nineteen as most deserving of divestment. The Canada Pension Plan was invested in four of these nineteen: Bank Hapoalim BM, Bank Leumi Le-Israel BM, Cemex SAB de CV, and Mizrahi Tefahot Bank. (CPP Investment Board. "Foreign publicly-traded equity holdings as of March 31, 2016." www.cppib.com/en/what-we-do/our-investments.)

the horrors resulting from war in countries like Syria, Iraq, and Yemen impact us all. The legacy left by tools developed here in Canada is destruction of communities, of the natural world of which we are a part, and production of increasing instability and hopelessness. Today's violence lies at the roots of violence in the future. This must end. We cannot stand by and do nothing, and we do not put our faith in Canadian weapons bringing peace.

We call on Canada not to sell arms to countries which may use these arms in violation of international law or to repress civilian populations. We call on Canada to sign and ratify the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty without further delay, and to share information about its involvement in the international arms trade in a thorough, timely, and transparent manner. As Friends, we hope Canada's role can move from a backer of wars to a supporter of creative non-military actions to transform conflicts and build peace. [Emphasis added.]

Lastly, a few small details. Elizabeth Block is a member of Toronto Monthly Meeting (MM), not Hamilton. Missing from the photo of the Sunday panelists is Robert Assaly, an Anglican priest and founder and current director of Canadian Friends of Sabeel (friendsofsabeel.ca). Robert arrived partway through the afternoon, having driven down from Montreal after fulfilling his church-related duties. Also, although Yonatan Shapira idolized his fighter-pilot father, he himself piloted rescue helicopters.



Members of the Neturei Karta orthodox group at a protest.

(Photo: Peter Mulligan, Wikimedia Commons)

Finally, I'm sorry to report that the anticipated update to *Refusing to be Enemies: Palestinian and Israeli Nonviolent Resistance to the Israeli Occupation* is currently on indefinite hold, as my publisher is dealing with 'hard times.' The current afterword dates from 2011.

In Friendship and gratitude,
Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta.
(5 April 2018)

AROUND THE FAMILY

Updates from Monthly Meetings

Calgary Monthly Meeting

Calgary Monthly Meeting is a small but growing Meeting. Our Meeting has attracted several new attenders who have enriched us with their youth, their experiences, and their young children.

Our Clerk moved to Victoria in the summer of 2017. In order to fill the role of Clerk and other services, Meeting for Ministry & Counsel led us in a gift discernment process consisting of two Worship Sharing Meetings.

In the first, we asked,

- Why do you come to Calgary Monthly Meeting (CMM)?
- What interests and excites you about being part of CMM?
- What do you seek in CMM that you wish was part of the Meeting?

In the second, we asked,

- What are you called to do?
- What gifts or experience do you have that you can offer the Meeting?
- What would you like to learn?
- What might you be willing to try?
- What gifts do you see in others?

Both Meetings were well-attended and deeply spiritual. After the close of the second Meeting, people stayed very still and quiet, as if reluctant to emerge from the silence. As a result of this sharing, all our positions were easily filled by people eager to support the Meeting.

We have an annual winter retreat at a camp along the Elbow River near Bragg Creek, Alberta. Our retreat in February 2018 had between ten and twelve people over the two days, with two young children for Meeting for Worship and Sunday lunch.

We explored the concept and experience of Leadings at the retreat. We discussed Jerilynn Prior's pamphlet *I Feel the Winds of God Today: Leadings as Explored by a Woman, Mother, Doctor, Quaker* (Canadian Quaker pamphlet series #38, 1992). In the Worship Sharing that followed, we asked the following queries:

»»

- What is a leading?
- How can you tell if it is a true leading?
- How do you respond to a leading?

We were grateful to have Shauna Curry share her experiences with leadings. Her leadings took her on a bicycle trip from Calgary to Chile – and on an extensive search for the right job, which culminated with her employment at CAWST, the Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation.

Shauna stressed the important role of Committees of Care and Clearness, describing how her Committee supported her while she travelled and helped her explore her calling to find meaningful work.

There is a deepening spiritual base in the Meeting, a nurturing of our spiritual life. This spiritual grounding is the basis for our members' outward work, action that comes from being Spirit-led.

Most of our members are in caring professions or act in some way to promote change, so we do not feel moved to take on social or environmental projects as a group. "Social action happens through the hearts and hands of members," as we put it in our State of Society report. Instead, we exchange stories of what we are doing and endeavour to support our members and attenders in their outward work.

Coldstream Monthly Meeting

With the greater leisure of retirement – in the case of most of us – we are becoming a well-travelled bunch. Trips this winter have included taking in the Peruvian Amazon, hiking in New Zealand, a tour of Ethiopia, working with orphans in Uganda, and completing the Southwest Coast Path in England.

With such ventures has come loss. We mourn the mischievous smile of a long-standing faithful member who introduced us to Tai Chi and Christmas wreath-making, cheerfully corrected our sometimes unrhythmical hymn singing, and firmly established our habit of supplying real cream, not just milk with our coffee.

Collectively, we have done much. Our core members and attenders form a close-knit and harmonious community and, inspired by an activist couple, we have facilitated the entry into Canada of several refugees, Somalis and Iraqis principally. Working with the Anglican Church and a London interfaith group, we now have five further applications in the pipeline, all of whose arrival dates are uncertain. Already-established refugees aided by us have done more than their bit financially when applications are made for their relatives.

Our latest endeavour is responding to Canadian Yearly Meeting's call for Truth and Reconciliation work.

On responding to the request for a report on our activities, we discovered a number of individual actions and we have now established a committee so the whole Meeting can become involved.

Our annual Twelfth Night celebration had to be rescheduled due to the weather. Most of us travel at least half an hour to Meeting (and some far further) and we are weighing the advisability of wintertime events. Twelfth Night was first introduced because the original Christmas celebration in December was poorly attended, as people are so busy that month. It is a potluck celebration and Friends provide the entertainment – skits, poems, readings, and so on.



Despite a cold and snowy evening, about sixteen brave souls ventured out for Coldstream Month's Twelfth Night.

Photo: Margaret & Harold Saunders.

Our February retreat included nineteen Friends, including some from our neighbouring Meeting in Sparta. It focused on forgiveness, ending with a few queries and points for dealing with disagreements amongst us.

Come visit us! There's lots going on and our historic Meeting House is worth a visit in its own right.



The Meeting House of Coldstream Monthly Meeting, circa 1920.

Interior BC Monthly Meeting

Our Meeting Clerk, Alison Moore, stepped down from that position at the beginning of 2018. This forced us to recognize that, like a lot of other Meetings and Quaker organizations, our Clerk has been given too many responsibilities. Finding a replacement Clerk was difficult, partially because members regarded the Clerk's position as too onerous. We are now sharing many of those responsibilities, have laid some down, have set limits on the term of the position, and have found a new Clerk, Graeme Hope.



A scene from the retreat in Kelowna.

Our annual spring retreat will again occur at the end of April. This year the theme is "Sharing Our Spiritual Journeys." Those of us who have to travel often stay with fellow Friends and we all share potluck meals. In such a small, widespread Meeting as ours, getting together for a weekend of friendship, discernment, worship, and community

building is extremely important. This is reflected by the fact that we have been holding annual retreats for over 25 years.

After lengthy discussion and discernment – that included a focus at one of our retreats on possible service projects – our Meeting has been attempting to begin a project in the new provincial prison near Oliver, BC. Together with our partner, the John Howard Society (JHS), we have attempted for over a year to implement programs to assist prisoners to reenter society after their sentence is complete. We are now working with the JHS on support for former inmates and likely will be assisting with literacy skills.

Hamilton Monthly Meeting

Hamilton Monthly Meeting is well into our third year of waiting for the Syrian refugee family that we have sponsored to leave Turkey, where they are living as refugees. A series of setbacks for both the family and the sponsorship process itself have delayed their coming to Canada, but we are still hopeful we will see them in the not-so-distant future.

In the meantime, we've been occupied with renovating our upstairs and turning it into a living space for this family for their first few months, until we can find an appropriate apartment for them. The area definitely needed sprucing up and now has new paint, new floors, and of course furniture – some of which has been donated to the family and will go

with them to their permanent space.

Meanwhile, we've also been busy with an informal series of presentations by members on the Quaker Testimonies. We call these "Brown Bag Discussions," as they involve bringing our own lunches and sitting together to listen, talk, and munch. We also enjoy monthly potlucks on a variety of topics.

We recently had a new and beautiful steel roof put on the Meeting House. It looks like shingles but will last much longer! This was made possible in part by a very generous donation by one of our Friends, who has since passed away.

We had planned a one-day spring retreat for April 14th, but a "potentially historic ice storm" (Environment Canada's words!) in the forecast caused us to move it a month. Good decision! April 14th was terrible weather! No one even came to Meeting the next day.

But on May 12th, "What Canst Thou Say?", a mainly silent retreat at the country home of Bev and Robbie Shepard, provided a time to share our personal leadings and witness, surrounded by the beauty of woods and fields in the burgeoning springtime. Worship, worship sharing, walking the labyrinth, a silent hike on a woodland trail, sitting in quiet reflection, and – of course! – good food made a restorative time for those who attended.

On April 22nd, fourteen Hamilton Monthly Meeting adults and children participated in the Stewards of the Cootes Watershed restoration project. William Olenek was our group's leader. We had a beautiful day and we collected an estimated 1000-plus pounds of discarded items (AKA garbage), which were strewn over a relatively small area and concentrated along a fenceline. It was a perfect site because it included both a roadside area that was easily accessible and a steep ravine that was especially attractive for the children.



Triumphant volunteers at Hamilton Monthly Meeting's event to clean up the Cootes Paradise Marsh.

Montreal Monthly Meeting

We've had two new memberships: William Holmes and Sherry Honke. They've just moved to the Annapolis Valley area and have a big interest in farming.



William Holmes & Sherry Honke, & Will in the garden at their new home in Annapolis.

We're looking at starting a South Shore and Quebec City worship group. We've started a monthly singing group and a refugee committee, who would love to hear what other Meetings are up to.

Vancouver Island Monthly Meeting

Besides weekly Sunday Meeting followed by refreshments, we encourage spiritual community for Friends, attenders, and visitors in a weekly silent midweek Meeting. The Wednesday Midweek Meeting, with spoken afterthoughts, has expanded this year, and its bag lunch time has moved from the kitchen to the Meeting Hall.

There are also regular, mostly monthly events: singing before Worship, soup and stories after Worship, and conversation over crafts in the homes of Friends. The last December family singing event was attended by many adults and children, led by Friend and musician Carol MacIsaac. As of January 2018, there is also now the monthly Sunday 'Worship Sharing' before Meeting, led by Leona Gray-Mason and Sabra Peil.

In the past half year, there has been much work undertaken by Ministry & Counsel and Meeting Care Committees to hold families caring for seriously ill and dying loved ones.

Adrian Dolling is living with a blood cancer and, after an autumn of invasive treatment, is doing well, supported by Care Committees.

Will Pegg, a birthright Quaker and member of our Meeting, was diagnosed in January 2017 with metastatic bone cancer. He is choosing to go on his terms, dying an assisted death.

"He couldn't feel more alive" is the title of an [interview](#) with Will for CBC's "The Current," hosted by Anna Maria Tremonti on Dec 11, 2017. The story is still posted on the internet as of June 4th.

Will is supported by Quaker, Buddhist, and other friends, and his wife Louise. Occasionally Will has been able to come to the end of a Sunday Meeting, to give and receive blessings. A home funeral is being planned.

We mourned and gave thanks for four Friends who have died in the past months. Rich memorials were held for Alvera Witt in October; in February for long-time Friend of our Meeting, Maisie Priestman, who died just a few days shy of her 102 birthday; and for Jim Prentice in March of 2018.

We also held the Monroe family in the Light, as they gathered in March 2018 in memory of Judith Monroe, who died in a Texas hospice. Judith and Mick are members of our Meeting, even after moving to build a new family home in Katy, Texas.

Long-time Friend Pashta MaryMoon is very active in leadership these past months (and years) on the Meeting's Memorial Committee, and provides extensive pastoral care to those dying and their families. She is a pioneering 'death midwife' to Friends and friends, as well as chair of the Dying With Dignity Canada's Disability Advisory Council. She leads 'home funeral' workshops, and helps prepare the Advance Care Planning legal documents that can give family and the medical community directions about end of living care.

The biweekly Fern Street e-Newsletter, steadfastly produced by Llynne Phillips, nourishes connections among those who cannot come regularly to Worship Meeting – as well as among a wider circle of Friends living on Vancouver Island, and on neighbouring Gulf Islands and Haida Gwaii. Llynne celebrated her 80th birthday recently, buying a splendid red hat for the occasion, to add to her collection.

Helping to maintain spiritual community on the Island, our Clerk Catherine Harding (and other Friends) travel to Nanaimo Worship Group for Meeting and Business at least twice a year.

The long task of collecting signatures of those Friends and attenders willing to have personal information printed in an Island Quaker Directory was orchestrated by Derek Hawksley and Ministry & Counsel. In the spring of 2018, an elegant booklet was produced by our Meeting House librarians and local history authors Ann-Lee and Gordon Switzer. The directory includes contacts, as well as information about Quaker worship, testimonies, organization practices, and photos, both historical and recent.

Our Meeting has produced a *Self-Study Pamphlet on the Canadian Quaker Faith and Practice*, based on notes from an education series led by Marjory Reitsma-Street, Gale Wills, and Catherine Novak. Late in 2017 it was uploaded to the Canadian Quaker website by the Canadian Yearly Meeting's Education and Outreach Committee (see quaker.ca/resources/education/).

That Committee also used the materials for an online course, written and led by David Summerhays (of Montreal Monthly Meeting).

This Quaker Studies course was offered for the first time in January 2018, and several regular attenders of our Meeting enrolled.

Linda Taffs and her husband Ion Mora transferred membership to the new Cowichan Valley Monthly Meeting, while Celia and David Cheatley did so to Argenta Meeting. We miss them and wish them well. They report they are using the *Self Study Pamphlet* in education events in their new Meetings.

A major Meeting activity is regular meetings to learn about our Indigenous neighbours. There was an early fall workshop during which we explored the CYM questions regarding implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Report.

A “Village Exercise,” led by Kathy Camilleri of the Cree Nation, was held at the Meeting House late in the fall. It helped us experientially deepen our understanding of the impact of European colonization. Approximately forty people, including visitors from the wider Victoria faith community and Quakers from other Island Meetings, attended this day of ceremony, role-play, and sharing.

More gatherings are planned for 2018, organized by our Relations with First Nations Working Group.

The second ongoing Meeting activity is fostering a relationship with Quaker Pastor Parfaite Ntahuba from Burundi, as well as providing financial support for the Kamege HIV/AIDS clinic run by the Friends Women’s Association in Burundi.

Janine Gagnier actively organizes communication, visits, and fundraising for the clinic. Janine announced early in April 2018 that a crowdfunding appeal for the clinic had raised over five thousand dollars towards a crucial building expansion.

Janine also reported with joy and pride that her daughter Amelia Trofymow, who attended our Meeting since she was a little girl, recently graduated from the Wilson School of Design at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Richmond, B.C. Her graduate collection, named *Enouement*, showcases unique luxurious lingerie for transitional body types, particularly those born males as they transition to female bodies.

In media interviews, Amy said she was “raised in a non-prejudiced household that honoured different opinions about religious and moral beliefs. Coming from a family that cherished other views has empowered me to keep an open mind when working with any customer... I have a social responsibility to use my talent for those who may not have a voice” (quoted in *The Straight Georgia*, 19 March 2018).

Members of our Meeting happily announce births of grandchildren and welcome the presence of children in the Meeting House – even though we are not able to host a

regular children’s program.

We end with a photo of four generations. Emma Gabor, mother of Resident Friend Sherryll Harris, lives with Sherryll and Gerald at the Meeting House, and is lovingly cared for by them. Emma delights in the frequent presence of her great-grandchildren, Huxley and Fuller Klassen, sons of Holly Joy Harris and Alex Klassen.



Four generations: Emma, Holly, newborn Huxley, and Sherryll.

Peterborough Monthly Meeting

We are very pleased to have welcomed a number of new attenders this past year.

Several members and attenders have experienced serious health and other personal challenges over the past few months, and the Meeting has been extremely supportive.

Regular events include the Wednesday Worship Sharing Group, which meets at a local retirement home once a month. The World Religions Discussion Group – previously the Bible Study Group – meets once every two or three months. Recent readings include chapters from the Koran and two of the Quaker Quest pamphlets. The Peace Council, made up of a number of local groups, holds regular monthly vigils.

In March the Program and Outreach Committee arranged for David Summerhays and Dick Cotterill to present their penal abolition workshop on “Alternatives to Incarceration.” There were 25 attendees, including some members of the local Amnesty group, and the response was very positive. »»

One result from the workshop was discussion and letter writing supporting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action on penal reform.

In March we showed the film *Griefwalker* after our regular monthly potluck, followed by a discussion of end of life issues. In April there was a post-potluck discussion on addictions and how they can affect family, friends, and communities.

One of our members is offering a series of thought-provoking films at his home this year. It takes place regularly on the 16th of every month, so that people can attend at least some of them.

In April the Meeting organized an 'Olio,' which is Spanish for stew, mixture, or variety show. This was a very new venture for us and it took the form of a talent show, with about ten enthusiastic participants. Most were children who attend the Earthcare program (or who attended in the past), but a few adult members of the Meeting also took the stage. Parents of the children and their friends came to cheer them on. The show consisted of dance, singing, magic, poetry, and gymnastics, and was very well-received.



Kaleem the Magician, one of the talented performers at Peterborough Monthly Meeting's "Olio" (variety show).

Winnipeg Monthly Meeting

The past half year has been brimming with action and reflection for Winnipeg Monthly Meeting (WMM). For the past couple of years, we have been seasoning a way to live out our Quaker Testimonies.

Through the leadings of our Peace and Social Action Committee, we have emerged with a practice we call 'Seasons of Testimony.' This winter Mark Burch, one of our members, led six workshops on voluntary simplicity during our Season of Simplicity.



Mark Burch, presenting on voluntary simplicity.

Another highlight – organized during our Season for Treaty Relations – was the We Are All Treaty Peoples celebration in September, co-sponsored by WMM, the Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba, and Winnipeg Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Canada. This event, open to all, celebrated the treaties which cover much of Manitoba.

We have continued distributing the booklet we printed in 2015, the *94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Printable PDFs of it are posted on our website, winnipegquakers.weebly.com. (On our "Links and Resources" page, scroll to "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action.") We encourage you to download this version for free to produce more booklets for your own distribution.

Several of our members created a podcast last year, *What Canst Thou Say*, as part of our oral history project documenting the story of Quakers in Manitoba. You can hear six Quakers in Manitoba talk about their experiences with the Religious Society of Friends in our podcast, which you can find on our website under "Podcast."

In the past six months, WMM took under its care the Editorial Board for the Canadian Quaker Learning Series. The Board looks forward to soon publishing *Falling into Grace* by Steven Fick.

This spring our Meeting hosted a well-attended book launch to raise funds for our sponsorship of an affordable housing project in our community. *The Things We Say*, a book of brief reflections on commonly-used wisdom, was written by WMM member Glenn Morison (sites.google.com/view/thingswesay).

And while this Winnipeg winter was (as ever) brittle, our Meeting was warmed when a baby was born to one of our attenders in February. We look forward to our welcoming celebration for him this May!

REPORTS & REFLECTIONS

Grounded in Spirit

Ottawa Monthly Meeting's 2018 Retreat

Caroline Balderston Parry, Ottawa Monthly Meeting

Ottawa Monthly Meeting held its annual weekend retreat from Friday through Sunday morning, January 26-28. Our Meeting has held these winter retreats for almost twenty years, and around thirty attenders always find them rich experiences.

This was only the second year we were not at a retreat centre, but slept in our separate homes and used the Meeting House as our daytime base. Because we were non-residential, we used some of the funds saved to hire several different people to cater our main meals, which made a refreshing change from our usual potlucks.

Organized by members of our Adult Religious Education & Outreach Committee, the retreat has a new theme each year, often with outside facilitators. But the overall format is similar, with whole group, small group, and individual sessions – plus relaxing Saturday evening activities.

This year our retreat was facilitated by Alison Levie & Michael Wajda from Goshen Monthly Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.



Alison Levie & Michael Wajda

Our introduction to being “Grounded in Spirit” involved singing: we were invited to share a snatch of a song having personal meaning, perhaps like a mantra.

- One person sang “step by step... singly none...”
- Another sang “This is Holy Ground.”
- At least two Friends shared lines from “My life flows on.”
- The Montreal visiting Pastor sang something lovely in Congolese.

Michael mentioned “Holy Spirit come... inward Teacher be our Guide,” and taught us all to sing it on Saturday night. This is a song by Aaron Fowler, a Quaker folksinger from the Midwest, well known at Friends General Conference.¹

Our leaders spoke to the theme in various ways, giving us queries and some exercises to consider either in small groups or individually, with the large group worship sharing our responses as well.

First query: What does ‘grounded’ mean to you?

Second query: What is groundedness? What is my relationship to groundedness? Do I struggle for it? Is it there all the time, or only sporadically so?

Michael spoke of his conviction that there is something within that is “an alerting, an invitation, a gift, that wants us to be spiritual beings.” He feels our spiritual practice plus awareness of this gift are the two halves of being well-grounded. He asked, “Without the gift, why would we have the practice?”

Alison spoke about how we are trying to describe something for which we don’t all have the same language, commenting that it is common to welcome the variety of understandings that exist within Quakerism, and to “translate.” But she encouraged us to *listen* deeply and openly, to be really present for what someone else’s words or images are, even if different, so that we can be enriched by them.

She has learned to expand her language in recent years, so feels like ‘God,’ as a term, has gotten bigger. “Please don’t censor yourselves, but try to go deeper... below the words you are actually using.”

Third query: How is it that God speaks in limitless ways? What are the doorways to hearing that voice, and what makes us vulnerable to it?

Saturday morning we read the following words posted on chairs, letting them soak into us as we walked around the Meeting Room, letting them be doors to our sense of groundedness: >>>

1 Aaron Fowler and Laura Dungan perform the song in a ‘QuakerSpeak’ video available on youtube.

brokenness, ecstasy, hope, despair, grief, comfort, confusion, strength, gratitude, joy, forgiveness, discernment, awe, healing, woundedness, longing, communion, and (over the door) “name your own doorway.”

Next we were invited to *sit* in worship with the word or two that grabbed us, and ask the Living Presence “why?”

Michael instructed us “remember whatever is revealed may lead to further doorways. Take your time, be honest in the listening. Sit down and be with the word that is calling out.”

Our afternoon session was about the corporate experience of being grounded, while a part of the whole group. “Remember there is a rhythm of personal and corporate experience, as well as gift and a practice – they feed one another.”

Fourth query: Are we living up to our potential? Do we truly go deep, stay deep, trust, and get ourselves out of the way enough? What is faithfulness about? Hearing a call, obeying it?

Michael and Alison shared some thoughts on the gathered Meeting as another way to experience groundedness, and also on the need to wait to hear and find God’s work, as a first step to being God’s mouthpiece.

They explained, “Our rational minds, our need to control, and our good thinking may all get in the way – it’s really not about thinking!”

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting now has some extended worship sessions, of three hours or more – where there may be a real sense of being visited.

Fifth query: What makes Meeting for Worship meaningful for us? What is going to unleash or deepen that groundedness?

Alison helped us tell stories of gathered Meetings for Worship we had experienced, and went on to discuss “living out this groundedness.” She asks herself each week whether Meeting for Worship has changed her. Does what comes out of worship for her stay with her all week and change the way she lives? “What’s different about me? Do others seem to want what I’ve got?”

Sixth query: When has being grounded helped you be more who you are called to be, or brought you someplace you want to be?

Seventh query: How do we live out our experience of groundedness, gained from worship, in our daily life? What are the fruits of our rootedness, of the tree that is grounded in the Spirit?

On Sunday before Meeting for Worship, Michael quoted Sandra Cronk’s pamphlet *Gospel Order*² about how, at the heart, we cannot live gospel order alone. We need a community to embody a new social pattern. We need a deep inward awareness of the ways in which the Spirit speaks to us.

Eighth query: What are we longing for? What is my heart yearning for?

Ninth query: What have been the gifts of this retreat? And what do I still want and long for?

Alison’s closing words were

Most of my life I have been blessed with moments of divine guidance, but would like them to be more often. I would like to see people through the eyes of divine love, to open myself to let it flow through me and get out of my humanness.

She felt she had been faithful during this weekend and totally able to let go, listening to what she was given by Spirit without worry.

We all rejoiced in the leadership of both of these Friends, and in our increased understanding of being grounded in the Spirit.

Gleanings & Quotations



We slowly came to understand that religion is a form of relinking, of increasing consciousness and communication. Worship is a form of communication, of communion. And communication can only be between equals. It can’t be abasement, a bowing down to something greater. When I make love, when I sleep under the trees, when I compost my garbage, all these things can be worship.

— Oberon Zell-Ravenheart
(AKA Timothy Zell)



“It is not the task of Christianity to provide easy answers to every question, but to make us progressively aware of a mystery. God is not so much the object of our knowledge as the cause of our wonder.”

— Bishop Kallistos Ware
(AKA Timothy Ware)

2 Sandra Lee Cronk. *Gospel Order: A Quaker Understanding of Faithful Church Community*. Pendle Hill Pamphlet #297, 1991.
pendlehill.org/product/gospel-order-quaker-understanding-faithful-church-community

The Perfect Accident of the Gathering

Alison Braithwaite, Pelham Executive Meeting

I am an accidental Quaker. I am actually not sure if I am a Quaker at all, though I apparently have a Quaker name – Braithwaite. I stumbled upon my first Quaker Meeting in Monte Verde, Costa Rica about fifteen years ago and I attended Meetings regularly for the few months I lived there. Sitting in silence in community brought me peace and a sense of belonging.

I can't remember when I discovered the Pelham Meeting. One day I just felt called to look up Quakers in Niagara and found it. I would drop into Meetings randomly, with months and sometimes years passing between my attending. Then one Sunday morning I decided, just before 11 o'clock, that I should go to Meeting. (I am glad I checked the location on the website before I left, because sure enough it had moved on me.)

As always I was welcomed into the silence and sat with the precious souls of the Pelham Meeting for an hour. There is something about sitting in silence that is like being wrapped in a warm blanket on a cold evening.

I had left my job a couple of years before this and was in the midst of recovering from burnout, while writing a book and trying to figure out my next step in life. Coincidentally, during announcements after Meeting, Rose-Marie Cipryk shared that the Friends General Conference Gathering was being held just across the border.

During Meeting I didn't pay much attention to what was said. I was not really committed to attending Meetings regularly. I was there to get my hit of silence to carry me through the next few months.

Yet when I got home, I found myself drawn to the computer and looked up what the Gathering was all about. I couldn't believe the agenda. There was so much that I wanted to attend. Then one workshop in particular jumped out at me – "Finding Your Spiritual Purpose in Life," with Lynn Fitz-Hugh. What could be more perfect?

I signed up for the Gathering and a week or so later I was commuting across the border to Niagara University. Little did I know how it would transform me.

By day one, I had found gratitude. I had always heard about how gratitude uplifted the soul and I had thought I had felt it before. What I felt at the Gathering was Gratitude with a capital G. I felt it so deeply in my being and it was an amazing feeling. I felt ignited.



Photo: Rose-Marie Cipryk

By day two, I had my evolutionary question, the question that I had come to answer in this life. I was so excited that when I crossed the border back into Canada that evening and the border guard asked me what I had been doing in the US, I told him I had found my purpose and I read the question to him.

His response was that it was a big question to answer. I said, "I know, but it's only Tuesday. I have a few more days to discern more."

Oh and discernment is now in my vocabulary! I had never used that word before in my life and now it is just what I do.

By the end of the week, I had made friends who are now my Anchor Group. I also made a commitment to attend Pelham Meeting regularly, which I remain committed to.

And for those of you who are curious, the question that I am here to answer is:

How can we see, ignite, and nurture the seed of who we are so we can grow a thriving world together?

That should keep me busy for this lifetime.

Reflections on Quaker Process & Community at a Gathering

Rose Marie Cipryk, Pelham Executive Meeting

Ever since I learned the Friends General Conference (FGC) July 2017 Gathering would be held close to my doorstep on the Niagara border, I felt called to serve. Having spent eight years on FGC's Long-Range Conference Planning Committee, I knew I wanted to be on Workshops Committee for this Gathering.

The week-long workshops are home base for most attenders. In my nineteen years at FGC Gatherings, I have participated in workshops ranging from class consciousness to sacred circle dance, all weaving in and out of spiritual deepening and sending me home with an open heart.

I immersed myself in that Committee in the role of Co-Clerk. I was in familiar territory, but it still meant having just enough light to see where to put my next footstep. This work continued and deepened my learning in relinquishing and trusting my inner guide more than my ego.

We approached our definitive work weekend as a sacred retreat. From Friday supper to Sunday lunch we delved into the proposals. These were offerings from dedicated, passionate, intelligent, creative souls willing to put themselves forward, to share their expertise, and take part in building the blessed community.

It is a major struggle to say no to such individuals. "We regret that we must decline your offer of service." That is hard.

But we came to our final offering of 49 workshops using exquisite Quaker process. We considered the numerous elements required to build our slate. We listened closely to each other around the table, and we went into worship when we struggled, calling out each other's particular gifts as light was needed.

The way we worked made the wrestling quite bearable. One member reflected, "In retrospect, it was a sea of depth and tranquility and peace." It is a Quaker truism that "It's easy to clerk Friends who know how to be clerked."

We were all delighted, by the way, to welcome six Canadian workshop leaders to our workshop slate.

Over the next eight months, numerous clerical tasks and phone meetings brought us to the main event.

At the Gathering itself, the workshop changes table – for last-minute adjustments – became my home from Sunday to Wednesday. I chose to be available there rather than go to the workshops I signed up for.

I built on my learning over the years that "less is more" in this powerful week. I did my work. I rested. I attended plenary lectures and some events. There was so much more possible, yet this was the right pace for me.



Some of the more than 70 Canadian Friends who attended FGC Gathering July 2017.

Photo: Mike Goren

I wrote to a distant friend, “I have felt love pouring in and around me today... I let it be and be with me. Then, there is the exhaustion and the missteps. A well-rounded day! I am in the beloved community and it is a mixed bag. I am so happy to be here and to have friends like you.”

I had the time of my life. I was well-rested and able to notice the love that was the pervasive energy of the week. I was in a flow and could give and take as needed.

Time and again, my heart overflowed as I watched so much goodness happening for our twelve hundred attendees: people of good will, listening for deeper meaning and guidance, open to each other, with so much to share.

I came home feeling that all my cells were aligned. I felt successful and content.

Surprising Uses of the Word ‘Quaker’

Timothy Kitz, Ottawa Monthly Meeting

From Wikipedia:

The monk parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*), also known as the **Quaker parrot**, is a small, bright-green parrot with a greyish breast and greenish-yellow abdomen. ... It originates from the temperate to subtropical areas of Argentina and the surrounding countries in South America. Self-sustaining feral populations occur in many places, mainly in North America and Europe. ...

[Quaker parrots] are highly intelligent, social birds. Those kept as pets routinely develop vocabularies of scores of words and phrases. ... Unusually for a parrot, monk parakeet pairs occasionally have helper individuals, often grown offspring, which assist with feeding the young.

From Stones Throw Records:

Quakers is a hip-hop collective boasting 35 members which orbits around a core of three producers: Fuzzface, 7-Stu-7 and Katalyst.

Fuzzface is better known as Portishead’s Geoff Barrow. 7-Stu-7 is Portishead’s engineer and in-house producer at Invada Records in the UK. Katalyst is one of the most respected producers in Australia and a partner in Invada Records.

From Wikipedia, again:

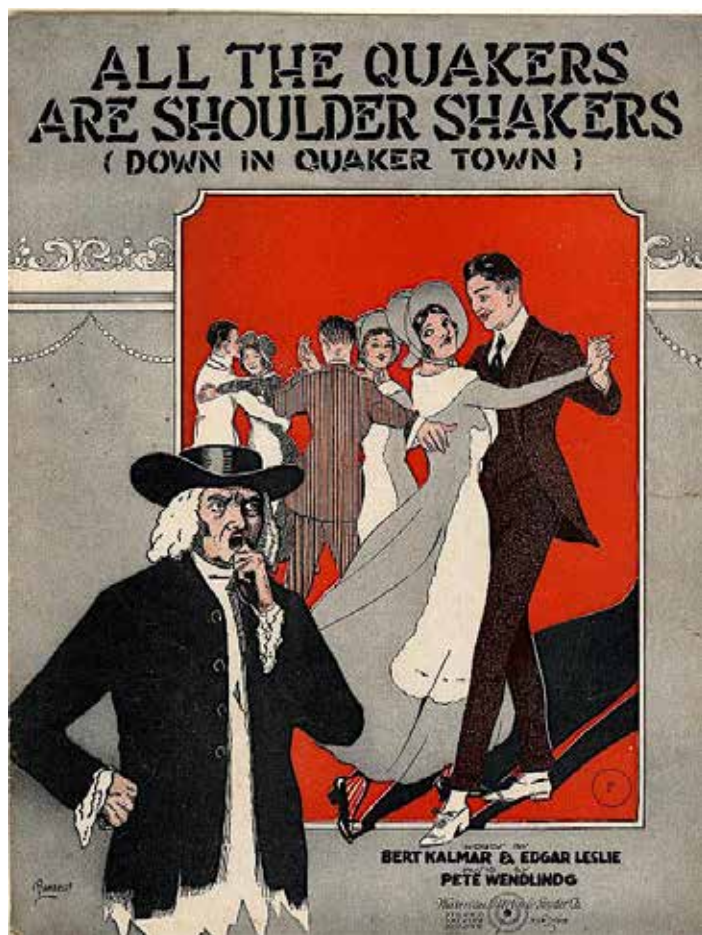
Quakers music first appeared in Banksy’s 2011 film *Exit Through The Gift Shop*.

The supergroup has no known affiliation with the Religious Society of Friends, also known as Quakers.

Proof not all old-time Quakers were puritanical, from the mere title to an article by Heather Arndt Anderson, published in the March 2018 issue of *Portland Monthly*:

“How the Father of Oregon Agriculture Launched a Doomed Quaker Sex Cult.”

(www.pdxmonthly.com/articles/2018/2/27/how-the-father-of-oregon-agriculture-launched-a-doomed-quaker-sex-cult)



Courtesy of the Historic American Sheet Music Digital Collection of Duke University Libraries.

A forgotten classic (1919) from Tin Pin Alley that never quite made it into the Great American Songbook:

“The jazz bug hit ‘em, how it hit ‘em
Every sister is quite a twister of a wicked knee
Baby brother, Dad and Mother, do the ‘Memphis Shiverer’
Brother Morgan at the organ, jazes all the notes
Gee it’s simply great to watch them sow their Quaker oats
You should see how Sister Birch
Does a foxtrot down to church
‘Cause all the Quakers
Are shoulder shakers
Down in Quaker town”

— “All the Quakers Are Shoulder Shakers”
(Words by Bert Kalmar & E. Edgar Leslie)

Flying First Class

**Brent Bowyer, Lucknow Area / North Huron Worship Group
(Kitchener Monthly Meeting)**

*All the amenities and personalized service
More legroom and comfortable seating
Enhanced multi-course meals, high cuisine and drinks
Expedited exclusive access, no lineups
On-demand entertainment*

Parallel universe
Old boys' clubs, networks of privilege
High-end restaurants, brand name clothes, entertainment, even washrooms
Elite cars, exotic holiday destinations, sports, schools, churches, speech patterns
Private health care, clubs, beaches

Hierarchy
Status, exploitation,
Entitlement, parasitism
Maintenance of the status quo
Feudalism

Walls, screens, filters
Barbed wire fences
Gated communities
Discriminatory admissions and immigration policies
Passwords, doorkeepers, hurdles

*The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them high and lowly,
And ordered their estate
(All things "bright and beautiful")*

*All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others
(No question now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs
The creatures outside looked from pig to man,
And from man to pig, and from pig to man again
But already it was impossible to say which was which)*

The enclosing of the commons

Why me Lord?
What have I ever done to deserve even one
Of the pleasures I've known
Why me, Lord?
Why?

Delusions
Candy floss
Holograms
Soap bubbles
Junk food





Triumph of spectacle and illusion

Lotteries....fanciful pipe dreams
Nationalism... our country's skies are bluer than any others
The American dream, manifest destiny, Disneyland
Wars... fighting for a "common" cause
Mirages

Desire, seductive appeal,
Visions of grandeur
Every want considered a need, insatiable
More, better, faster; the seven deadly sins
Now the seven economic "virtues"

Equalizers
Access for all to clean water, air, food, work, resources
Publicly-funded health care, transportation, libraries, education
Internet, unions, law, innate talent, democracy, prophetic critique
The commons

Gerrard Winstanley, 1649:
*Take notice, that England is not a free people
'Til the poor that have no land, have a free allowance
To dig and labour the commons, and so live as comfortably
As the landlords that live in their enclosures*

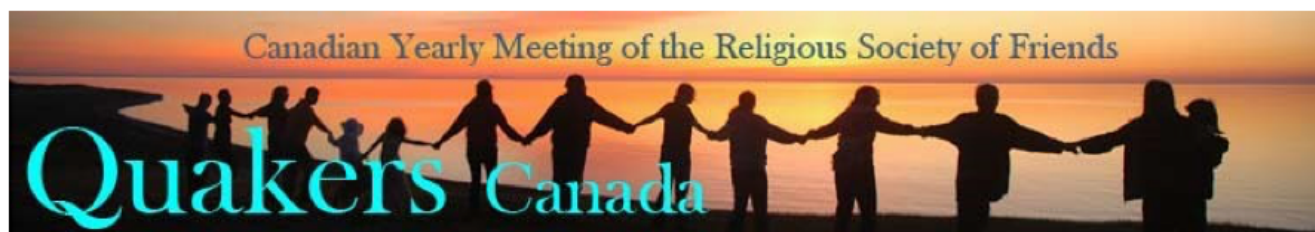
"Solidarity forever":
*Is there aught we hold in common with the greedy parasite,
Who would lash us into serfdom and would crush us with his might?
Is there anything left to us but to organize and fight?
For the union makes us strong.*

Thank thee kindly Friend Lucretia
*Let's bring an end to poverty the gentle Quaker pled
Let's give the workers all a chance
To earn their daily bread...
Thy light still shines for me*

All men are created equal
Liberty, equality, fraternity
*O ttttttv we are all family
O Siem we're all the same
O Siem we are all family*

Some fly in their private jets
Some fly first class
Some fly economy
Some don't fly at all
The 1% and the 99%.

***(Jan. 29, 2016. Written after a visit to Morocco,
seeing the gross disparity between rich and poor there.)***



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The Canadian Friend is one of many projects funded by Canadian Yearly Meeting

CANADIAN YEARLY MEETING 2018 SCHEDULE

	Thursday August 2	Friday August 3	Saturday August 4	Sunday August 5	Monday August 6	Tuesday August 7	Wednesday August 8	Thursday August 9	Friday August 10	Saturday August 11
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BREAKFAST

LUNCH

SUPPER

August 3-11, Georgian College, Barrie, ON

For details, see quaker.ca/news/register-for-canadian-yearly-meeting-2018 or the previous, Winter issue of *The Canadian Friend*

REFLECTIONS & CONCERNS

Polarization is a Real Challenge

But Not An Insurmountable One

Matthew Legge, Canadian Friends Service Committee

What's different in our environment stands out to us. This is a useful trick that lets our brains construct an intelligible world as efficiently as possible. We can use categories to help us tune in to only the differences that are apparently relevant, so we don't need to put limited mental resources into things that seem to be remaining the same.

What gets really dangerous, though, is when we take our social categories too seriously, thinking of them as hard and fast rules. The clearest example of this type of thinking is binary logic, where something is either a one or a zero.

Binary has an ancient history. In China the famous *I Ching* is one system based on solid and broken lines (i.e. binary) that builds up to hexagram patterns. There's evidence that the German philosopher and mathematician Leibniz, credited as a key figure in the development of the binary logic underlying today's computers, was heavily influenced by the *I Ching*.¹

However it's easy to forget what the *I Ching* actually expresses. The *I Ching* is the book of *changes*. It suggests, overall, that situations are not purely static and divided, as in binary logic. Yin and yang intermingle. Everything exists in an ever-changing messy dance of shades and degrees, always with part-of-one-in-the-other, never with total division.

Forgetting this interdependence, we can fall into simplistic either-or thinking – either you're with us or against us, either you're good or you're evil. This thinking could even drive us to support wars. For instance, a study found that it wasn't political views or level of religiosity that influenced people to support US bombings in Syria. It was belief in pure evil.²

When we think someone is an absolute zero, we need to be an absolute one – totally opposed to them. This is the worst form of polarization because it leaves little space for positive-sum relationships to be built. We can stop noticing that this either-or thinking is only one way of using our concepts, not a representation of the truth!

Friend Parker Palmer writes, "[F]or all the power it has given us in science and technology, either-or thinking has also given us a fragmented sense of reality that destroys the wholeness and wonder of life."³

A narrative running throughout countless popular stories in places like Canada is one of superior violent force subduing the 'other.' It's easy for us, especially when we're stressed and agitated, to pick up on this mythological way of thinking, scapegoating 'others' as the cause of our problems and seeing violence as the way to get our needs met.

When we see ourselves as wholly different from 'others,' we can give up on trying to learn anything from them. We might not even listen when they speak. One good way to get around this, when confronted by someone we find really challenging – a white supremacist for example – is to imagine that person's traits, like what types of vegetables they like to eat.⁴

Thinking in this way helps to break out of the categories that say 'this person is evil,' getting into more nuance and thinking of them as a unique individual with a rich range of feelings and behaviours. We do not need to accept or respect their hateful actions, but we can still break free from the binaries ourselves, and perhaps eventually help them see how to do so as well.

Another useful technique is to focus on how we ourselves aren't purely one way or another, but have various internal conflicts that remain unresolved. We're moving here from the simplistic binary thinking to more nuanced, messier thinking. Once we've done this, we tend to stop over-estimating how different we are from people we disagree with.⁵

On our own, none of us knows very much. There's simply too much to know. I know a bit about a number of things, but if you press me hard enough on the specific details, at some point I'll just be guessing. Dangerously though, most of us may *feel* as if we know a lot more than we do.

Studies have discovered that a simple way to counteract this is to ask questions not about *why* someone believes what they do, but about the detailed mechanisms at play – the *how*. So the question wouldn't be "Why do you believe that government policy is a terrible thing?" but "How exactly does that government policy work?"

1 Damien Walter. "The ancient book of wisdom at the heart of every computer." *The Guardian*, 21 March 2014.

www.theguardian.com/books/2014/mar/21/ancient-book-wisdom-i-ching-computer-binary-code

2 Maggie Campbell and Johanna Ray Vollhardt. "Fighting the Good Fight: The Relationship Between Belief in Evil and Support for Violent Policies." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Volume 40, Issue 1, 2014. journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0146167213500997

3 Parker Palmer. *The Courage to Teach*. Jossey Bass, 2017.

4 Mary Wheeler and Susan Fiske. "Controlling Racial Prejudice." *Association for Psychological Science*, Volume 16, Issue 1, 1 January 2005. journals.sagepub.com/stoken/rbtf/2Rga2nSLFnbaM/full

5 Chadly Stern and Tali Kleiman. "Know Thy Outgroup." *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, Volume 6, Issue 8, 2015. journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1948550615596209

If pressed to explain the details, we might notice how little we know about them. As we discover that we don't know nearly as much about the policy as we thought we did, we might tone down the initial intensity of our positions.

This works best if the discussion is framed not in the either-or of a debate about whether the policy is good or evil. After all, we can make a subjective case for either one, even if we admit we don't really understand the policy. The discussion is better framed in the more objective terms of whether or not the policy is *effective*.⁶

This brings me to the final point I'll touch on. Communication skills, including how we frame issues, matter *a lot*. For instance, research shows that making people with more left-wing views feel afraid temporarily causes them to hold more right-wing views,⁷ and getting people with more right-wing views to imagine that they have a superpower rendering them totally invincible temporarily makes them hold more left-wing views.⁸

This suggests to me that we're not so permanently and fundamentally different from each other as we might think. Choosing words that make us feel more secure, or more fearful, might have a significant impact on how polarized the conversation becomes.

To make use of this finding, we need to listen with genuine curiosity and seek to understand what people's concerns, feelings, and needs are. We need to learn to understand (and to communicate in ways that show we understand) the other person's values. Then, just maybe, we'll find that we don't have to be quite so entrenched.

One good example of this is studies in Germany, the UK, and the US that found that, even around contentious issues like policing, gun control, and immigration policies, people with more conservative views respond much more positively to proposals for reforms that frame the issue as a return to tradition, rather than as a new innovation (which can feel more threatening).⁹

Having conversations that speak to what matters to us – tradition to me, innovation to you – might help us hear each other better.

Polarization is complex, and I haven't had the space to get in-depth in this short article. But I've recently had the wonderful opportunity in my work for CFSC to research and write a book on these and many other peace issues.

I've been discovering the most up-to-date information about questions like how conflicts at different scales can be transformed in constructive directions, rather than becoming entrenched and violent. There are many exciting studies from recent years that overwhelmingly validate and help to expand on insights Quakers have developed and used for centuries.

In the end, I believe we're far better off when we exist in messy diversity rather than striving for the imagined purity of either-or thinking.

Matthew Legge is the Peace Program Coordinator for Canadian Friends Service Committee. He is the author of the forthcoming book Spreading the Peace Virus. Join CFSC's email list via their website (quakerservice.ca) to be notified when the book is available, or contact Matt directly at matt@quakerservice.ca.



Matt Legge, following a presentation given at Mid-Island Allowed Meeting, Feb 2018.

(Photo: Brigitte Wellershausen)

6 Philip Fernbach et al. "Political Extremism Is Supported by an Illusion of Understanding." *Psychological Science*, 25 April 2013. scholar.harvard.edu/files/todd_rogers/files/political_extremism.pdf

7 D. Oxley et al. "Political attitudes vary with physiological traits." *Science*, 19 September 2008. 321(5896):1667-70 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18801995>

8 John Bargh. "At Yale, we conducted an experiment to turn conservatives into liberals. The results say a lot about our political divisions." *The Washington Post*, 22 November 2017. www.washingtonpost.com/news/inspired-life/wp/2017/11/22/at-yale-we-conducted-an-experiment-to-turn-conservatives-into-liberals-the-results-say-a-lot-about-our-political-divisions/

9 Tom Jacobs. "Conservatives' Love of Nostalgia Can be Used to Promote Liberal Values." *Pacific Standard*, 1 February 2018. psmag.com/news/the-grand-old-party-longs-for-the-good-old-days

Synthetic Biology in Context

A note of retirement, thanks, & details of interest

Fred Bass, Vancouver Monthly Meeting

After several years of serving as an associate for synthetic biology to the Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC), the time has come for me to lay down this role; other Quakers may find themselves called to action in this area. Now I'd like to share some of what I have learned, recognize Friends and staff for their many contributions; and share some of this subject's fascinating elements.

To start, here is a simplified definition. Synthetic biology engineers DNA, – the principal molecule that drives inheritance in microbes, plants, and animals – to gain scientific knowledge and to develop products ranging from food and fuels to medicines and military weapons. It surpasses genetic modification to create entirely new organisms and biological systems. Time will tell whether the benefits of synthetic biology will outweigh its risks.



Photo: Arek Socha (pixabay.com/en/users/qimono-1962238/), Creative Commons CC0

For decades, Canadian Quakers have engaged in this area.¹ Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) held two Special Interest Groups on synthetic biology in recent years. CFSC prepared a kit of reference materials and ten Monthly Meetings across Canada conducted study groups on synthetic biology. Matt Legge of CFSC has published regular, online updates.² Matt and I participated in the UN Convention on Biodiversity's work on synthetic biology.³



Anne Mitchell introduces a speaker at the conference on synthetic biology at Friends House, Toronto, November 2017.

(Photo: Matthew Legge)

In November, 2017, CFSC joined with the Canadian and World Council of Churches to hold the first international conference of faith groups to explore this subject.⁴ Anne Mitchell has long pioneered Canadian Quaker efforts and now chairs the Canadian Council of Churches' Faith & Life Sciences Group (formerly the Biotechnology Reference Group).

I have learned a great deal in my years spent with synthetic biology. For example, social scientists note that representative democracy is as important in establishing science policy as it is in forming government.⁵ Also, there are many perspectives for gaining knowledge, and holistic ones are especially valuable in setting policy for powerful technologies.

The 2015 meeting on synthetic biology of the UN Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) called for Indigenous representation. This was achieved in 2017, when an Indigenous representative called for strong protection of Mother Nature, a term not used previously.

At this last CBD meeting it was up to me to raise the issue of how synthetic biology should be related to the current Sixth Major Extinction of species.⁶

Technology itself seems to have become a religion, in that the promise of synthetic biology seems more based on faith than on observed evidence. And reductionism is alive and well.

1 Anne Mitchell, Pinayur Rajagopal, Keith Helmuth, and Susan Holtz. *Genetically Modified Crops: Promises, Perils, and the Need for Public Policy*. Quaker Institute for the Future, Pamphlet #3, 2011. (Available under "Publications" at www.quakerinstitute.org.)

2 Both the information kit and updates are available at quakerservice.ca/resources/#SyntheticBiology.

3 Convention on Biological Diversity. "Report of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology," 9 December 2017. www.cbd.int/meetings/SYNBIOAHTEG-2017-01

4 Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers). "The latest news on synthetic biology," 11 January 2018. <http://quakerservice.ca/news/latest-news-synthetic-biology>.

5 Daniel Sarewitz. "CRISPR: Science can't solve it." www.nature.com/news/crispr-science-can-t-solve-it-1.17806.

6 Fred Bass. "A Quaker Perspective: Technology, Synthetic Biology, and Extinction." *Quaker Concern* 44: No 1, Winter, 2018. quakerconcern.ca/quaker-perspective-technology-synthetic-biology-extinction

This perspective holds that truth is best learned by breaking things into their component parts and, once you see how the pieces fit together, you have an essential understanding of the whole. But biology can't be understood only at the molecular level.

Some organizations,⁷ after exploring the social and ecological aspects of synthetic biology, have put much effort into studying how the field should be governed, but they tend not to be heard outside of academia. Fortunately, the Action Group on Erosion, Technology, and Concentration (ETC, www.etcgroup.org), which prioritizes these aspects of synthetic biology, has a strong voice at the CBD.

The Quaker testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and stewardship offer needed guidance on how synthetic biology might develop. Life's key building block of heredity, DNA, is worthy of deep respect and study, but applications of synthetic biology require formal consideration in their social and ecological contexts.

Ursula Franklin, the Canadian Quaker, physicist, feminist, and activist noted:

Enquiry is not to be discouraged but knowledge has to remain a common good and must not be turned into private property. It is the end use of the fruits of enquiries that is in great need of discernment and critique.

The drive for corporate profits must not be camouflaged as a genuine search for deeper knowledge and understanding.⁸



⁷ See for e.g., the Nuffield Council on Bioethics report "Emerging biotechnologies: technology, choice and the public good," (2012). nuffieldbioethics.org/project/emerging-biotechnologies.

Another example is the Center for Genetics and Society, www.geneticsandsociety.org.

⁸ Quoted in a notice for a talk by Franklin, "A Quaker Perspective on Research in Science," 3 June 2014 at Friends House, Toronto.

No Infallible Directions

Margaret Slavin, Peterborough Monthly Meeting

When I was new to Friends, I read the blue *Christian Faith and Practice in the Experience of the Religious Society of Friends* (London Yearly Meeting, 1960) from cover to cover. The volume taught me much about the spiritual life of Friends, but one passage – only one – made me break out laughing.

It wasn't even a direct quote, but a summary written by somebody else of the views of Corder Catchpool. I was amused by his odd name and delighted by the report that

At the age of 28, following a period of frustration and misery, he was led to "alter his whole conception of the way in which divine guidance may be sought and found. He came to see that God did not make our decisions for us, or give us special infallible directions for great occasions, if we prayed hard enough for them; that a feeling of certainty and joy in making a critical decision was no guarantee that it was going to work out well."

The summary goes on to give Corder Catchpool's Quakerly way forward out of this existential dilemma:

no one could rightly understand or talk of Divine Guidance except one who had sought it daily in the smallest concerns of life; and so grown gradually to live more and more in the 'mind of Christ' until his decisions in greater matters also were such as flowed out of a settled loving character, and were for that very reason in accord with the Will of God.

That passage did not make it into the Canadian *Faith and Practice*, but I have often quoted it to others when we fall into what Caroline Balderston Parry called the "I don't know place"¹ – how can we know what is the divinely-led way forward? Well, Catchpool says, we can't!

If the skies open and a golden light shines upon your firstborn's head and a voice says, "Chain yourself to that pipeline," you still have no way to know whether you are hallucinating or letting your own ego drive your decisions. It's a relief. All you can do is go with that discipline of seeking divine guidance in the smallest of daily decisions, and then go with your hunch and hope it is a leading. >>>

¹ This was the title of the Sunderland P. Gardner Lecture delivered by Caroline in 2013, which you can watch by going to quaker.ca/resources/audio-video. It was also published as the Canadian Quaker Learning Series pamphlet #4 – *The I Don't Know Place: Holy Spirit With Me Always* (Canadian Yearly Meeting, 2013).

So I have carried Corder Catchpool around in my sense of Quaker forbears, along with Sarah Grubb and Lucretia Mott and John Woolman and others.



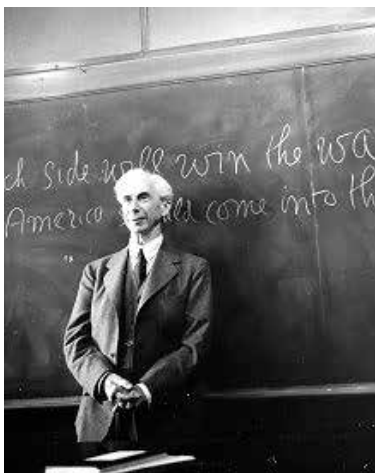
Corder Catchpool.

(Photo courtesy of Bury St. Edmunds Quakers)

Following a different thread, I recently I read a history of the First World War. The book is *To End All Wars*, by Adam Hochschild (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011). I picked it out of the library because David Millar had strongly recommended it during St. Lawrence Regional Gathering.

I am very glad I read it, and add my own strong recommendation to anyone who is involved with peace activities now and wants to see how such work played out during the madness that was WWI. Hochschild follows the lives of several historical personages, and the appalling story unfolds like a novel, although meticulously documented.

Of course I followed with most interest those who saw from the start that the war was unnecessary and wrong, and who maintained those views under unrelenting social pressure, including jail – in particular the seventeen Conscientious Objectors (COs) who were forcibly taken to the front to serve in the military, where they refused and were sentenced to death. I have long admired the writings of Bertrand Russell, but moreso now as I saw the committee he led get those death sentences commuted to ten years' hard labour.



Bertrand Russell lecturing at the University California, Los Angeles in 1939.

(Photo: Fenwick W. Holmes, through Wikimedia Commons)

Before reading this book, I could not have told you that six thousand Britons were imprisoned during that war, usually in health-breaking and punitive conditions, for refusing to go to war. I was touched by one passage where conditions in one prison were exceedingly harsh, yet it was noted that the Quakers there held a Meeting for Worship.

Toward the end of the book, the author notes a scene on the day that peace was finally declared. Suddenly, I found myself in the company of a f/Friend, the very one whose insights had so delighted me when I was new to Quakers and reading my way through the boring but good blue book.

Here is the passage where I once again heard the voice of Corder Catchpool:

In a prison at Ipswich, another resister, Corder Catchpool, recorded an event that afternoon when he and other COs were in the exercise yard: "An airman suddenly swooped down from three thousand feet and skimmed over our heads, waving a black arm and oily rag. I was deeply touched by this little incident. I took it as peace overtures from the Army to us – a message of goodwill for the future, by-gones by-gones, all recrimination and misunderstanding, all heart-burnings over, wiped out by that kind, dirty bit of cloth."

Now I know that seeking divine guidance daily "in the smallest concerns of life" led Corder Catchpool to the supremely difficult path of being a Conscientious Objector in Britain during World War I. I am humbled to have 'known' him.

Also, in the acknowledgements in this book, and at one point in the text, Hochschild refers to the help he received directly from Jo Vellacott and her work. Those of us who still know Jo can thank her too. I knew Jo is a scholar and that her focus has been the history of women, but I did not know that her groundbreaking work about the World War I era – *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote: The Erosion of Democratic Suffragism in Britain During the First World War* – is now a significant resource for historians of the calibre of the author of *To End All Wars*.



Jo Vellacott in her home library in Kingston, May 2005.

I have finished reading the book now and will take it back to the library. Among the myriad bits and pieces of historical knowledge that have now been grafted into a coherent narrative in my head is the Quaker bit, our forebears and our elders who carried and who carry the testimony of peace.

The Positive Side of Polarization

Timothy Kitz, Ottawa Monthly Meeting

We live in a dangerously polarizing world, goes a common trope. But what if this polarization indicated more than a breakdown in civility, more than the shrill feedback loop of social media's echo chamber? Maybe it reveals the untenable situation we've arrived at – a societal dead end that we need to creatively transcend.

That said, it is troubling that the very way we communicate today seems to foster polarization. In a sign that new social technologies' honeymoon phase must be over, many pundits are denouncing the ways our modern digital culture and (social) media fosters antagonism.

What people don't see about Facebook is that polarization is built into the business model. Polarization is profitable.
— Tristan Harris, former design ethicist at Google, founder of the Center for Humane Technology¹

Facebook spends all this time learning your emotional hot buttons, and it exploits those hot buttons because that's what makes you be highly engaged, makes the advertising be valuable. Making you angry, making you afraid is really good for Facebook's business.
— Roger McNamee, early Facebook investor²

Polarization is built right into the way social media's algorithms work, which determine what messages we're exposed to.

The difference is the constant feedback loop. When you watch the television, the television isn't watching you. When you see the billboard, the billboard isn't seeing you. ...

When you use these new designs – social media, search, youtube – you're being observed constantly, and algorithms are taking that information and changing what you see next. And they're just blind robots – there's no evil genius here – until they find those patterns, those little tricks that get you and make you change your behaviour. ...

The difference with social media is that the algorithms that are following you respond very quickly. They're looking for the quick responses. And the negative response, like getting startled or scared or irritated or angry, tends to rise faster than the positive responses like building trust or feeling good. Those things rise more slowly.

So the algorithms naturally catch the negativity and amplify it... Now in the big picture, it's not true that negativity is more powerful. But if you're doing this very rapid measurement of human impulses instead of

accumulated human behaviour, then it's the negativity that gets amplified. So you tend to have elections that are driven more by rancour and abuse.

— Jaron Lanier, virtual reality pioneer³

Ironically, the breathless alarm of the clickbait title of Lanier's interview ('how social media ruins your life') and the fact that youtube knew to suggest it to me perfectly illustrates the dynamic he's discussing. Youtube has me pegged, its algorithms working to silo me by catering to my fears.

And with a deluge of content competing for our attention, the best way to get a response is to be provocative. Remember that the primary content creators on social media are not professionals but ordinary users – us. People are being rewarded for articulating extreme and antagonistic views, conditioned by the dopamine rush of digital attention and likes.

It's enough to make you nostalgic for all that utopian talk about how digital media would bring us together in one global village. Is this still happening? *Are Quakers – is anyone – managing to create meaningful online community across geographic boundaries?* What does social media give us? At what cost?

It also seems to me that there is more driving polarization than technological change. It has a lot to do with the overall political and economic trajectories of our times. Wealth and power have become polarized – concentrated in the hands of a few elites. We've seen an erosion of the middle ground, of the middle class, and of liberal democracy itself.

The unconscious privilege of many ordinary folks has been challenged by social justice movements, generating disorientation and then a backlash – to the point where 'social justice warrior' has become an insult. This disorientation gains a sharp edge from the slow-motion, officially-unacknowledged crisis sending many on a downward economic trajectory. (It's easy for people to feel threatened by refugees when they have no security in the present and no confidence in the future).

After all, for the first time in living memory, young people in North America today face a worse future and lower standard of living than their parents. And the spectre of a catastrophic crisis and collapse haunts our dreams – and even our most escapist storytelling, given the popularity of sci-fi films, zombie shows, and superhero apocalypses.

Formerly robust, trusted, and progressive institutions like civil society, schools, the media, the market, and representative democracy itself seem no longer capable of widening society's franchise and mediating competing social interests. »»

1 Jo Ling Kent, Chiara Sottile, Emma Goss, and Alyssa Newcomb. "Facebook is a 'living, breathing crime scene,' says one former tech insider." *NBC News*, 16 Jan 2018. www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/facebook-living-breathing-crime-scene-says-one-former-manager-n837991

2 Same source as #1.

3 "Jaron Lanier interview on how social media ruins your life." Channel 4 News, 15 June 2018. youtu.be/kc_Iq42Og7Q

Under such conditions, it shouldn't be surprising – just depressing and worrying – to see a strain of politics re-emerge with an authoritarian, illiberal, and scapegoating bent. It's appealing to trust a strongman who promises to save us from the perfect scapegoat – any already-denigrated group who can be blamed for all our ills but who has little power to fight back.

These trends challenge notions of inevitable progress.⁴

How might Quakers meaningfully respond to this polarization?

In an article in this issue, Matthew Legge from CFSC offers some thought-provoking and practical advice on how to overcome polarization (see pp.19-20). His article is worth reading, pondering, and returning to repeatedly.

But I'd like to spend the rest of this article discussing some of the ways polarization can be *positive*.

What if we listened for 'that of God' in polarization?

To start, here's Steve Albini on 'call-out culture.'⁵

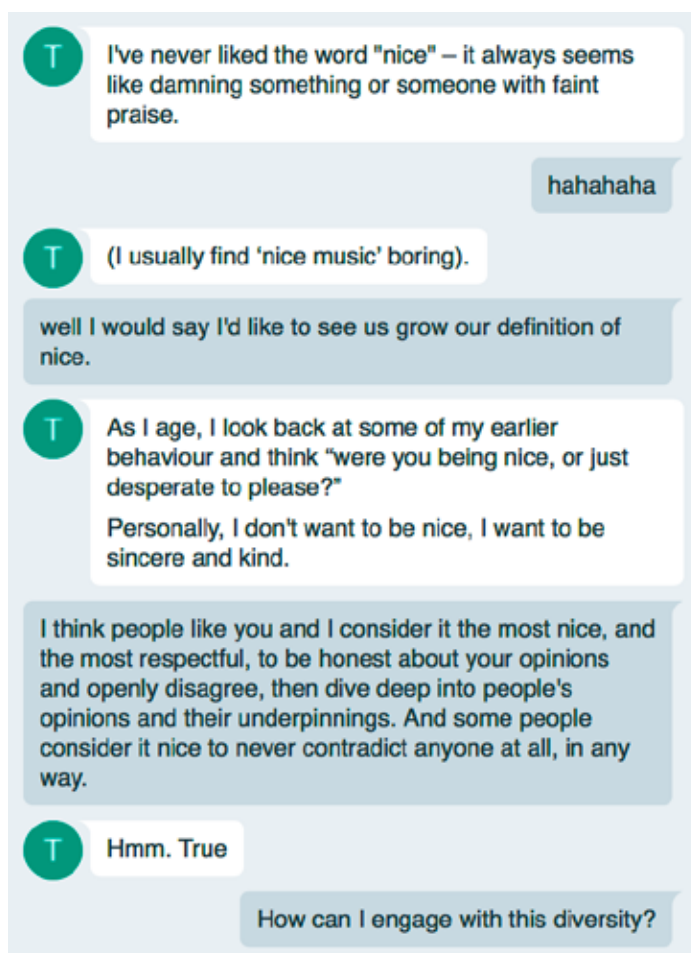
If you substitute the phrase 'being decent towards other people' for 'being politically correct' in every instance, then you start to see how ridiculous the arguments against political correctness are. When someone is offended by political correctness, what they mean is that they don't want their biases and presumptions to be criticized. They want to be able to get away with them.

I think it's healthy to be called on those biases and presumptions. If nothing else, it gives the person who's been called on them an opportunity to justify their biases and presumptions. It identifies aspects of normal interactions that have buried within them layers of condescension and bias and prejudice that would have been unspoken otherwise.

And while it might be irritating for somebody to pipe up now and again, I would much rather have that dialogue and risk offending someone who's being callous than carry on the way things have been, with all this institutional and casual racism and sexism and homophobia – have all of that stuff just simmering and unspoken.
— Steve Albini⁶

When I listen to this statement, I hear a truth about how conflict and polarization can demand dialogue, name the unspoken, and bring to the surface things that need dealing with.

Every meaningful advance in human justice and equality started with dissent and disagreement.



😊 | Send a message

Too much consensus is the enemy of democracy. In a way, it seems to me democracy thrives, as the individual thrives, on their not being too much agreement. There has to be competing claims. One might be worried, on a political group level, if too many people begin to feel too like-minded. One would have to wonder then what is being suppressed, or what is being left out. Because there's such a drive to avoid conflict that people might actually be setting aside things that matter to them, in order to form the consensus and be part of the group.
— Adam Phillips, psychoanalyst⁷

The anarchist in me wants to believe that our current crisis of polarization is unmasking the lie of progressive liberalism – a little like in this anecdote from an American Friend:

Last Sunday, a couple of hours before Meeting for Worship, some Friends were in a small group for worship sharing. A Friend who I very much admire for

4 How has the alt-right managed to rebrand racism, sexism, and fascism, almost making them trendy? How are we fighting these discredited mind diseases again?

5 As a studio owner and recording engineer for literally thousands of indie rock bands, Steve is now something of a punk rock elder statesman. But in his youth in the '80s, he led a series of musically-abrasive and lyrically-transgressive bands, to the point that even some of the bandnames are not something I would want to print. Point being, he knows something about confrontation and saying politically incorrect things publicly.

6 "Ian MacKaye & Steve Albini (Part 2)," *Kreative Kontrol* Podcast, 17 November 2015.

7 "Psychoanalysis and Democracy." *In Our Time: History* Podcast, BBC Radio 4, 10 July 2002.

her spirituality and activism (especially around climate change) talked about how she was having trouble finding that of God in the President and how it was probably fear that was impeding her from doing this.

I then decided to talk about something I usually keep to myself, about how I have felt for most of my life that North American society is based on imperialism and genocide, and that whoever is president is by definition our War-Criminal-in-Chief, so that although at one time or another the progression of destruction might have a prettier face on it, it's pretty much the same from one leader to the next. Therefore, I really don't have any more fear with this president as the figurehead than I've had at any other time.

The breakthrough for me came a couple of hours later when that same Friend came up to me and said something along the lines of, "I have come to the same realization that you have about our society, but only recently. And I wonder how you have kept it together all these years emotionally and with sanity." I said that, well, first off, this was just my country... We are where we are; it is just what we have to deal with, and that I have no illusion about being in a fundamentally different situation had I been born and raised in a different country.

— Howard Hawhee, Austin (TX) Friends Meeting⁸

This kind of radical critique of our society does seem to have become more normal on the left, with polarizing effects. But maybe this polarization is simply revealing the naked dominance our society's progressive ideals have covered over.

Years ago, when I first became involved with an indigenous solidarity group, we had an argument on our internal listserv over whether Canada was a white supremacist nation. Many of us felt this was going a little too far. Sure, Canada may have been supremacist in its origin, and much of the weight of its institutions and trajectory comes from these origins.⁹ But surely it isn't a supremacist nation now?

Surely, for that matter, we're not living in a truly patriarchal society anymore?

Nowadays I'm not so sure.

I'm not sure when I look at the fetid comments section on any public post related to indigenous or feminist struggle. It seems like if you scratch many ordinary citizens, out flows unrepentant racism and sexism.¹⁰ In fact, it isn't hard to find blatantly sexist and supremacist reactions online. Any place people are invited to offer public opinions seems to devolve into casual hate crimes these days.

I'm not sure when I look at alt-right groups like the Proud Boys, who valiantly self-identify as "Western chauvinists" and "neo-masculine reactionaries." Or celebrity professor Jordan Peterson, who baldly sings the praises of the "male dominance hierarchy" in Western culture.

If the wealth of our society is ultimately derived from colonial theft and genocide, if ordinary people react with racist scapegoating when their privilege and economic position is threatened, if nuanced intellectuals and dilettante presidents can deploy misogyny to applause... maybe we are a supremacist nation and patriarchal society.

Maybe polarization just means progressive liberalism cannot paper over the conflict between two opposite forces.

One side – radical reactionaries like Peterson and the alt-right – demand retrenchment, back to traditional oppressive hierarchies, baldly named and valued as such.

Another – radical revolutionaries – want to fundamentally challenge the values and categories underlying the Western project, from linked binaries like male/female, intellect/emotion, spirit/flesh, culture/nature, to the nation-state, borders, capitalist production, hierarchy, and anthropocentrism.

My sympathies with the latter are probably evident, though sometimes I wonder if this revolutionary thinking throws the baby out with the bathwater.

But then I remember that we're in the midst of the sixth global extinction event. We're having an effect – a disastrous effect – on the planet on a geological time-scale, for the first time in human history.

Maybe there's something wrong with the fundamental direction of Western Civilization? *How do you participate in a society that seems so determinedly ecocidal and suicidal?*

It's this threat, rather than a reality TV President, that our Friend Howard Hawhee grappled with later in his article:

I did remark, though, that a kind of dread has come over me for the past few years. I wake up in the morning with this sense of an impending 'something.' I told her that this dread seems to have settled on the environmental catastrophe both current and impending. This fear is newer and overtook me more suddenly when I was older. ...

I've somehow gotten to where I can dialogue with the older fear that was perhaps the awareness of living in a society predicated on destruction and subordination. I now see the way to personify and dialogue with my newer fear of planetary ecological destruction. ... »»

8 Howard Hawhee. "Don Beldur: Mr. Fear." *BeFriending Creation: A Publication of Quaker Earthcare Witness*, 31.2, April-May-June 2018.

9 Many of the Fathers of Confederation explicitly said the 'white race' was superior and that Canada was for that race. And as we all should know by now, politicians and bureaucrats called for the elimination of 'Indians' as 'Indians' – i.e., they called for genocide. See, for example, the article "Truth & Reconciliation: Importance of Examining Genocide" in the Canadian Friends Service Committee's resource *Truth & Reconciliation: Quakers in Action* (quakerservice.ca/news/truth-reconciliation-quakers-action).

10 Again, I think the 'scratch' in this case is the double crisis of economic and social privilege being challenged.

I have always known in my head, but perhaps am beginning to be able to feel with the rest of myself, that a community is possible around a cheerful, resolute, realistic response to impending global destruction and that we can build the emotional and spiritual basis for that among ourselves.

— Howard Hawhee¹¹

Creativity, it seems to me, is the key to cheerfully facing such fears and such crises.

Creativity is what we need, because polarization is also dangerous. How far will it go in our society? From scapegoating and dehumanization, to the elimination of enemies through violence, war, tyranny?¹² How will our society react and convulse if we're struck by a dire and abrupt ecological and economic crisis?

Clinging to the status quo is not the way to protect ourselves, I've convinced. Instead we need to engage courageously with some of these dangerous tensions, rather than dismissing them because they seem raw and extreme.

After all, Martin Luther King, to take a saintly example, called riots "the language of the unheard," and denounced those who failed to hear their message of "intolerable conditions," — those who failed to hear that "the promises of freedom and justice have not been met... [and] that large segments of white society are more concerned about tranquillity and the status quo than about justice and humanity."¹³

And in fact King's methods aimed to create tension and creative crises. After 'Project C' (for confrontation) landed him in a Birmingham jail, Martin Luther wrote to white moderates,

Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. ...

Perhaps the South, the nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.

Direct action doesn't shy away from conflict; in many ways, it aims to provoke it.



Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King. Coretta protested nuclear weapons in the '50s and came out against the Vietnam War years before her husband.

(Photo: Herman Hillier, via Wikimedia Commons)

Conflicts are very, very important. Conflicts are energy — energy for development, for improvement, for progress. Energy can be something wonderful. ...

Conflicts which are managed in a constructive way can be about wonderful things. Deconstructive ways of dealing with conflicts can lead to disaster. Wars are the result of conflict, but democracy, human rights, environmental protection, humanism, the welfare society, the open society, and liberalism — all these things were fought for, and they were always preceded by social conflicts. It all depends with how one deals with them.

Conflicts are actually something neutral... The constructive management of conflict leads to social progress and social innovation.

— Aladin Eli-Mafalaani, German sociologist¹⁴

But what makes conflicts creative? How do we make dealing with them constructive?

How do we make conflicts into opportunities to engage and draw closer, rather than to wound, and drive away?

I ask this from the heart, and not only in a political way.

A good friend and I went on a roadtrip recently. At one point we had a short but sharp moment of disagreement. We've since spent hours — on several occasions — trying to make sense of

11 Howard Hawhee. "Don Beldur: Mr. Fear." *BeFriending Creation: A Publication of Quaker Earthcare Witness*, 31.2, April-May-June 2018. www.quakerearthcare.org/article/don-beldur-mr-fear

12 It couldn't happen here right? Maybe, but I was chilled when I researched groups involved in an anti-immigrant rally at Parliament Hill for an article in *The Leveller* (www.leveller.ca/2017/10/canadian-fascism). I discovered there are at least three Canadian neo-fascist groups active in Eastern Canada: Storm Alliance, Northern Guard, and the Soldiers of Odin. Storm Alliance, probably the *least* racist of this unholy trio, aspires to both "unite the far right" by softening its image, and act as an "informal security group" ready to "protect our communities." Already the group has taken to patrolling borders, on the lookout for refugees crossing. The Storm Alliance's name, acronym, and logo just so happen to invoke the memory of the Nazi Sturmabteilung (SA) — also known as Hitler's brownshirts, Stormtroopers, or most literally "Storm Brigade." (The SA was the original paramilitary wing of the Nazi party — the original violent thugs who helped Hitler sweep to power, before they were supplanted by the more disciplined and efficient SS).

13 Martin Luther King, Jr. "The Other America," speech at Grosse Pointe High School, 14 March 1968. www.gphistorical.org/mlk/mlkspeech/mlk-gp-speech.pdf

14 "Fighting at the table: Conflict as successful integration." *CBC Ideas*, 29 June 2017.

our feelings over what happened. We've tried hard to listen supportively and speak constructively. (I'd even say we've mostly succeeded.) I feel I've learnt a lot about her and myself in this process. And yet we also seem to have walked away from each conversation, in the end, a little rawer and more troubled.

What do we do when our attempts at conflict resolution create more problems than they solve?

"The aim of the psychoanalysis that I value is to enable people to be able to bear and sustain their conflicts without having to resolve them. ... Our conflicts are the bulletins from ourselves and from our cultures about the things that matter to us. But there are going to be competing claims. And it's very difficult to conciliate rival claims, politically in the external world and internally in the internal world. But the aim is to make that bearable, not simply to abolish the enemy... — Adam Phillips¹⁵

I find it interesting that Jesus' famous instruction to "love your enemy as yourself" (Matthew 5:44) takes for granted the idea that we have enemies. Perhaps its deeper spiritual entreaty is to abolish our enemies, to realize that there's no such thing as an enemy.

Or maybe it isn't. Maybe recognizing that we have enemies – that there are things and even people that we oppose, that there are differences we can't reconcile – and then still loving them is the mature, courageous thing to do.

How do we make peace with our conflicts?

Should we really be reconciled to the forces threatening life on this planet?¹⁶ Do we just 'agree to disagree' with hate?

How do we oppose and still love?

How do we hold opposites within ourselves without flinching or breaking? How do we hold opposites together and move forward?

If we were to find a key to the explosive condition of the world it could only be done by holding contraries together.

That was the key.

It was also obvious.

For a moment I recoiled from the banality. It was like saying, 'You really should love one another.' Of course we should, but we don't.

Then I saw what was not obvious: that the holding together could only be done by *quakers*. And that meant not only the Society of Friends, however aptly named, but men and women everywhere who were prepared to quake. For quaking was what happened when you endured inside yourself the tension of divisive forces. It was what happened when you refused to shrug them off, neither disowning your own violence nor deploying it; not admitting only the good and throwing evil in the teeth of the opposition, but holding the conflict together inside yourself as yours – the dark and the light of it, the love and the lovelessness, the terror and the hope. And as you did this you changed. The situation changed. ...

Perhaps, in the end, what mattered was how many people were prepared to quake this way, for such quaking spirits were the keepers of the keys.

— Lindsay Clarke¹⁷

I see great value in holding within ourselves the contradictions of our society – the perils we face, the long emergency threatening to undo us. And waiting, expectantly and creatively. (What could be more spiritual?)

To those once in the thrall of the divine right of kings, democracy was unthinkable. It was unimaginable to organize society on any other basis other than aristocratic hierarchy.

Do we really think our current political and economic systems are the last word on human organization?

To medieval Catholics, there was no salvation outside submission to the Church and papal authority. Protestant reformers proclaimed salvation through simple faith, but could not imagine a rightly-ordered spiritual community without clergy, creeds, and sacraments.

Quakers, meanwhile, dared to imagine salvation without mediation and a spiritual community without hierarchy. And we have spent centuries experimenting with such radical notions.

How can we bring that same kind of radical imagination to our conflicts and communities today?

How do we hold out conflicts in silence – without a drive to dismiss them, to hide from them, or paper them over? How do we quake, becoming inwardly charged with the energy of their contrary motion, so that we can break through to new insights and effective actions?

¹⁵ "Psychoanalysis and Democracy." *In Our Time: History Podcast*, BBC Radio 4, 10 July 2002.

¹⁶ "For me faith is about confrontation. It is about challenging radical evil on behalf of life. We can't use the word "hope" if we don't resist. As long as we resist, we keep hope alive."

— Chris Hedges

"Stop Fascism: Chris Hedges in Portland, Oregon. A KBOO Benefit." 7 June 2017.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2klcRVZs0g

¹⁷ Lindsay Clarke, *The Chymical Wedding* (Picador, 1990), pp. 414-15.

Quoted in p. 27, Alastair McIntosh's *Decolonising Land and Soul: A Quaker Testimony* (2015 Sunderland P. Gardner Lecture, Canadian Quaker Learning Series #7, Canadian Yearly Meeting).

Reports Worth (Re-)Reading

Christianity and Canadian Quakers

Editor's Note: *Canadian Quakers have some experience dealing with conflict and polarizing (or potentially polarizing) questions.*

A report on Representative Meeting in last issue of The Canadian Friend sent me on a deep dive into Minutes and Reports on our business site (quaker.ca/business). I was trying to trace how CYM had dealt with two questions: whether to split regionally¹ and whether Quakers were Christian. These seemed relevant to an issue on polarization and Quakers.

These also seem to be perennial or at least recurring, questions – I've heard similar discussions among Young Friends this past year. And I was impressed by some of the pearls of wisdom that emerged. I offer some excerpts from my search in hopes that others will find them edifying.²

“Query: How can we openly engage with the diverse Quaker theology within our Yearly Meeting?”

— “Report on Responses to the Consultation & Renewal Queries” (2006), by the Working Group on Consultation & Renewal.³

“We need to work to find inclusive language, to listen and to help people recognize and learn from their hurt.”

— Anonymous respondent quoted in the above “Report on Responses to the Consultation & Renewal Queries.”

“People so often panic when there's dissension and rush to resolve things. But the dissension was/can be very important, as long as you don't panic and leave, but stay and work with it. Over time it's refined and we all grow from those experiences. I learned to respect the vocal people who were contrary thinkers.”

— Anonymous respondent quoted in the above “Report on Responses to the Consultation & Renewal Queries.”

“We study our history because of difficulty with defining ourselves in the present.”

— “Report on Responses to the Consultation & Renewal Queries” (2006), by the Working Group on Consultation & Renewal.



Excerpts from the “Conclusions and Recommendations from the Consultation and Renewal Working Group (C'nR): Interim Report to Canadian Yearly Meeting 2006.”

Christianity is a divisive issue among Canadian Quakers despite the fact that diversity is cherished by many and seen as one of our strengths. ...

On the whole Canadian Friends express a great deal of appreciation for diversity of thought and practice. There is a strong sense that diversity is our main strength and attraction, along with the practice of being ‘tolerant’ and ‘non-judgmental.’ Our lack of creed and dogma, and the opportunity for each person to shape his or her own spiritual path is very important to Canadian Friends. ...

Most Friends believe that we should be open to diverse theology and different points of view. However we tend not to engage with our diversity. We keep our points of view to ourselves because we often get burned by unpleasant or hurtful responses when we share. Christians feel silenced because it too often happens that others say (even in response to ministry in Meeting for Worship) that they are offended by Christian language. It appears that tension between Christian and non-Christian Friends has created difficulties in many local meetings and that the Christians are the ones leaving. This was often connected to the idea that Friends and attenders have brought ‘baggage’ with them from other churches. Very few of us were born into Quaker families. ...

Membership is a divisive issue in some Monthly Meetings. The meaning of membership is often not communicated to attenders at Friends meetings and rarely in worship groups. Sometimes membership is seen as a tool for power in decision-making, which can cause ‘outsider’ feelings on the part of attenders who are not members. The membership process is ill-understood and often poorly done. We are afraid to ask the hard questions. Sometimes we ask those questions in a way that makes a prospective member feel tested and attacked.

Sometimes Meetings are willing to accept anyone who wishes into membership in the Religious Society of Friends. This is not consistent with the membership section in our CYM discipline. Our *Organization and Procedure* treats membership

1 Anyone interested in excerpts from twenty years of reports on this question can take their own dive by going to quaker.ca/publication/regionalizingcym.

2 This could be the start of a whole new feature in *The Canadian Friend*! Do you have a favourite passage or Quakerly turn of phrase from a report or minute at the national, regional, or monthly Meeting level? Please send them along to editor@quaker.ca, for a future round-up in “Reports Worth Reading” or “Favourite Minutes.”

3 Hosted on the quaker.ca/consultation page, and specifically at quaker.ca/consultation/wp-content/uploads/sites/42/2013/05/Report_on_the_CnR_Queries.pdf.

as a commitment, a serious undertaking, and an initiation process into a Quaker community with mutual accountability. There are Friends who believe that a condition of membership should be a willingness to engage faithfully in Quaker process, acknowledging that the Spirit can cause anything to happen, and that Quaker process implies a willingness to put oneself under the corporate discipline of the Meeting.

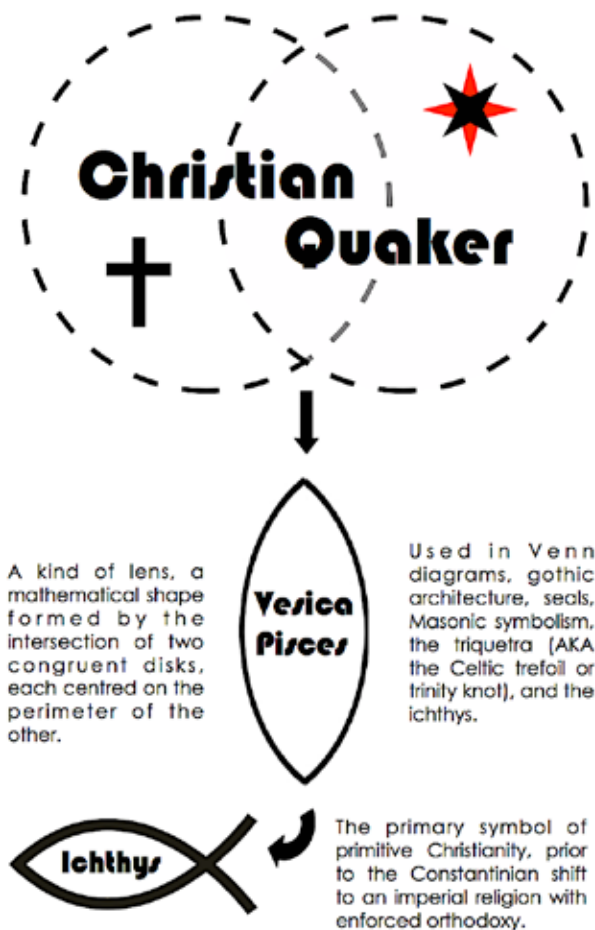
The membership issue raises questions as to our concept of Quaker identity. Who are we? How are we different from other religious organizations that are similar to us? What is our relationship to Christianity today? Can or should we accept as members people who openly reject our Christian heritage? ...

Recommendation F1: that Canadian Friends openly recognize the Christian heritage of our Religious Society of Friends and its continuing nurture to many of our members and attenders. We ask local Meetings and Yearly Meeting to engage us more deeply with the Christian roots of Quakers, recognizing that these have fostered the loving community and inspirational diversity that we experience and value corporately.

Recommendation F2: that Canadian Friends deliberately create opportunities for open dialogue about beliefs and expression of spirituality in which we are reminded to look for “the spirit from where words come” (J. Woolman). We hope this would help us to understand diversity within Christianity and its historical relationship to the Religious Society of Friends, as well as the diversity of non-Christian beliefs within the Society.



Excerpts from the “Conclusions and Recommendations from the Consultation and Renewal Working Group (C’nR): Final Report to Canadian Yearly Meeting 2007.”⁴



Many Friends are very concerned that these strong beliefs about the importance of our diversity may be causing us to lose a coherent identity, even to becoming an ‘anything goes’ religion. C’nR shares this concern because an organization that has no common ground and shared focus will inevitably fall apart. ...

There is a prevalent belief among Canadian Quakers that we are unique in our acceptance of diversity. Some individuals cite this as their reason for attending Quaker Meetings. Yet considerable diversity exists in other faith groups, including those we often associate with rigidity and authoritarian attitudes. ...

We were often reminded that Friends must be open-minded about language and not get stuck on the words – rather “love to feel where words come from” (Papunehang, a Delaware leader

cited by John Woolman); listen in tongues; look for the constructively positive in the words and ideas of those who express their spirituality differently than ourselves. Friends who share their spirituality in non-Christian ways also should not be made to feel uncomfortable expressing their spiritual experience in Friends’ meetings.

The responses to our section on Diversity in our interim report indicated a deep and fundamental division – a troubling dichotomy. Some respondents suggested that we should acknowledge our Christian nature openly and clearly, welcoming non-Christians, but making sure they understand that we are a basically Christian faith community. On the other hand, there are those who see the Christian character of Quakerism only in relation to our past and see us moving beyond that to what is essentially a universalist community. 21st century Friends in Canada are dealing with a significant move away from being a purely Christian faith community to one of mind boggling diversity – very different from our roots.



⁴ Hosted on the quaker.ca/consultation page, and specifically at: quaker.ca/consultation/wp-content/uploads/sites/42/2013/05/CnR_final_report_to_CYM.pdf.

Excerpt from the Canadian Friends Service Committee's response to the C'nR interim report⁵

We would support the general idea of deepening our understanding of the relationship between Quakerism and Christianity, both past and present, and of deepening our appreciation for the more progressive strands of contemporary Christianity. ... Canadian Quakerism should be a place where both Christians and non-Christians will feel welcome and comfortable.

... we believe it would be appropriate to identify liberal Quakerism as part of a broader current of religious thought, which might be called Progressive Theism. Within the category of Progressive Theism, we would include liberal Quakerism, Unitarianism, the progressive wing of Christianity, the progressive wing of Judaism, the more socially-engaged wing of Neo-Paganism, progressives working in a variety of other faiths, and a number of movements which have crossed religious boundaries, such as women's spirituality, eco-spirituality, and process theology.

All of the above examples tend to display a number of common themes: a desire to be free of overly rigid and fundamentalist interpretations of the respective traditions, a desire for just and inclusive practices within the respective religious organizations, a desire for tolerance and respectful dialogue between world religions, and a desire to participate in the work of peace, social justice, and sustainability in the broader world.

The personal experience of the Divine, the life of the Meeting, and action in the wider world, are all deeply intertwined and a part of what we are.



"Minutes of Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 2007."⁶

Minute 50. Consultation and Renewal Report ...

We considered recommendations C-1 through C-3:

Recommendation C-1: that Canadian Friends openly recognize the Christian tradition of our Religious Society of Friends and its continuing nurture for many of our members and attenders. We ask local meetings and Yearly Meeting to find ways to engage more deeply with the Christian roots of Quakerism. This does not mean overlooking the current

breadth of belief and conviction among those who are not Christian – both Christian and non-Christian beliefs have a part in fostering the loving community and inspirational diversity we now experience and value corporately.

Recommendation C-2: that local Meetings and Yearly Meeting deliberately create opportunities for open dialogue about beliefs and expression of spirituality, thus enhancing our freedom to worship together and to minister to one another with a variety of spiritual language. We remind ourselves to "feel where words come from."

Recommendation C-3: that our *Organization and Procedure* be revised so that it acknowledges our diversity, as described in C-1 above.

There was a rich discussion focussed on the nature of Quaker experience of Christianity and the teachings of Jesus, in relation to C-1. Many suggestions were made for rewording the recommendation and some Friends supported it as it stands. We were united on the importance of these matters but were not united on the recommendation at this time.

We approve recommendation C-2.



"Minutes of Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 2008."⁷

Minute 66. Consultation and Renewal Working Group Recommendation (continued):

On behalf of the Special Interest Group on Our Christian Roots, Beverly Shepard presented a proposed rewording of C'nR recommendation C-1 which arose from the ministry on this topic in the morning. The revised version, printed below, was approved.

Recommendation C-1: That Canadian Friends openly recognize the Christian *origins* [emphasis added] of our Religious Society of Friends and its continuing nurture for many of our members and attenders. We ask local Meetings and Yearly Meeting to find ways to engage more deeply with the Christian roots of Quakerism. This does not mean overlooking the current breadth of belief and conviction among those who are not Christian – both Christian and non-Christian beliefs have a part in fostering the loving community and inspirational diversity we now experience and value corporately.

⁵ Quoted in the above "Conclusions and Recommendations from the Consultation & Renewal Working Group (C'nR): Final Report to CYM 2007."

⁶ Hosted on the quaker.ca/business/cym-minutes page, and specifically at: quaker.ca/business/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2014/07/CYM_Minutes_2008.pdf.

⁷ Hosted on the quaker.ca/business/cym-minutes page, and specifically at: quaker.ca/business/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2014/07/CYM_Minutes_2008.pdf.

Recommendation C-3: That our *Organization and Procedure* be revised so that it acknowledges our diversity, as described in C-1 above.

This recommendation was also approved.



“Minutes of Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 2012.”⁸

Minute 31. Changes to Organization and Procedure,⁹ second reading: ...

“Summing up” to read as follows:

This short history of the life of Friends and the development of Canadian Yearly Meeting since 1955 reminds us that the same God that Jesus exemplified and taught us to know is our centre, as it was with Friends who have gone before. As we have joined to bring our divisions together, we have grown into one faithful body, the Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. Among us there is a diverse understanding of the divine expressed in both Christian and non-Christian ways.

⁸ Hosted on the quaker.ca/business/cym-minutes page, and specifically at: quaker.ca/business/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2014/07/CYM_Minutes_2012.pdf.

⁹ Available from quaker.ca/resources/organization-and-procedure

We seek the will of God together and “to feel where words come from” (Papunehang of the Lenni Lenape, as recorded in the Journal of John Woolman, c. 1762). We find guidance through the presence of God in our worship and through the inward experiences of others shared in the fellowship of the Meeting for Worship. This guidance is our empowerment to live a life in the Spirit and to work in the world for justice, peace, and love.



We were reminded that worship is the central element in all that we do. We may disagree about testimonies that were established in the past, but we unite in worship – worship being at the core of our lives individually and as a religious society. We are called to set aside our individual desires and listen to the guidance of the Spirit that unites us all.

— “Conclusions and Recommendations from the Consultation and Renewal Working Group (C’nR): Interim Report to Canadian Yearly Meeting 2006.”

The punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing of these reports and minutes has occasionally been lightly edited.

It's Time For Reconciliation

ARE YOU READY?

Donate to support Friends' work for reconciliation:
Quakerservice.ca/Support

"Reconciliation is not an aboriginal problem — it is a Canadian problem. It involves all of us."
 — Justice Murray Sinclair

Canadian Friends Service Committee

Two Poems

Beauty

(A found poem
in the spirit of
Caroline C. Graveson, 1937)¹

There is a daily round for beauty
as well as for goodness, a world
of flowers and books,
of cinemas and clothes,
of manners as well as
mountains and art.

In the beauty of everything
there is a Spirit –
in the natural beauty
of earth and sky,
in the fitness
of language and rhythm,
in the street fight
as well as the heavenly vision.

In the fitness of line,
of shade and of colour
of sound, of beat and of measure –
in the passions of Bach
or a nursery jingle,
though the quantity of God may change,
in their fitness, the quality
of beauty remains.
(2005)

Keith R. Maddock, Toronto Monthly Meeting

Prayer

(A found poem
in the spirit of
Pierre Ceresole, a Swiss Friend, c.1925)²

Eternal, ever vital, intelligent
(the opposite of hide-bound theologians
in black coats, falsehoods and degrees)
who fathered the crocuses,
snowdrops and alpine roses
nestling in the hollow of an old tree;

God of whatsoever is honest
and true and simple: clear-eyed girls
faithful in love and destined to be
warm and intelligent mothers;
god of the sensitive ones
who know how to listen for thee;

father of delicate, unsullied things:
drops of water that glide
from the icicles' ginger tips
to the fruit of the mountain lily;
father of Taylor's mathematical series
and of solid mechanical theorems;

of everything honest and true
that people labour to understand
collaboratively.
(2000)

1 Based on passages from Graveson's *Religion and Culture* (London Yearly Meeting: Swarthmore Lecture, 1937).

2 Based on passages from *For Peace and Truth: From the Notebooks of Pierre Ceresole*, translated by John W. Harvey and Christina Yates (London Yearly Meeting, 1960), from *Vivre sa vérité: Carnet de route, 1909-1945*, (Neuchâtel : A la Baconnière, 1950).

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Next theme: “Candian Yearly Meeting 2018”

The next issue is scheduled for October, with a final due date of **1 September 2018**.

Speak to your community; be part of the conversation among Canadian Friends. Please submit articles between 500-1200 words long. The primary topic of the issue will be the summer gathering at Canadian Yearly Meeting 2018. Submissions on other topics of interest to Canadian Friends are also warmly welcomed; so are suggestions and submissions for “Gleanings & Quotations” (i.e. funny or interesting quotes), favourite minutes and report excerpts, and photos.

Due Date: 1 September 2018

Submit to: editor@quaker.ca, c/o CYM Office, 91A Fourth Ave., Ottawa, ON, K1S 2L1

Poem

A Sudden Summer Rain

by Gerald Bosacker

A needed surprise rain
concluded the drought
that withered spring grain
and curled corn leaves,
turning pagans more devout.
This rain dancer believes
in thanking all of the Gods,
slighting none who might decree
that nimbus cloud tightwads
dump their water for me.

Editor's Note : Readers may remember two poems in last issue by Gerald, accompanied by a lovely photo of a snow-covered field by his daughter Jill Courtney.

Jill later wrote to say that Gerald has passed away on March 3. On learning that he had submitted another poem, Jill wrote, “I am so pleasantly surprised to hear my Dad submitted ‘A Sudden Summer Rain’ on 2/27!! It was the last day he was alert and then slipped into a coma on 2/28. I LOVE knowing he did that.”

Gleanings & Quotations

Once I foolishly tried to find some quotation during the Meeting for Worship. I touched my iPad too long, and Siri spoke up in the silence, “Sorry, I didn’t get that...!”

Laughter erupted after a voice responded “That Friend speaks my mind.”

Yikes! Now I shut the whole thing off!

Religiously.

— Jane Keeler, Ottawa Monthly Meeting

Caption Contest



“My mom said this was airplane luggage, but I just can’t seem to find the controls.”

— Frances Witt (VIMM, Victoria Meeting)

Please send intriguing or funny photos to the editor (editor@quaker.ca) for the future caption contests. (You’re allowed to submit photos that don’t feature children or funny animals, if you like). Those who submit photos involving a copy of *The Canadian Friend* will store up treasure for themselves in heaven.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR THE CANADIAN FRIEND AUTUMN ISSUE:
DEADLINE, SEPTEMBER 1, 2018.

Mural Photo: Brent Bowyer



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