

THE CANADIAN FRIEND



SPRING 2020

VOLUME 116 NUMBER 1

ABOUT

The Canadian Friend is the magazine of Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM). It is published three times a year under the care of the Publications & Communications Committee (pubcom-committee@quaker.ca). It is funded by Meetings and members of CYM, with assistance from funds administered by the Yearly Meeting, to further the work and witness of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Canada.

CREDITS

Edits & Layout: Timothy Kitz (editor@quaker.ca)

SUBSCRIPTIONS & DONATIONS

The Canadian Friend is sent by mail or email to all members and regular attenders of CYM bodies who wish to receive it. Donations to defray the costs associated with this group subscription are welcome.

An individual print subscription costs \$20 for Canada, \$30 for the US, and \$40 for all other countries. An electronic subscription is \$10.

To donate, subscribe individually, be added to the group subscription, or to change your address contact:

Canadian Yearly Meeting
91A Fourth Avenue, Ottawa ON, K1S 2L1
Email: cym-office@quaker.ca
Tel: (888) 296-3222 and (613) 235-8553

REPRODUCTION

The Canadian Friend is published under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International Licence. You are free to share and adapt it as long as you provide attribution and share any copies or derived work on the same basis. For details see:

creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0

ADVERTISING

The Canadian Friend is published in print and online. Placing an advertisement in it puts you in touch with the members and regular attenders of Quaker Meetings and Worship Groups across Canada. Contact the editor (editor@quaker.ca) to arrange advertisements.

Ad size	RATES	
	Single issue	Multiple issues
Full page	\$160/ad	\$145/ad
Half page	\$100/ad	\$85/ad
Quarter page	\$60/ad	\$55/ad
Classifieds	\$0.50/word	\$0.43/word

One-page colour ads are available for an additional \$150 print surcharge. Canadian Yearly Meeting and its committees and bodies do not pay for black and white ads.

View *The Canadian Friend* and back issues online: quaker.ca/resources/the-canadian-friend

PRINTED ON 100% RECYCLED PAPER
FSC CERTIFIED
ISSN 0382-7658

IN THIS ISSUE

MESSAGES TO FRIENDS

- 4 Letter from the Clerks: Cancellation of Yearly Meeting
- 5 Editorial *by Timothy Kitz, Ottawa Monthly Meeting*
Poem: Reckoning *by Rachel Yordy, Vancouver Monthly Meeting*
- 6 “I’m glad reconciliation is dead” *by Jesse Wente, Serpent River First Nation*
- 7 Letter from Continuing Meeting of Ministry & Counsel

AROUND THE FAMILY

- 8 Ottawa Monthly Meeting’s Retreat *by Carol Dixon, Ottawa Monthly Meeting*
- 9 Coldstream Monthly Meeting’s Young Friends Program *by Pat Moauro*
- 10 Young Friends’ Post-Boxing Day Gathering *by Steve Ginley, Peterborough Monthly Meeting*

QUAKER EDUCATION

- 12 Clerking a Quaker Meeting for Worship for Business *by Beverly Shepard, Clerk of CYM*
- 14 Tradition & Continuing Revelation, Part III: William Penn *by Maida Follini, Halifax Monthly Meeting*
- 119 What is Capitalism? *by Robert Kirchner, Edmonton Monthly Meeting*
- 25 Devastation as Faith *by John Samson Fellows, Winnipeg Monthly Meeting*
- 27 Friendly Fire Collective’s Dissolution Reflections
- 28 Walking the Wildlife Park *by Joy Belle Conrad-Rice, Kamloops Worship Group*

POETRY

- 29 Baby Calla Haikus *by Caroline Balderston Parry, Ottawa Monthly Meeting*
I Hope Greta Would Approve of Me Doing Nothing *by Roger Davies, Halifax Monthly Meeting*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 30 The Role of Contributions Committee *by Penni Burrell, Contributions Committee Clerk*
- 31 Rotary Peace Fellowships *by Svetlana S. MacDonald, Coldstream Monthly Meeting*
Camp NeeKauNis Needs Your Help!

Cover: Window for Rosedale United Church (Toronto, ON)

Artist: Sarah Hall

“For as the days of a tree,
so shall be the days of my people.”
Isaiah 65:22

The genesis of this beautiful cover came when Keith Maddock wrote to say “Sarah Hall, who joined Toronto Monthly Meeting with her husband Jeffrey Kraegel, was recently named to the Order of Canada for her contribution to Canadian art through her many spiritual and multi-faith stained glass window projects. They are now living in Prince Edward County.”

In her art and educational work, Sarah “seeks to bring people to a new understanding of stained glass that goes far beyond the sentimental Victorian designs traditionally associated with it,” according to the press release announcing her appointment.

The release also notes,

“Since 2000 Sarah has pioneered a revolutionary approach to architectural art glass in North America: integrating energy-generating photovoltaic cells directly into the artwork. More recently she has been working with researchers at the American Bird Conservancy to develop architectural art glass that will prevent bird collisions and at the same time collect energy from sunlight.”

Toronto Monthly Meeting has a display copy of the book *A Thousand Colours: Sarah Hall Glass* (2017), a 30-year retrospective of Sarah’s work. It includes a discussion of how her Quaker faith has influenced her art.

More info and many more images are available at www.sarahhallstudio.com.



Speak to your community; be part of the conversation among Canadian Friends. Please submit articles between 500-1200 words long. Submissions on any topic of potential interest to Canadian Friends are warmly welcomed, as are photos and art.

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

Dates for 2020		
Summer Issue	June 9 Aug 11	Submission Due Date ~Received in mail
Autumn Issue	Sept 22 Dec 7	Submission Due Date ~Received in mail

March 16, 2020

Dear Friends,

On Friday, March 13th, the Canadian Yearly Meeting Committee of Clerks met electronically, as we do monthly, and after much discussion and careful discernment, and with regret, decided to **cancel the sessions of CYM scheduled for this coming August.**

We are well-aware that this decision will be a great disappointment for many Friends who cherish our annual gathering, but we hope that it will also seem prudent and wise. Many of our members are in the higher-risk categories (over 60 and/or with underlying conditions such as hypertension), and many make their travel plans well in advance of the CYM dates. An early decision is desirable for these Friends.

To be clear, it is not simply a matter of the existing pandemic crisis of the Covid-19 virus, although that, of course, is the prime motivator here. Some Friends may be reacting to this news with a sense that the decision was made too early, but the fact is that our YM sessions require a great deal of preparatory work, much of which is done by volunteers. To ask this of our short-handed Program Committee and then to cancel after much work has been done seemed to us unfair. We believed it would be preferable to cancel the sessions now for the sake of the many people who work hard to make CYM the wonderful gathering that it is; then work can proceed toward a joyous gathering in 2021. As you probably know, there is already much discernment underway about changes to be made to CYM to ensure sustainability. This decision allows these discussions to be more relaxed and thorough before our next gathering.

This unexpected cancellation of sessions will necessitate some new plans: for instance, an earlier and/or extra Representative Meeting; consideration of the terms of committee members and other Friends serving YM; and designations of individuals or groups to carry forward the business of Yearly Meeting until next year. You can be sure that the Committee of Clerks will be working on these plans and will keep Friends in CYM informed as they develop.

In the Light,

Beverly Shepard Marilyn Manzer

Beverly Shepard and Marilyn Manzer, Clerks



As many Friends will already know, opportunities to meet online for worship now abound. Friends Meetings in [St. John's](#), [Ottawa](#), [Toronto](#), [Saskatchewan](#), [Edmonton](#), [Vancouver](#), and [Victoria](#), as well as from [Canadian Friends Service Committee](#), [Pendle Hill](#), [Woodbrooke](#), and many other Quaker Meetings and organizations are all hosting online Meetings for Worship.

Most of these organizations have details and links on their website frontpages, along with tips on using the technology. Woodbrooke College has been hosting online Meetings for Worship for years and has put together a thorough guide on hosting and joining them:

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/about/online-mfw/Online-worship-advice

If none of the above meets you where you are, find a forest, a tree, or a quiet indoor spot. We'll be with you in spirit.

Friends,

It's been strange putting this issue together as Canada shuts down. As an introvert who already works from home, I'm fortunate enough for my life to have been minimally disrupted, so far. But it's been a little surreal and sad to lay out articles reporting on Quaker gatherings and programs and plans for next steps as we slide into a worried state of suspended animation.

Who knows when we will see each other again? I have rejiggered the schedule for the next issue so that it should come out during the time Yearly Meeting normally happens. Even more than normal, I want to invite you to connect with each other through the pages of the *Canadian Friend*, to share reflections and stories across our isolation, to explain whatever concerns and comforts you. All the details on submitting are at the bottom of the Table Contents.

I think you will still find helpful seeds and new resonances in this issue, whatever context it finds you in. As I've proofread the issue, I've noted that "Change and transformation" was the theme of one of those Quaker gatherings (p. 8), for example. And I used to think Joy Belle Conrad-Rice's description of a walk through a wildlife park (p. 28) was about the coming of spring; now I think it's about being solitary yet connected.

While preparing the issue, I've also found that mundane interactions and questions like "how are you?" can get deep, fast. An email exchange to pass Canadian Friends Service Committee's ad for the issue led to Matt Legge writing, "I think this gives comfortable and complacent Canadians an opportunity to feel and understand how quickly so many aspects of our lifestyles that are taken for granted can be totally changed. Maybe we can use this to re-envision and push toward some of the deeper shifts we urgently need!"

Again, I would like to think you will find help in this issue sharpening your thinking and envisioning change. There are meaty articles that discuss alternatives to our current economics and government (p. 19), for example, and a report from the frontlines of one group trying to live out the spirit of radical liberation (p. 25).

Like Matt, my personal read is that 'normal' has been a fairly comfortable dead-end, politically and economically, at least for those of us with relative privilege. So hopefully

some openings will come out of this crisis, for this is a moment of both danger and opportunity.

There's the immediate danger to health and life, and then to the systems we rely on to meet our needs. There's the more abstract danger of governments claiming new powers, never to be relinquished, that will further the "inverted totalitarianism" of our "managed democracy," as Sheldon Wollin and Chris Hedges put it. There are all sorts of dead-end, ecocidal corporations ready to share their financial losses with all of us when they kept all the profits. Old ideological villains, like nationalism and xenophobia also stand ready for action.

Like George Fox, we have an opportunity to find light and love in an ocean of darkness and death. Pain and loss can help us see what matters, and crisis can create change.

"Only a crisis – actual or perceived produces real change," said economist Milton Friedman. (And he should know, as the apostle of privatization and deregulation, and the prophet of "disaster capitalism," as Naomi Klein put it.) Friedman added, "When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable."

Friends, we have kept some seeds of change alive and available that this world needs. We have shown a society can be organized without hierarchy, that it can survive and even flourish through a sometimes messy and frustrating process of collective discernment and decision-making.

As we see on pages 14-18, William Penn translated his Quaker faith into a 'holy experiment' (and a colonial one too, let's be honest) that put into practice once-radical and utopian ideas like religious freedom, a charters of rights, and a democratic assembly. What new, radical, holy experiments can we try now?

"Hope has two beautiful daughters," Augustine wrote, "Anger and Courage: Anger at the way things are, and the Courage to change them."

Friends, I hope this finds you doing well. Hopefully cooperating and supporting each other in very immediate ways here and now in dark times will be the beginning of something good. I wish you courage, wisdom, grace, and strength during these times.

Timothy Kitz (editor@quaker.ca)

Reckoning

by Rachel Yordy, Vancouver Monthly Meeting

maybe stars hold the origins of all poems
beyond the silence of snow,
the echoes of desert.
from their distant flames
we feel somehow less alone:
each light, a solar system;

each heartbeat, interwoven
in a swirl of galaxies;
each revolution,
an expression of love.
ashes to ashes, dust to dust,
and light to light.



“I’m glad reconciliation is dead – It was never really alive”

This is an excerpt from an interview with Jesse Wenté (who is Ojibwe, from Serpent River First Nation) on CBC’s Metro Morning from Feb 25 – a day after Tyendinaga land defenders were arrested for blocking railway tracks in solidarity with Wet’suwet’en arrestees.

Canada is a state built on the removal of Indigenous peoples to make way for resource extraction companies. That’s very literally the reason this country exists.

And it has exported this around the world, with Canadian resource extraction companies doing this globally – removing Indigenous people so they can access their land with little care for the environment or their sovereignty. ... That Canadians don’t realize this is due to years of false history-telling and mythmaking, the lies that a country tells itself so it’s not tied down by the guilt of its own actions. ...

Frankly, I’m glad reconciliation is dead – it was never really alive. It was a campaign slogan, a way to get elected, to appear progressive while advancing the same colonial agenda that has fuelled Canada since its inception. And its death should not be mourned. What it should do is free us to do the actual work. ...

Reconciliation deserved to die, as the truth remains too much for this country to bear. Now that we know reconciliation is dead, for all to see, we can stop pretending that this is a relationship to be saved. It is one to discard and start over. Save your reconciliation for someone you care about, give us back what was taken – all of it – and then we can discuss the nature of the relationship we should have. ...

Many Canadians seem to know that great change is required – and I ask them now to bring it about. You have the power to stop this, to redefine the country you call home. It’s up to you – not any politician or corporation. Show that your solidarity has teeth and a backbone. Canada’s ongoing survival is not written in stone; its right to exist is not immutable. We know that you are not leaving, nor have we ever asked you to. Our ancestors welcomed yours, even when that generosity has never been returned.

You should know by now that we aren’t leaving either. Despite all that has been done to us and continues to be done to us – and will be done to us today and tomorrow – we were here before Canada, and we will be here long after it as well. Show us the resolve of your solidarity, show us that the myth of Canada can be replaced by its truth. 🌊



Pandemics spread more than sickness. They can bring out the worst in us. **The Quaker voice is needed now more than ever to spread calm, to spread justice, to spread peace.**

Please donate today:
quakerservice.ca/spreadpeace



OVERCOMING DISTANCE ELECTRONICALLY

Dear Friends in Canada,

During this strange time of anxiety and isolation, we invite Friends to participate in a community-building exercise by sending to our [“Canadian Quakers” Facebook page](#) your personal experiences (pictures and/or short descriptions) of your worship activities during this time of disconnection.

- How are you coping with COVID-19 and the fallout from this interruption?
- How are you staying connected with Friends and with the Divine?
- What continues to give you strength and hope in the face of these challenges?

Please also feel free to share with each other the ways in which your local meetings are continuing to keep faith and community despite our “shared isolation.”

Your Friends on Continuing Meeting of Ministry & Counsel, Jeff Dudiak, Charles Brown, Maria Recchia and Erika Koenig-Sheridan

GLEANINGS & QUOTATIONS

“End the sickness of war and focus all the world’s resources on facing the endemic.”

— Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General

“I feel that the main job of musician in this world is to give people a feeling of ‘fight,’ ‘keep on going,’ ‘don’t give up, no matter what happens.’ In a way, you might say my slogan is ‘because I’m so pessimistic, I go around trying to cheer people up.’”

— Pete Seeger, Rainbow Quest episode (26 Feb 1966)

“My war survivor friend Hubert says, ‘When I accepted that everything is absurd, I felt much better.’ Permanently disillusioned, he is full of cheerful effort.”

— Trudy Myrrh Reagan

“Because no choice happens in a vacuum, it’s scientifically impossible to make no difference. We have to quit saying ‘Can one choice make a difference?’ and recognize that every single choice we make has an impact.”

— Julia Butterfly Hill

Ottawa Monthly Meeting's Retreat Change and Transformation by Carol Dixon, Ottawa Monthly Meeting



Decorating a wall of the Ottawa Meeting House during the retreat. This wall of free art was possible in advance of the extensive renovations of the OMM basement. (Photo: Carol Dixon)

Ottawa Monthly Meeting's annual retreat was held at the Meeting House on the weekend of January 31 to February 2.

The theme was Change and Transformation, facilitated by Margaret Slavin of Peterborough Monthly Meeting. Time was given over for each Friend to speak of change that s/he is experiencing or feeling anxious about.

We watched and were inspired by the video of George Monbiot's TED talk "[The new political story that could change everything](#)." The talk is about the need for a new narrative that will drive people's behaviour toward community and care for each other and the planet – and away

from the neoliberalism of recent decades that drives people to seek only self-interest and fosters a widening gulf between the rich and the poor, as well as the destruction of the planet.

This led to considerable discussion about climate change, care of the planet, shared experiences, and exploration of options for action. We rounded out the weekend trying to articulate what sustains us in hard times.

And there was singing and eating and a play reading from the Emma Field series of books by Carol Williams.¹ It was a full weekend of sharing and community building. 🌱

1. These books tell the story of girl growing up in a 19th-century Quaker community in Bloomfield, Ontario. See emmafieldnovels.com for more information.

Coldstream Monthly Meeting The Introduction of Our Young Friends Program by Pat Moauro, Coldstream Monthly Meeting

Coldstream Monthly Meeting is now providing an environment for children and young people in newly introduced Young Friends Programming. It has been organized primarily by Meeting member Pat Gere, a retired long-time Montessori teacher.

The room formerly designated as the large Sunday School room is now being used for Young Friends. The environment is designed to allow children to follow their natural inclinations and interests, gently guided by an adult volunteer, a Young Friends' Companion (YFC).

The room is set up with a number of individual activities set out on trays or in baskets on the shelves. Many of these activities will be familiar to children — drawing with felt markers, playing with cards, matching animals, a book corner, lego, making a straw necklace, etc.

The experience incorporates Quaker Testimonies, such as peace and simplicity. Still in development are activities specifically designed to help children explore aspects of Quakerism. Based on the [Faith & Play program](#) of Friends General Conference (FGC), some themes for these will include:

- Love's Way
- Friends Meeting for Worship
- Listening for God
- Images of God

Here are a few more details, to show how this program works.

Program Schedule

- Before 10:30 a.m. on First Day (Sunday): Parents with a new child arrive and the Young Friends' Companion (YFC) shows them the room and gives a brief explanation of the program.
- 10:30: Parents and children join the Meeting, sitting and listening in silence.
- 10:45: The YFC invites familiar children and any new child (and the parent if the child is hesitant) to follow them to the Young Friends' room. The YFC introduces the new child to the environment.



Pat Gere, a volunteer in the Coldstream Young Friends Program at Coldstream Meetinghouse, works with Anthony, age 4, on a Faith and Play activity board. (Photo: Pat Moauro)

- 11:40: YFC helps children tidy the room.

- 11:50: YFC returns children to the Meeting.

Room Guidelines

- This is a room for quiet activity.

- Children are allowed and encouraged to be as independent and responsible as possible.

- The YFC (the adult in the environment)

introduces any new activity in the room to a child individually, or to a small natural group of children, when they express an interest in it.

- Children are free to choose whichever activity they wish and continue it for as long as they wish.
- A child can ask a child who has an activity if they may join but the child who has taken the activity out has the right to politely decline.
- Children are encouraged and helped to return an activity to its place on the shelf before they begin a new activity, and to keep the environment tidy by tucking in their chairs and wiping up spills, etc.
- The YFC observes the children's interactions with the activities and with one another and provides gentle guidance, support, and conversation as needed. 🌱

The Post-Boxing Day Gathering of Canadian Young Friends Yearly Meeting (CYFYM)

by Steve Ginley, Peterborough Monthly Meeting, CYFYM Representative



Community Night featured both Ethiopian takeout and homemade bread!

Based on a report given to Peterborough Monthly Meeting.

Young Adult Friends (YAF, ages 18-35ish) gathered at Friends house in Toronto from December 27 to 29. The weekend consisted of:

- two sharing sessions, one around a reading of the article “A Gospel of Quaker Sexuality” by Kody Gabriel Hersh and the other around the ministry of Job Scott (#52 in the Blue Book¹);
- an urban hike or writing session;
- a community night;
- group singing late into the night; and

- strengthening connections among YAF from Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Kitchener and Area, Montreal, Peterborough, and Vancouver Monthly Meetings such that, if I may say so, Toronto Meeting for Worship on December 29 was moved with our love.

The discussion around Kody’s article was the first in what we hope to be a series where Young Friends share their experiences around not just the acceptance of queer Friends but also:

- complexities around romantic or sexual relationships among two or more people within a spiritual community;
- how communities respond (or not) if those relationships are toxic or abusive;
- the interplay between spirituality and body acceptance (of our own and our Friends’ bodies and boundaries); and
- the questions people face when family planning in a time of climate crisis.

I highly recommend Friends read or listen to Kody’s article.² While it may sound heavy, I believe that it is, in fact, Good News for Friends seeking physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual wholeness.

Our community also benefited from discussions of “What is or isn’t Divine?” that grew from the seed of Job Scott’s ministry – who dismissed the nostalgic idea in his own time that people “way back when” were somehow more spiritual or enlightened than the present generation. Canadian Young Friends look forward to sharing and exploring the struggles and joys in our faith journeys with each other for a long time to come. Community night was a blast, with visitors from throughout Toronto and even first-timers!

From the outset, the organizing committee of myself (Steve Ginley, Peterborough) Harmony Morris (Lethbridge) Caileigh Morrison (Winnipeg), and Clerk Evelyne Russell (Toronto) prioritized a relaxed gathering for ourselves and for Friends attending. Ordering in food from the variety of omnivore and vegan options in Toronto proved invaluable for this, and despite ordering delivery for over twenty Friends for one lunch and two dinners, we spent less than our proposed budget.

1. *Christian faith and practice in the experience of the Society of Friends* (London Yearly Meeting, 1960).

2. You can read the article or listen to Kody reading it at www.friendsjournal.org/quaker-sex-sexuality-jesus



Some of the Young Friends (and guests) from Ontario, Quebec, and Winnipeg gathered together at Friends House December 27-29.

The generosity of Toronto MM and the helpfulness of Friends House staff also were key to a low-stress gathering where we could focus on building community. Friends who attended the gathering made our job easy by taking on chores, contributing to the cooperative framing of our community standards, making clear boundaries and requests, and not getting on our case when things ran late.

And of course, the gathering would not have been possible without support from CYM staff who were available to help us, even given the inconvenient season to be working and how close it was to the end of our fiscal year.

Friends younger than eighteen were invited to come for the discussion, hike, and community night on December 28. To our joy, one teen was able to join us. Perhaps more would have joined, if not for the gathering occurring during the holiday break for students and for our request that minors be accompanied by a guardian.

Indeed, the challenge of incorporating teens was something the gathering made clear. Young Friends who legally are minors must be accompanied by at least two adults at all times for Friends’ safety and that of the Society. Canadian Youngs Friends Yearly Meeting (CYFYM) is mostly Young Adults at

the moment and values the participation of teens but also their safety – and it takes a lot of resources to ensure their safety under CYM’s Safe Nurture policy. We hope to discern as CYFYM how we can safely include teens more in our Meeting and welcome the help of teens and parents in our discernment. (See yf.quaker.ca/contact-us if you want to be in touch.)

For most of the Gathering Organizing Committee, it was the first gathering we had planned. But thanks to advice from elders of all ages, and a bright, active body of Young Friends that were eager to meet each other, it happened. And it will not be the last from this committee. Hope to see you at the next one! 🌈

GLEANINGS & QUOTATIONS

"I suggest a heart trained up in beauty and a mind attuned to beauty is like a survival kit for the soul. Am I putting too much weight on beauty to see us through the hard times likely to come? How else can we spiritually prepare ourselves to remain functional and not collapse into fatalism?"

— Keith Helmuth, "Beauty is the Earth's Bright Call" p.11 of *The Canadian Friend* 110.2, Summer 2014

Clerking a Quaker Meeting for Worship for Business

Ideas from a Clerking Workshop

by Beverly Shepard, Hamilton Monthly Meeting, Presiding Clerk of CYM

A while ago, around the time of Yearly Meeting sessions in 2019, I was asked to write an article on clerking a Quaker Meeting for Worship for Business. Not a bad idea, it seemed to me at the time, especially considering that Nominating Committee has been having difficulty finding names to propose as Clerk of Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM), and various committees have been having similar problems in naming their own clerks. A little published counsel on what clerking is all about might be an aid to finding clerks.

However, I had second thoughts once the Yearly Meeting sessions were over and the nitty-gritty work of clerking CYM got underway – telephone meetings or electronic conferences, responses to outside bodies, letters to be written to Canadian Friends and to others such as the government, and much more. I found that clerking was taking on new aspects because of the period of change and transition that CYM is now in. My thoughts about clerking were not only less clear than they had been, but they were changing weekly. I needed, if I were to write such an article, to step back to less tumultuous times and consider what clerking ought to be and, in my experience, usually has been.

Years ago, I was asked to give a workshop on clerking, to be held at Camp NeeKauNis. I agreed to do this if Dana Mullen would co-present it with me. She agreed – mainly, I think, because it gave her a reason to come to Camp for the first time, and with her expenses paid! So we worked on the preparation, the presentation, and the follow-up together.

Since that time, I have given the workshop without her, in both weekend and one-day formats. I've used the background material, the ideas we wished to emphasize, and the conclusions we drew from the process — all of which were already written down – to produce this article.

The Basics of Meeting for Worship for Business & Clerking

First of all, who gets to attend a Quaker meeting? Usually Monthly Meetings for Worship for Business are open to all who attend worship – it's often a good introduction to Quakerism for attenders. There are exceptions for when a few topics are considered, such as considering a name for membership.

That said, many committee meetings are more sensitive and don't welcome outsiders. Some, like Ministry and Counsel, are closed.

At Yearly Meeting, we expect that those attending business sessions are members of the Religious Society of Friends. If they are from a Yearly Meeting other than CYM, we generally expect an introductory letter or minute and offer 'freedom of the meeting' to the visiting Friend.

What do we mean by 'freedom of the meeting'? That the Friend who is offered it may participate in the proceedings of the meeting as though she or he were a member of the Meeting whose business session it is, contributing ministry about an issue. However, someone not a member of the Meeting would not be permitted to prevent unity.

Second, what are the desirable qualifications in someone selected as a clerk? Our CYM Organization and Procedure¹ says, in 2.14: "Clerks should be chosen with special reference to their sound judgement and gift of discernment and their ability to determine what is the sense of the Meeting." A certain amount of organizational skill and the willingness to give of your time to your Meeting are also important.

Are there different needs for clerking different sorts of groups, or is it the same job anywhere? The short answer is that there are different needs which require distinct approaches, but the job is at base the same job in any setting.

Tips on Clerking

Clerking is a balancing act. You need to balance being the 'servant of the Meeting' with being in charge. You can't be overbearing, yet you're responsible for keeping things moving forward and not letting anyone dominate. You need to balance questioning with affirming – asking how things stand when they seem still unclear but asserting that unity seems near when it does.

Here are the ideas that Friend Dana Mullen (my foremost role model for clerking a meeting) and I, after talking together and with others, judged to be particularly worthy of mention in the course of the workshop. They are expressed as advice to a person serving as presiding clerk.

- Call for silence anytime during a meeting when it seems useful, beneficial, or necessary – especially while a minute is being formulated. (The conservative practice of having the presiding and recording clerks be the same person ensures that discussion doesn't proceed while a minute is being composed! It actually works well.) Silence is our friend: it can calm down a controversial moment, re-centre Friends in worship, allow for prayerful writing of a minute, and foster other worthy objectives.
- Don't simply assume unity or approval. Be sure to ask, after a minute is read or a name submitted for a position, "Is this approved?" Be sure to test for unity before saying something like, "So we've decided that..." You have supposedly been chosen for your ability to "determine what is the sense of the meeting," not to assert your own preferences in an issue or rush to conclusions.
- The sometimes-recommended practice of testing a minute "early and often" is, in my mind, debatable. My preferred method is to hear what Friends have to say (preferably just once from each Friend who wishes to speak, but that is an ideal that is sometimes unattainable), suggest what the result is ("I believe we have unity to do such-and-such..." or "I don't feel that Friends are ready to move forward with..." or "It appears that this name is acceptable..." or the like), and if the suggestion is acceptable, call for silence as the recording clerk formulates a minute.
- If your suggestion turns out not to be correct, in the opinion of the Friends gathered, then you must either carry on with the discernment or carry over the item to another meeting.
- Both the recording clerk and the presiding clerk should read a minute and deem it ready, before reading it aloud to the meeting. Occasionally it is approved by Friends at this point; more often there is some twiddling and tweaking by Friends before it is ready.
- I strongly recommend that Quaker clerks use Quaker language – it's time-tested and serves us well. Also, it reminds people that the clerk is the clerk, not just someone chosen to keep things proceeding in any old informal way. Don't say "Are Friends good with this?" or "Are we easy with this?" Ask for "approval," test for "unity," etc.
- What does it mean to 'step away from the table'? When should you and when shouldn't you? For the most part, a clerk should be hearing all aspects of a matter under consideration in order to determine approval, or lack of it.

Your own opinion can, however, be expressed – if you truly believe it is important to do so and will aid in the process – if you stand and say, "Friends, I need to step away from the table for a moment." Then you literally step to one side. This means you are not the clerk when you express your opinion. When you sit back down and become the clerk again, you should consider what you have just said as a contribution like any of the others that have been made.

- You shouldn't step away from the table if what you have to say has already been said, or if it's more a comment than a helpful insight. For any clerk of any meeting, stepping away from the table should be a rare and deeply considered action.
- Be wary about body language (or non-verbal sounds, such as sighs and little "hmphs"). If something should not be stated directly – for instance, the thought that this speaker has an opinion way too often, or that you dislike the way a particular Friend expresses things — then it's probably not something that should be hinted at either.
- You get to call on people, and it doesn't have to be the first person who has a hand up. Chances are you know which Friend has an opinion way too often or tends to repeat what someone else has said or never quite gets the point the meeting is considering. You can wait to call on such a difficult Friend until others have had their say. In fact, it is actually your decision whether to call on a particular Friend at all. If someone wishes to speak more than once on a matter, you do not have to accede to this wish. Just be prepared to deal with the situation if someone you decide not to recognize goes ahead and speaks anyway or confronts you unhappily after the rise of the meeting.
- Sidebar conversations are not Quakerly, nor is back-and-forth discussion on the floor between two or three Friends, and they should be quenched. There may be a few necessary exceptions to this, especially in a very large meeting, but on the whole all contributions in a discernment process should be well-considered by the speaker, formally recognized by the clerk, and heard by all.

Remember that, no matter how often or how long you have been clerking, or how good you are at it, or how delighted Friends are that you accepted this service, you are still really just one of the Friends gathered to make decisions and conduct the business of the Meeting. Your part is a little different from everyone else's, but ultimately it is one bit of the amazing process that is a Quaker Meeting for Worship for Business.

¹ Available from quaker.ca/resources/organization-and-procedure.

Tradition and Continuing Revelation (Part III)

William Penn – A Quaker Mover and Shaker

by Maida Follini, Halifax Monthly Meeting

This is the third in a series of articles which will show how belief in continuing revelation allowed the faith of Quakers to progress, beyond the limitations of tradition. The first instalment examined George Fox and the birth of the Quaker movement, while the second turned to his contemporary Robert Barclay, the first great Quaker theologian.¹ In this article, we will look at the life and thought of William Penn.

William Penn (1644-1718) was a multi-faceted genius who confronted traditionalists, refused to bow to power, delighted in new ideas, and worked to create new societies. Converting to the Quaker faith at age 23, he found his new religion an ideal medium for carrying out revolutionary ideas – his own and those of his Quaker colleagues.

Penn's Background

Penn was descended from unremarkable yeomen in the county of Wiltshire, western England, where their family lands were at Penn's Lodge. His grandfather, Giles Penn, (1573-1656), seeking a more ambitious career, became a naval officer.² He distinguished himself as a captain in the English fleet, which in 1637 freed over 300 English captives from Moroccan pirates.³ Giles had taken his son, the future Admiral Sir William Penn (1621-1670), with him on his voyages and trained him in seamanship and navigation.

Like his father Giles, William Penn, Sr. was ambitious. Serving first with King Charles I's Navy, he continued under Cromwell's Commonwealth, and achieved the rank of Rear Admiral of England by age 31. He communicated secretly with the Royalist exiles in Holland, and following Oliver Cromwell's death, Admiral Penn was one of those sent to Amsterdam to bring Charles II home. Penn was knighted, made Commissioner of the Admiralty, and granted estates in Ireland.

Admiral Sir William Penn was close to King Charles II and the King's brother, James, Duke of York. William, Jr., our subject, served as his father's messenger to the royal brothers. This connection served William Jr. well in later years. The Admiral also provided his son with a good education to prepare him for

a career at court. William Jr. attended Chigwell School in Essex, and Christ Church, Oxford University.

The Admiral's plans were not always supported by William's behaviour, however. At Oxford, young Penn proved himself something of a rebel. William affronted the authorities by associating with an Anglican chaplain with liberal tendencies, and by failing to attend compulsory Anglican chapel services. As a consequence, he was expelled from Oxford. His parents then sent him to France, where he was enrolled in the Huguenot university at Saumur. There he studied with noted moderate theologian Moses Amyraut. After completing his course at Saumur, William Penn returned to England, where he studied law at Lincoln's Inn in London.

Sent by his father to manage the Penn estates in Ireland, William was impressed by the Quaker missionary Thomas Loe. Penn began attending Quaker Meetings and joined the Society of Friends in 1667. His disappointed and angry father, who had intended a career at court for his son, ordered young William out of the house and withheld his inheritance.

William, however, was a brash young man, confident in asserting himself and not inclined to accept limits, even those of his father. He refused to conform and began living with Quaker families. Fortunately, he and his father were later reconciled. But William, far from giving up his Quaker principles, proceeded to confront the authorities who wished to ban this new sect. He was arrested with other Quakers for attending Quaker Meetings.

While in prison, Penn began writing pamphlets in defence of the Quaker religion and freedom of conscience. He had been well-educated in both Anglican thought at Oxford and Protestant theology at Saumur. He was aware of church history and was better prepared than most to criticize the dogma of the Early Church Fathers.

More than that, he had an enquiring mind. Supported by the Quaker belief that "the kingdom of God is within," and that God has written the spiritual law in the hearts of men, he was

¹ These appeared, respectively, in *The Canadian Friend* of Spring 2019 (Issue 115.1, p. 7) and Summer 2019 (Issue 115.2, p. 9), which are available from quaker.ca/resources/the-canadian-friend.

² "Will of William Penn of Minety (c. 1520 - 1591)," dated 1 May 1590, from the National Archives at Kew, quoted in www.geni.com/people/William-Penn-Keeper-of-Penn-s-Lodge.

³ Albert D. Hart Jr., "Penn Family Genealogy," *Our Folk*, 20 September 2005, www.coltechpub.com/hartgen/htm/penn.htm.

open to the new revelations. Quakers interpreted Christianity in a new spirit, and Penn did not hesitate to challenge accepted traditions.

In his pamphlet *The Sandy Foundation Shaken* (1668), Penn questioned three traditional Christian concepts: the doctrine of the Trinity, the need for Jesus's sacrifice to atone for the sins of humankind, and the belief that sinners can receive "imputed righteousness" through Jesus's sacrifice on the cross. Penn's critique put church dogma to the test of scripture and reason.

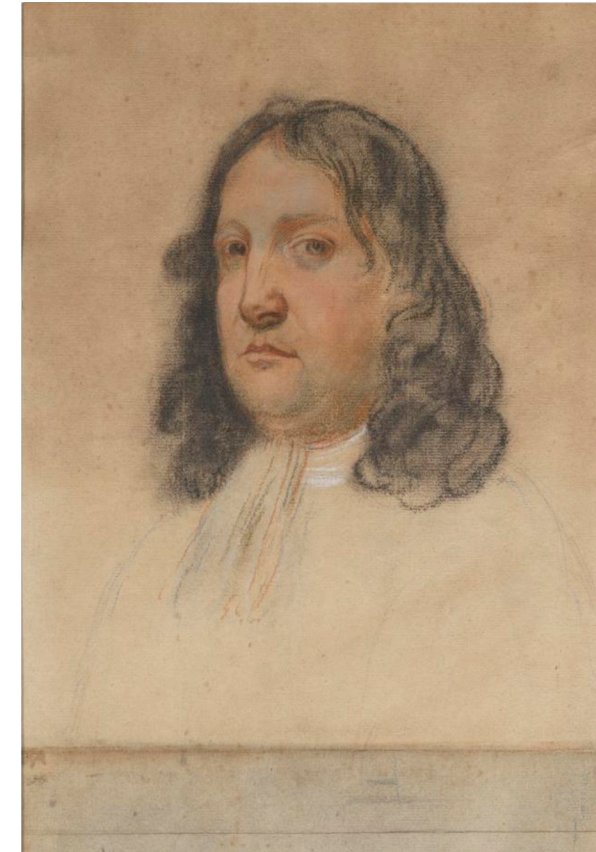
The Doctrine of the Trinity

Penn points out that the doctrine of the Trinity appears nowhere in the Bible, but was formulated by Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria in the fourth century, and enforced as a creed by persecution of those who opposed it. Penn attributed this doctrine to the Bishop's imagination and ignorance. He refutes it through scripture, quoting extensively from biblical statements about the one God.

For example, Ephesians 4:6 says there is "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Penn writes: "If, as the scriptures unanimously declare, God is the Holy ONE, then God is not a Holy Three nor does God exist as three separate and distinct Holy ONES."⁴

He then goes on to apply reason: "If the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God, then either they are three distinct nothings, or they must be three distinct somethings, that is, three distinct Gods."⁵

Similarly, theologians have raised questions about the nature of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit from early Christian times.



1677 pastel portrait of William Penn by Francis Place, believed to be the only surviving portrait of Penn drawn from life.

Was Jesus of the same substance as Almighty God, or of a different substance? Did Jesus exist as an eternal being from the beginning of time, or did his existence start with his birth? Some of the ancient church fathers wished to ensure that Jesus was conceived as completely divine, just as was Almighty God, but at the same time wished to see Jesus as a separate being, distinct from God the Father.

The various theories about 'substance,' 'essence' and 'consubstantiality' show how the church fathers' thought was challenged and made to twist and turn, trying to accommodate the two opposing concepts of 'separate' and 'unitary.' In Penn's essay, he comes down on the side of a unitary God, encompassing Jesus and the Holy Spirit, who are not seen as separate beings.

Forgiveness for Sins

From antiquity, human beings have tried to propitiate their gods with sacrifices. Fruits, animals, and even human beings have been sacrificed on altars in attempts to gain the favour of an angry god. When Abraham took his beloved son Isaac to sacrifice him on the fire, the scriptures tell us of how he found a ram in the bushes to sacrifice, instead – turning from human to animal sacrifice. Christians in their early days were still filled with the beliefs of earlier faiths that sacrifice would propitiate God.

The early church fathers interpreted the crucifixion of Jesus as a necessary sacrifice in order to appease God for humanity's sins and gain his forgiveness. Penn challenged the need for such a sacrifice by quoting numerous scriptural passages in which God is merciful and forgiving to sinners. ➡➡➡

⁴ Penn's *The Sandy Foundation Shaken*, on p. 12 of Paul Buckley's *Twenty-First Century Penn, Translated into Modern English* (Earlham School of Religion, 2003).

⁵ p. 13 of Buckley's *Twenty-First Century Penn*.

For example, Micah 7:18 says, “Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.” Penn explains that God forgives humankind through his mercy and grace, not through Jesus’ death on the cross.

In using the test of reason, Penn questions that God needed to demand Jesus’ sacrifice to ‘pay’ for human sins, when God already has the power and mercy to forgive those sins, by grace alone. It is not the crucifixion and suffering of Jesus’ death that saves humankind, Penn said, it is the example of Jesus and his guiding us, as a preacher and teacher, to lead new lives as reformed souls.

The Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness

This doctrine indicates that sinners can be saved (given immortal life in heaven) by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, because Jesus’s righteousness is ‘imputed’ to the sinners. In this context, impute means “to ascribe good or evil to a person as coming from another.”⁶

Penn quotes scripture to refute this. For example: “The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” (Ezekiel 18:20)

Using reason, Penn also criticizes the doctrine: The doctrine says “that one can be actually sinful and yet, by imputation, righteous... we will in reality be judged and condemned, but, by imputation, justified and glorified: we will be damned, yet saved by imputation.” He goes on, “This is truly a gross absurdity! Doesn’t it make more sense that the obedience required for our justification be as real and complete as was our disobedience in earning condemnation?”⁷ Penn insists to truly atone, we must reform our behaviour, and not continue our sinful ways.

Imprisoned in the Tower

After the publication of *The Sandy Foundation Shaken*, William Penn’s refutation of the Trinity was interpreted by the Church authorities as denying the divinity of Christ,

which was blasphemy to the Anglicans. In 1668, he was imprisoned in the Tower of London, to stay confined until he recanted his ‘heretical’ statements. Penn’s response was “My prison shall be my grave before I will budge a jot: for I owe my conscience to no mortal man.”⁸

In prison, he wrote, to defend himself, *Innocency with Her Open Face*, published in 1669. In this tract, he quotes 1 Corinthians 1:23-24, “To those who are called (we preach) Christ the power of God and the Wisdom of God,” and goes on to say, “From this, I conclude Christ the Saviour to be God.”⁹

Penn goes on to quote scripture in which the term light is used equivalent to God: “God is light and in God there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). He writes, “I affirm the unity of God and Christ. Though they are nominally distinguished, both are essentially the same Divine Light. If Christ is that Light and that Light is God, then Christ is God.”¹⁰

This second tract, plus Admiral Penn’s friendship with royalty, must have been in his son’s favour, as William was freed from the Tower of London after eight months, when one of the royal chaplains interceded for him.

The Penn-Mead Trial

Penn soon called attention to himself again, when he opposed the Conventicle Act which forbade meetings of more than five persons for a religious purpose of anyone other than Anglicans. With the Friends Gracechurch Meeting House closed by the authorities, Penn met with William Mead and other Quakers in Gracechurch Street. Penn deliberately wanted to test the law by breaking it, in a kind of 17th century civil disobedience. He and William Mead were arrested as leaders of the group.

In the ensuing trial in 1670, the jury brought in a verdict of “guilty of speaking in Gracechurch Street,” which was not a crime. The judge commanded them to bring back a guilty verdict for breaking the Conventicle Act and locked the jury up without food or water until they did. Nevertheless, the jury held out and refused to find the two Quakers guilty of breaking the Conventicle Act. Finally, the judge fined Penn for failure to remove his hat!

6 Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language, College Edition (World Publishing, 1960).

7 Penn’s *Sandy Foundation Shaken*, again in Paul Buckley’s *21st Century Penn*, p. 33.

8 p. 101 of Hans Fantel’s *William Penn: Apostle of Dissent* (William Morris, 1974).

9 Penn’s *Innocency with her Open Face* (1669), again in Buckley’s *Twenty-First Century Penn*, p. 47.

10 Same work and page.

Penn refused to pay the fine and was jailed. However, Admiral Penn, who was mortally ill, wanted to see his son for one last time and paid the fine, releasing Penn. The Admiral died September 16, 1670, about ten days later.

The jury, meanwhile, had been fined a year’s wages for contempt of court and also jailed until they paid. One member, Edward Bushell, refused to pay, heeding Penn’s advice as the court adjourned that “you are Englishmen, mind your privilege, give not away your right!”¹¹ Bushell was able to use a writ of *habeas corpus* to challenge his imprisonment, extending this legal recourse against arbitrary imprisonment. He then successfully argued that juries could not be punished for their verdicts. This established an important precedent supporting the independence of juries and jury nullification.

A Retreat for Oppressed Religions in the New World

Before passing away, Admiral Penn wrote to his friend, the Duke of York, requesting protection for his son. This led to King Charles II granting William land in what is now



The Pennsylvania Assembly ordered the Liberty Bell in 1751 to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of William Penn’s Charter of Privileges, which was written in 1701 as Pennsylvania’s first Constitution. On the bell are the words: “Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all inhabitants thereof,” from Leviticus 25:10.

religious freedom.

Travelling to Pennsylvania in 1682, Penn met with the leaders of the indigenous Lenape nation and arranged to purchase from them the land where he planned to build the city of Philadelphia.

Editor’s Note: Jury nullification is when a jury refuses to convict someone because they consider the law unjust or misapplied in the defendant’s case. Penn’s acquittal and Bushell’s case are generally seen as a significant precedent in any country whose justice system is derived from British common law, including Canada and the U.S – and jury nullification and *habeas corpus* are still important legal principles to this day.

Jury nullification started Canada on the path to legalizing abortion and medical marijuana, for example. Meanwhile, circumventing *habeas corpus* was the rationale behind using Guantanamo Bay as a prison, and the suspension of *habeas corpus* under the War Measures Act is what allowed internment of thousands of Canadians of Japanese, Ukrainian, German, Italian, Austrian, Turkish, and other backgrounds during WWI and WWII. (Over 2,000 Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis were also **interned as prisoners of war**, often alongside captured Nazis).

The 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom specifically grants “everyone” the right to habeas corpus; in May 2019, the Supreme Court ruled that this applies to immigrant detainees. One crucial difference between the 1988 Emergencies Act and the War Measures Act that it replaced is that it maintains Charter protections.

11 “The Trial of William Penn & William Mead” from *Howell’s State Trials*, v. 6, page 951. This transcript of the trial is available from constitution.org and was originally published by Penn and Mead under the title of “The People’s Ancient and Just Liberties, asserted, in the Trial of William Penn and William Mead, at the Sessions held at the Old-Bailey, in London, the 1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th of Sep. 1670, against the most arbitrary procedure of that Court.”

Penn stayed in Pennsylvania for two years, starting the building of the new city, having land surveys made, and establishing a “Frame of Government” which allowed for citizen participation, foreshadowing the democracy that was developed in the United States.

In August 1684, Penn set sail for England, arriving in October to settle a boundary dispute between himself and Lord Baltimore, a legal problem which continued to fester for many years. But in England he found the government attitude towards Quakers had hardened, and large numbers of Quakers had been imprisoned. King Charles II died in February, 1685, and his Catholic brother James became King James II. For three years, Penn’s patron James was on the throne, and Penn’s influence was helpful in releasing over 1000 Quakers from prison.

Penn also influenced James’ 1687 Declaration of Indulgence, which granted freedom of religion and ended the requirement that government office holders swear an oath. This freedom was shortlived, however. In 1688 the ‘Glorious Revolution’ occurred, in which James II was exiled, and his Anglican daughter Mary with her husband William of Orange were crowned King and Queen. Penn was under suspicion as a friend of the deposed king. He was a fugitive in England for several years, but was eventually exonerated.

Penn took up his writing again in 1693. Concerned about the frequency of wars between European nations, he wrote “An Essay towards the Present and Future Peace of Europe by the Establishment of a European Parliament.” It took more than 250 years before a European Parliament formed in 1952.

In 1699, Penn returned to Pennsylvania, this time intending to stay. He resided at Pennsbury Manor with family members and worked with the Pennsylvania Assembly on improvements to the colony’s laws. In 1701, Penn proclaimed the Charter of Liberties, which became the constitution of the colony. The charter secured for the citizens freedom of religion, separation of church and state, trial by jury, and the right of male citizens to elect the members of the Assembly.

However, back in England, factions in the government were planning to take away the proprietary power of Penn and turn

Pennsylvania into a Crown Colony under the ruler. Penn sailed back to England in 1701 to defend his proprietorship.

Penn had spent much of his fortune establishing Pennsylvania, but had received little income from his extensive lands. He had had constant trouble from agents who had violated his trust, embezzled large amounts of money from him, and even tried to gain possession of his lands. With debts, lawsuits and uncertainty regarding his proprietorship, Penn decided to sell Pennsylvania back to the Crown. But in 1712, while he was trying to negotiate this, he suffered two strokes and was no longer able to speak or care for himself. He died six years later, at age 73.¹²

Penn in Perspective

William Penn as a mover and shaker, affected his times as few individuals have. He supported the Quaker religion, both through practical deeds and extensive writings, bringing respect to this new and progressive faith. His “Holy Experiment” in Pennsylvania provided an example of a jurisdiction where democracy and religious freedom thrived and different nationalities lived together in peace.

Meanwhile, his theological writings contrasted with many traditions within Christianity which had persisted from the earliest times. Rather than focusing on such concepts as original sin and the depravity of humankind, Penn stressed an optimistic and more rational view of humanity and religion, believing that each person had “a Holy Principle within themselves” which could lead them to righteousness.¹³

Similarly, he saw the divine, not as an angry and vengeful God, but as loving and kind. He wrote: “We should allow more Love in Religion than we do; since Religion itself is nothing else but Love to God and Man. He that lives in Love lives in God.”¹⁴

In future articles in this series, we will see how Fox, Barclay, and Penn – religious revolutionaries in their day – were followed by Elias Hicks, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Rufus Jones, who testified to new insights into humankind’s spiritual responsibilities. 🐾

¹² The proprietorship of Pennsylvania fell to the Penn family, including Penn’s surviving widow, Hannah, and William and Hannah’s sons and grandsons. Penn’s sons famously pushed the Lenape out of Pennsylvania with the fraudulent “Walking Purchase” of 1737. The last Penn family proprietor, William’s grandson John Penn of Stoke, returned to England after the American Revolution ended the proprietorship in 1789. John became a Member of Parliament in England. The Penn family was partially reimbursed for the Pennsylvania property by the State of Pennsylvania and also by the British government.

¹³ Penn’s *The Christian Quaker*, again in Buckley’s *Twenty-First Century Penn*, p. 76.

¹⁴ William Penn, *Reflections and Maxims*, Part I, #551-552, in *Fruits of Solitude in Reflections & Maxims Relating to the Human Life* (Philadelphia, John Harrison, 1839, available on [google books](#)).

What is Capitalism? A Response to John Samson Fellows by Robert Kirchner, Edmonton Monthly Meeting

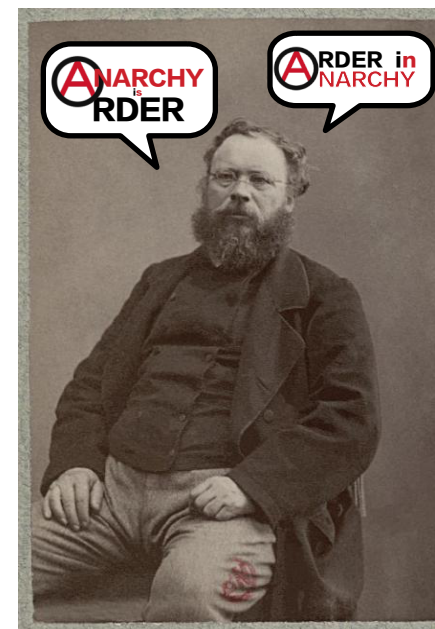
John Samson Fellows’ thought-provoking series ‘Look Upon Our Treasures’¹ traces the history of Quaker involvement in, and opposition to, capitalism, with a view towards imagining and beginning to build a post-capitalist society. While I am in complete unity with the spirit and goal of John’s endeavour, I believe it suffers from a failure to accurately identify the beast that it’s trying to track. (Indeed, my disagreement is less with John’s article than with the work on which he relies, Steven Davison’s online manuscript *Quakers and Capitalism*.²)

What exactly do we mean by capitalism? And what do we envision as its alternative?

I will argue here against the conventional wisdom that equates capitalism with a free market economy. Rather, capitalism established itself and sustains itself with violent expropriations of wealth, typically through state action, for the benefit of the ruling class. This is not Adam Smith’s ‘invisible hand’ of the market,³ but the iron fist of the state.

Unlike John, then, I see Quakers as largely (though not entirely) innocent of the charge of instigating and spreading capitalism. More importantly, there is no contradiction whatsoever between abolishing the horror show of capitalism and retaining – even strengthening – free markets, and liberty generally.

Since I’m challenging conventional understandings, perhaps I should begin by explaining where I’m coming from. My perspective herein is that of free-market anarchism, also known as mutualism or left-libertarianism, a strain of political-economic thought associated with Pierre-Joseph Proudhon,



Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865), the first person to declare himself an anarchist.

Voltairine de Cleyre, and Benjamin Tucker – among others in the 19th century – and more recently with Kevin Carson and other writers at [C4SS.org](#) (Center for a Stateless Society).⁴

By *anarchism*, I mean opposition to the institution of the state (anarchists are *not* against social order, though police and politicians like to portray us that way).⁵

For me, anarchism follows directly from the Quaker peace testimony, for states are inherently violent, coercive institutions. Recourse to organized violence, whether directed externally (war) or internally (police power), is precisely what distinguishes a state from other institutions of civil society. How can I reject the moral legitimacy of violence without concomitantly rejecting the moral legitimacy of the state?

Understanding the essence of capitalism

The word *capitalism* entered the English language in the 19th century to name the emerging political-economic order of, by, and for *capitalists*.⁶ *Capitalist*, in turn, denotes an owner of industrial *capital* (i.e. the means of production: machines, factories, inputs, and the money to buy them, later understood to include land as well).

Originally, therefore, *capitalism* described a society in which a relatively small group of people, the capitalist class, own most of the means of production, while the rest of the population mostly live by selling their labour to the capitalists as employees. ➡➡➡

¹ See the last two issues of *The Canadian Friend* (2019, issues 2 and 3; available at [quaker.ca/resources/the-canadian-friend](#)).

² See [throughtheflamingsword.wordpress.com/quakers-capitalism—the-book](#).

³ Smith, the author of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), is generally regarded as the founder of the field of economics.

⁴ This is also not to be confused with ‘anarcho-capitalism,’ an extreme form of right-wing libertarianism that enthusiastically defends existing capitalism, including all of its savage inequality, often turning a blind eye to the state power that supports it.

⁵ Indeed, the popular anarchist symbol (an A inscribed in O) derives from Proudhon’s slogan ‘Order in Anarchy.’ *Editor’s note:* Or perhaps it’s from Proudhon’s slogan “Anarchy is Order.” In true anarchist fashion, there seems to be no singular agreement. Proudhon both wrote “As man seeks justice in equality, so society seeks order in anarchy” (in 1840’s *What is Property?* or, *An Inquiry into the Principle of Right and of Government*) and “anarchy is order without power” (in 1849’s *The Confessions of a Revolutionary*). And in between the two statements, in 1848, Anselme Bellegarrigue wrote “Anarchy is order, government is civil war.”

⁶ E.P. Thompson (1963) *The Making of the English Working Class*. Since we’re considering Quaker and Canadian history in particular, this historical review will be admittedly Anglo-centric. But the pattern of development of capitalism elsewhere in Europe was, so far as I am aware, not significantly different, though it began somewhat later.

Capitalists later found it useful to dress themselves up in free-market ideology, but this has always been a case of the wolf in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15).⁷ It is therefore both more intellectually honest and politically useful to insist on using *capitalism* in the original sense of the word.

Capitalism, in a nutshell, rewards people for already being wealthy: because of their ownership of the capital, capitalists get to keep the profits from their workers' labour, extracting a sort of unearned rent on the production process. A threshold question is how this vastly unequal distribution of wealth arose in the first place – what Marx called 'primitive accumulation.'

Adam Smith, a radical thinker in some ways, unfortunately did not give an honest answer to this question. Instead he concocted a legitimizing myth: some workers, being more industrious and thrifty than their peers, were able to accumulate some savings and to invest these savings in capital, which further enhanced their productivity, enabling them to hire more and more workers. And so the capitalist class rose to their current position of economic power purely through consensual market transactions. But this 'just-so story' bears no more relation to economic history than 'How the Leopard Got His Spots' bears to evolutionary biology.

Of course the capitalist era did not begin with anything like a level playing field. It emerged in Western Europe out of late feudalism, a vastly unequal system of land ownership which in turn arose out of the violent conquests, slaughters, and subjugations of the mediaeval era. But under feudalism, even peasants had certain property rights, such as pasturage and other uses of common lands.⁸

Beginning in the 16th century, and accelerating over the next two centuries, English feudal lords seized even more wealth for themselves by enclosing common lands bit by bit, using acts of Parliament to transform themselves into absolute landowners, free of feudal encumbrances and obligations. Around the same time, they established plantations in Ireland, killing or driving many Catholics off their ancestral lands. A similar dispossession was perpetrated in the Scottish highlands a century later.

This violent colonial land theft project was then extended to the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Australia. Further violent seizure of wealth came in the form of the expropriated labour of abducted West Africans and generations of their descendants. In sum, as Marx observed, the story of capitalist primitive accumulation was "written in letters of blood and fire."⁹

7 This ideological move is like a poker game in which one of the players declares, "We'll play strictly according to the rules, starting now," just after seizing 90% of the chips at gunpoint.

8 In an agrarian society, land is the primary means of production. So this traditional arrangement provided a degree of communal ownership of the means of production.

9 *Capital*, volume 1.

10 See the BBC's "Britain's Forgotten Slave Owners" at www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b063db18/clips.

11 For examples, see Dom Phillips' "Amazon gold miners invade indigenous village in Brazil after its leader is killed" (*The Guardian*, 28 July 2019), Jackie McVicar's "Canadian Mining Continues to Trample on Human Rights in Latin America Under Trudeau" (*Upside Down World*, 20 October 2017), and Yves Engler's "Canada and Bolsonaro" (*CounterPunch*, 28 August 2019).

When slavery was legally abolished in the British empire in 1833, there was a taxpayer-funded payout of reparations – the biggest in British history – not to the former slaves, but to their masters for the loss of their 'property.' As recently documented by a team of historians from University College London,¹⁰ this sudden infusion of liquidity stimulated massive investment in railways and other steam-powered technologies, transforming Georgian slaveholders (mostly absentee owners of Caribbean sugar plantations) into Victorian industrial capitalists.

This state-subsidized (but privately enclosed) investment gave Britain a significant leg-up in the industrial revolution vis-à-vis other nations. In North America, a similar stimulus was provided a few decades later by large-scale government subsidies and land grants to railroad companies.

Significant changes have happened to the details of capitalist organization and operation since the industrial revolution. But the basic capitalist *modus operandi* has always been to use state power to externalize the costs of doing business as much as possible – making *other* people provide inputs and absorb the environmental damage – while privatizing the revenues. Defenders of capitalism regularly wax eloquent about the sacredness of property rights and individual liberty, but capitalism depends on the wealthy and powerful trampling on the property and liberty of others, violently if necessary.

This pattern of violent expropriation is not confined to the distant past. To take a salient modern example, mining interests are right now invading the lands of Indigenous peoples of the Amazon basin and murdering those who resist them. This is all with the active support of the Brazilian government – and the quieter support of the Canadian government, since many Canadian mining companies are complicit in this ugly business.¹¹

A more run-of-the-mill example is the US Bureau of Land Management's subsidization of large-scale cattle ranchers, by turning over to them much of the publicly-owned land in the western US for nominal grazing fees. Or here in Alberta: the mineral wealth ostensibly belongs to all the province's citizens, but the provincial government permits fossil fuel companies to extract tar sands in return for token royalty payments. Meanwhile the federal government has assumed the cost and risk of pipeline construction.

These later examples may seem less violent than the earlier ones, but anyone engaging in direct action to interfere with these giveaways to Big Business swiftly encounters the iron fist

of the state. Just look at the police response to the water protectors at Standing Rock in 2016, Burnaby in 2018, or Wet'suwet'en territory in 2019 and 2020.

Nor are these exercises of state power exceptional or peripheral to modern-day capitalism. First, let us consider the legal monopoly accorded to the banking industry, which could be likened to the circulatory system of capitalism. Under the fractional-reserve system, chartered banks (and nobody else) are permitted by the state to create money out of thin air,¹² money which will have to be repaid by the debtor with interest. From this state-granted power comes a stream of unearned revenue for the bank's shareholders.¹³ Kevin Carson observes,

"In a genuinely free banking market, any voluntary grouping of individuals could form a cooperative bank and issue mutual bank notes against any form of collateral they chose, with acceptance of these notes as tender being a condition of membership¹⁴ ... Were the property owned by the working class freed up for mobilization as capital by such means, and the producers allowed to organize their own credit without hindrance, the resources at their disposal would be enormous... Abundant cheap credit would drastically alter the balance of power between capital and labor, and returns on labor would replace returns on capital as the dominant form of economic activity. Given the worker's improved bargaining position, capitalists' ability to extract surplus value from the labor of employees would be eliminated or at least greatly reduced."¹⁵

12 This is an oversimplification of how fractional-reserve banking works, but only a slight one. For a fuller picture, see wikipedia.org/wiki/Fractional-reserve_banking.

13 It's true that the bank theoretically runs the risk of the debtor defaulting, if the loan is secured with inadequate collateral. But in 2008, US and UK governments stepped in and rescued the big banks from their own bad credit decisions, shifting the multi-trillion dollar burden instead onto the shoulders of taxpayers – and that was hardly the first time such an intervention has occurred: indeed, it happens so often that the phenomenon has acquired a name: 'Too Big to Fail.'

14 That is, the notes would circulate as a form of money among the cooperative's members.

15 *Studies in Mutualist Political Economy* (2007) pp. 220-222.

16 Credit unions and other alternative credit organizations do exist in Canada. In most cases these are legacies of past cooperative movements, which struggled heroically against the power of established banks and merchants (see for e.g. www.theworkingcentre.org/influential-thinkers/2494-moses-coady-and-antigonish-movement). If you have the option of switching from a corporate bank to a credit union, by all means do so! But in the absence of a reenergized cooperative movement to change the legal framework under which they operate, credit unions are not going to be able to expand their economic power nor to move closer to the free voluntary credit cooperatives that Carson describes.



Riot cops in front of the capitol building of St. Paul, Minnesota, during the Republican National Convention in 2008 (Photo: Nigel Parry, Creative Commons, flickr)

But under the current legal regime, the members of such a credit cooperative could be prosecuted for operating a bank without a charter; the cooperative would be forcibly shut down.¹⁶ But you can't obtain a banking charter without an already-accumulated hoard of liquid assets (i.e. you have to be a member of the capitalist class); and you must further obtain the agreement of the banking establishment that your proposed bank will fill a needed niche in the market (i.e. the old-boy network has to welcome you in). Catch-22.

Next, let's consider state-subsidized transportation

infrastructure – railways, highways, airports, etc., plus the oil industry subsidies that keep fuel costs artificially low. Apologists for the current system often speak of 'economies of scale,' as though businesses with national or international market reach will inevitably out-compete smaller-scale local and regional businesses – as though bigger is inherently more efficient.

Yet efficiency must be calculated in relation to cost. The public subsidies that keep transportation costs low distort markets in favour of large-scale industries and against local operations. Add to this the ecocidal environmental consequences of all this long-distance transportation, which mean that polluters are allowed to shift the costs of this damage onto the rest of us. Again, it is state power, not market forces, that props up Big Business, at everyone else's expense.

Finally, consider intellectual property law. Despite their stranglehold on the economy, large corporations nowadays produce very little themselves: their manufacturing is mostly contracted out to relatively small workshops in low-wage countries. ➡➡➡

What precludes these workshops from cutting out the big corporations – selling directly to consumers (at a fraction of the cost) – is the corporations’ legal control of the associated intellectual property: patents, trademarks, or copyrights, enforced by the state.

As I wrote in a previous article for *The Canadian Friend*,¹⁷

“The most valuable part of a product is typically the information embedded in it. The cost of the plastic and metal materials in, say, a vacuum cleaner [or the labour cost of assembling them] is just a tiny fraction of the product’s retail price; the consumer is primarily paying for the information that shapes this plastic and metal into a useful appliance. But the information itself is not subject to any natural scarcity. With modern computer technology, information can be copied an unlimited number of times and instantly disseminated around the world, at near-zero marginal cost. [And with 3-D printers and CNC machine tools, electronic information can be automatically turned into tangible products.] ... This explains Big Business’ push for international trade agreements imposing draconian intellectual property regimes, precisely to maintain artificial scarcity.”

The foregoing examinations of banking, transportation and intellectual property systems are merely illustrative of my broader point. Start looking for state protection of capitalist interests and you will begin to see it as a pervasive feature of the political-economic regime we live under.

To summarize: it is no exaggeration to say that capitalism came into being through massive state-sponsored armed robbery. And in hundreds of ways large and small, the iron fist of the state continues to intervene in the political economies of modern societies, through subsidies and legal protections, backed with violence when necessary, in order to maintain the capitalist class in its position of power.

Quakers and capitalism

Now we turn to the question of Quaker responsibility as the originators and propagators of capitalism, which is the principal focus of John Samson Fellows’ articles. I emphatically agree with John that we Friends need to be honest with ourselves about our history: sanitizing mythology is never helpful. Our self-congratulation around Quaker racial equality, for example, was justly demolished in McDaniel and Juley’s (2009) *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice*. But in the case of capitalism, we must ask whether this claim of responsibility is supported by the historical record.

Steven Davison cites early Friends’ adoption of a strong ‘Protestant work-ethic,’ entry into the wool trade, establishment of fixed-price merchandising, and improvements to metallurgy in support of his thesis that Quakers are heavily implicated in the origin of capitalism. But I have argued above that these sorts of activities are not the essence of capitalism. Rather, capitalism is about leveraging state power (or private violence) in order to externalize one’s costs of doing business.

The clearest example of Quaker participation in this leveraging of state power is slave ownership, which Quakers engaged in up to the mid-18th century. But they got out of this abominable practice before the emergence of cotton as a cash crop made the use of slave labour even more profitable, as well as more appallingly brutal. It must further be acknowledged that some Quaker families rose into the capitalist class, owning factories and banking houses and the like. But so far as I am aware,

- Quaker factory owners did not hire armed thugs as strikebreakers,
- Quaker shipowners and captains did not engage in the trans-Atlantic slave trade,
- Quaker farmers did not press governments to exterminate or expel Indigenous populations in order to get at their land,
- Quaker manufacturers did not become war profiteers and the like.

To the contrary, Quakers frequently spoke out against such unjust and oppressive capitalist practices, and took action to mitigate their harm, as John’s article notes. Friends were, at most, bit players in the game of capitalism, not the inventors of this deadly game, nor heavyweight players within it.

This is not to absolve us of complicity. Capitalism, racism, colonialism – together they form an intertwined net, harming and corrupting everything caught in its mesh, destroying the natural biodiversity on which our very lives depend. It is impossible to exist in a capitalist-racist-colonialist society without being to some extent complicit in its evils.¹⁸ 19th-century North American Quakers may have opposed the expulsion of Indigenous peoples, but they settled on some of the land that this expulsion made available. Today, Quakers may oppose environmental degradation, but we are economically dependant on the perpetrator corporations for our livelihoods, for the products we consume, and so on.

All of us, to a greater or lesser extent, benefit from this system. By the same token we also, to a greater or lesser extent, are victims of it. Those of us who are white and middle-class have benefited more and been victimized less than others (the super-

rich 1% much more so). But the point is not to calculate one’s precise beneficiary/victim ratio – any victimization of anybody is too much. The point is to labour as the Spirit leads us to overcome the injustice and destructiveness of this system, whether our personal victimization has been great or little.

To do this effectively, though, we must understand what’s wrong with the system. And we must have some vision of the alternative society we want to move towards. To such an alternative vision we now turn.

Towards a free(d)-market, post-capitalist society

To extend the Matthew 7:15 metaphor above, many have been taken in by the capitalist wolf-in-sheep’s-clothing, understanding the problem to be the inherent predatory nature of sheep. This analysis assumes that post-capitalism requires state ownership of property and a command economy, the abolition of all market transactions, of the profit incentive, or of money itself.¹⁹ If any of this seems impracticable or undesirable, the conclusion is that, like it or not, we’re stuck with capitalism – “There is no alternative,” as Margaret Thatcher loved to assert.

Similarly, some conflate the specific historical development of capitalism with the general human propensity for competition, or the general human failings of greed and selfishness. Under this analysis, capitalism can’t be overcome until humans achieve perfect altruism.

Certainly, capitalism has had a corrupting effect on society, encouraging selfishness and suppressing empathy and mutual aid. But I believe this moralistic diagnosis confuses the symptom with the disease. I contend that the most attractive alternative to capitalism is a genuine free market.

Kevin Carson defines the term *free market* as “the sum total of all consensual transactions within a society.” The term suggests cash transactions, such as when one buys vegetables at a farmers’ market. But Carson’s definition is broader than this: it

THERE IS
NO
ALTERNATIVE!



Margaret Thatcher, prime minister of the United Kingdom & leader of the Conservative party from 1979–1990. (Photo: Levan Ramishvili, Creative Commons, flickr)

also includes barter and gift-giving, with or without expectation of reciprocity. It can even include collective economic action, such as an organized boycott against a business that pollutes, that engages in fraud, or the like. To underscore the distinction between this notion vs. the dysfunction of markets under capitalism, the term *freed market* is sometimes used.

The **programme** to create a freed market, in a nutshell, is to do away with the state subsidies and protections that stifle an authentic free market. The principal **strategy** to achieve this is to create cooperative, non-coercive economic and social institutions²⁰ – “building the

new society in the shell of the old” as the old Wobbly²¹ slogan put it – while withdrawing, as much as possible, our consent and participation from coercive existing institutions, until the old shell collapses and the new society supersedes it. The **premise** is that without state violence to protect and sustain it, the vastly unequal wealth distribution of capitalism would dissolve.

Workers could go into business for themselves, either as sole proprietors or as members of worker cooperatives, receiving the full value of goods and services they produce, deciding for themselves what to produce and how. The employer-employee relation would not be outlawed per se; but why would anyone enter into an exploitative, hierarchical labour relation when better, more democratic work opportunities are readily available?

Could a freed-market economy of worker-owned, worker-directed enterprises slide back into capitalism, simply through the operation of the free market? Classical Marxists certainly thought so.²² But freed-market anarchists would reply that without state subsidies and protections, economic competition tends to shave prices down to the fair labour value of the product, precluding serious concentration of wealth. ➡➡➡

¹⁸ I am not entirely easy with this pessimistic formulation of mine: something about it feels un-Quakerly. I am tempted to answer myself that John Woolman, for example, strove very hard indeed to avoid complicity in the evils of his society. But even for Woolman, I think, the point was not to achieve a state of perfect personal purity, but rather to bear prophetic witness against these evils and thus to eradicate them from society.

¹⁹ I see money as a useful social technology for facilitating consensual exchanges. This is not to say that the rules surrounding money could not do with substantial reform, starting with the state’s monopoly on printing and coining it. See Mike Nickerson’s (2009) *Life, Money and Illusion* for more ideas along these lines.

¹⁷ ‘Electronic Surveillance and Open-Source Alternatives,’ *The Canadian Friend* 2018, issue 1, p. 25.

This anarchist programme therefore merits the noble term *socialism*, that is, a movement demanding economic equality within society. After all, many early socialist thinkers such as Thomas Hodgskin advocated this very programme.²³ This freed-market anarchist vision of post-capitalism ('to each according to their labour') is however distinct from communism ('to each according to their needs'). That is, under the communist ideal, individuals' economic standard of living is uncoupled from their labour.

I am well aware of the distinction between this communist ideal and the actual operation of 20th century state-socialist command economies. Nevertheless, it is hard to imagine how a society could allocate its resources and labour on a needs basis without some sort of powerful centralized administrative apparatus; and it is hard to imagine such a powerful apparatus operating without brutal coercion and massive inefficiency, as was indeed the case in state-socialist command economies.²⁴ The virtue of markets is that they provide producers with feedback on what buyers want, and thus what to produce, without any centralized administration at all.

On the other hand, as anarchist anthropologist David Graeber has observed, even current capitalist societies have 'islands of communism' within them.²⁵ Family members, for example, typically help each other out: parents are supposed to ask what their child needs, not the monetary value of what the child has produced for them.

A post-capitalist society could also have (consensually formed) islands of communism within a sea of freed-market transactions, perhaps large islands – perhaps even whole continents, so to speak. Within such an island, members would pool their income and allocate it according to need, like the early Christian church (Acts 2:44), or modern-day Hutterite colonies.

Anarchists tend to leave it to individuals to work out for themselves the sort of relations they prefer, provided that all such arrangements are consensual.²⁶

Conclusion

One thing that I particularly value about Quakers is our emphasis on individual and corporate Spirit-led discernment. When we are able to do this well, it allows us to rise above binary conflicts, to think outside the box, to transcend socially conditioned preconceptions and ideological blinders – and to open ourselves to creative, innovative solutions.

Since the mid-20th century, North American and European society has been locked in a binary left-vs-right political contest. The liberal left has tended to look to the state to regulate Big Business, to protect society from the depredations of capitalism. Meanwhile, the conservative right has championed capitalist enterprise as a counterweight to overreaching state power.

What neither side seems capable of acknowledging is that these are the two arms of the same ruling class. And now, this ruling class seems intent on keeping its power-and-wealth-concentration game going indefinitely, even at the cost of imminent ecological collapse that could render humanity itself extinct.

Though I have challenged elements of John Samson Fellows' historical analysis in this article, I fully agree with him that we urgently need to move toward a post-capitalist society. And to begin that transformation, we need to get down to the work of discerning what that society might look like. This article is my contribution to this work.

May this discussion continue and bear fruit among Friends and in the wider society. Amen. 🌿

²⁰ The Religious Society of Friends can be regarded as one of the first of these.

²¹ 'Wobbly' is a nickname of the Industrial Workers of the World labour union; see www.iww.org/history for more.

²² See e.g. Friedrich Engels, 'Anti-Dühring,' *Marx and Engels: Collected Works* (International Publishers, 1987) vol. 25, p. 168.

²³ It was only in the early 20th century that leftist thought came to be dominated by state socialists and communists, who pursued socialism through capturing the power of the state, electorally or by armed uprising. As a result, the term socialism now carries a strong association with top-down statist solutions to social problems, unfortunately.

²⁴ For an intriguing attempt at imagining such a system, see Albert and Hahnel's (1999) *Looking Forward: Participatory Economics for the 21st Century*. Participatory Economics (Par-Econ) relies on online voting as a non-monetary decentralized mechanism for resource and labour allocation, within worker coops and within larger social groupings. Albert and Hahnel seem to assume that their Par-Econ model, once established, will get universal buy-in from all sectors of society. They do not say how a Par-Econ society should deal with individuals or groups who wish to remain outside it. Should they be absorbed by force? Should they be ostracized? Should they be traded with on a free-market basis? If the latter, Par-Econ turns out to be a variant of freed-market anarchism with 'islands', as described below.

²⁵ *Debt: the First 5000 Years* (2011).

Devastation as Faith

Friendly Fire and the Welcome Challenge by John Samson Fellows, Winnipeg Monthly Meeting



I've been thinking about a phrase on the welcome page of my Monthly Meeting's website: "true welcome requires more than welcoming words." I like it because it asks us to expand our idea of what we need to do to make a place for the stranger, and reminds me that concrete conditions have to exist in the world for that stranger to even make it to our Meeting House door – that they are housed and fed, respected, cherished and cared for.

This is obviously pretty daunting, especially when we consider the world as it is – with a brutal financial system that not only enables but requires inequality and ecological destruction, with a protest-resistant strain of fascism spreading over the planet, and with any tender lessons of the past gleefully mocked by those in power.

I take inspiration in these times from communities that are actively working to expand and meet this challenge of true welcome. One of the most vivid examples I've found is the Friendly Fire Collective, a group of activists in Philadelphia dedicated to "prayer and mystical practice, revolutionary leftism, and direct action."¹

I discovered Friendly Fire via their [bracing newsletter](#), where I learned about their confrontational and explicitly religious banners ("All Cops are Apostates," for example), and political actions dotted with Quakerly language. They challenged and provoked me, made me laugh (sometimes uncomfortably), and reminded me of the original avid rebels who became the Religious Society of Friends.

During a visit to Philadelphia in 2019, I got to sit down on a park bench on a bright spring afternoon and talk with Hye Sung Francis, one of the founders of Friendly Fire. I began by asking Hye Sung how Friendly Fire started.

"On Facebook, basically," he said. "Several people in the Quaker world who are anarchists got together on Facebook. At first it was to start a zine and was people from all over the States. So we weren't a group necessarily, we were just trying to put together some resources and have a thing to send out to people, and also maybe figure out if we wanted to do something more. Then we decided to have a retreat last year, and at that time we decided to broaden it to more than just Quakers. There are only so many religious leftists as it is.

"So Friendly Fire formed around the retreat. After the retreat,

which was just outside of Philadelphia, a group of us here in Philly decided we should do something, so we started meeting every week for prayer. Then Occupy ICE happened, and that's when we started organizing as a group."

Occupy ICE was a multi-city response to the racist Family Separation Policy put in place at the Mexico border by the U.S. government and carried out by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE). In June of 2018, activists in Portland started a vigil and occupation of an ICE detention facility, and the actions spread to other cities, including Philadelphia, where members of Friendly Fire camped and prayed and protested.

Later that summer, incarcerated people across the North America organized a prison strike, and Friendly Fire found an innovative way to support it. "We had an action in front of the police headquarters," Hye Sung explained. "It was a prayer meeting, and we prayed and read the demands of the prison strike through a megaphone, and also called all the police to repent and quit their jobs and get right with god, and told them about the judgment of god weighing on them."

These tactics often antagonize those in power by subverting their expectation of what protest is. Hye Sung relates a story from one of their early actions. "We were at a really liberal march protesting Mike Pence, and a car was starting to drive through the crowd, so we were like, 'let's make this car stop.' We didn't know it was a secret service car, and the police came out, and we were telling the cops about the gospel and hell, and were like, 'we see those crosses under your shirts, we see those tattoos,' and warning them that the day is near, judgment day is coming, and immediately the batons came out. They hated it, and you could tell they enjoyed beating us, they were smiling and laughing."

Friendly Fire had made a rare, undeniable impression on those in power. "The reality is, no matter how many ways we put this, even if it is thought out and polite, it probably won't reach them. But for them to see our faith so explicitly is maybe confrontational on another level."

Hye Sung sees early Quakerism as one of the sources of inspiration for such actions. "I like early Quakers because they literally went to churches and yelled at priests. That's something I'd like to do, eventually!" He has an excellent, infectious laugh, which peals out when he says this. ➡➡➡

¹⁸ "FAQ," *Friendly Fire Collective*, friendlyfirecollective.wordpress.com/about-us.

As their work together gained momentum, it led Friendly Fire to consider their goals and purpose. “Over the last winter we really focused on, ‘What are we, again? What is this supposed to do?’ And we’re still kind of in that. At first, we were an almost completely Christian group. Then someone who is Muslim joined us, and we became more explicitly multi-faith – we read the Koran in worship this week, also most of us are fasting together (for Ramadan), and a number of us have a church abolitionist critique that’s been coming up.”

I asked Hye Sung what worship looks like at their regular weekly Friendly Fire Meeting. “It is Quaker worship, basically. You’ll hear more ‘tongues,’ and more prophetic words than you typically would at a Quaker Meeting. You’ll see people quaking. People cry. We intentionally use the Quaker model because it leaves room for multiple faiths.”

Part of their goal is to provide some room and support for revolutionary organizing. “A lot of the people who come aren’t members, there are different people every week, and a lot of them are organizers. We want to offer that space to people.”

Friendly Fire’s actions caught the eye of some mainstream Quakers when they were protesting against the appearance of white supremacist Richard Spencer in Michigan. Hye Sung told me, “Our action kind of got into the Quaker sphere, especially our banner that said, ‘Whiteness is Anti-Christ.’ Some Quakers really didn’t like that, and that created a lot of discussion, which was cool.”

This provocation was purposeful and welcome – Friendly Fire’s revolutionary stance to liberalism must especially include Liberal Quakerism. “More than a theology we want to offer an experience, and we’re not trying to dictate what that means. It’s hard to find that conviction within the framework of Liberal Quakerism. With most churches, you have multiple authorities, and traditions you go back to. Liberal Quakerism sometimes does that, but mostly in a self-congratulatory way, not in a way that would draw inspiration or build off of something.”

Hye Sung also points to the specific institutional blind-spots in Liberal Quakerism, especially when it comes to race. “Since there’s no ecclesial authority, no book that we all go to, sometimes it feels like the authority becomes whiteness.”

But Friendly Fire’s critique is not limited to Liberal Quakerism, or particularly interested in reforming it. Like early Quakers, they have all of institutional Christianity in mind: “Our analysis as United States citizens is even if it’s a church doing nice things, it is still a church on stolen lands. And we’re really interested in the inseparability of Christianity from imperialism, and Christian hegemony. And needing to actively decentre it.”

This again reminds me of the original Friends and their open opposition to established churches and power structures. In an email the next day, Hye Sung made this connection more explicit by citing an entry from George Fox’s Journals. The portion of it I was familiar with, included in British Faith and Practice, ends with, “I saw, also, that there was an ocean of darkness and death; but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that I also saw the infinite love of God, and I had great openings.”

But in the full entry Fox goes on to complicate his revelations, noting that the infinite oceans of light and dark led him towards a harsh, difficult transformation into something fierce and prophetic. “The same eternal power of God, which brought me through these things,” Fox finishes, “was that which afterwards shook the nations, priests, professors and people. Then could I say I had been in spiritual Babylon, Sodom, Egypt, and the grave; but by the eternal power of God I was come out of it, and was brought over it, and the power of it, into the power of Christ.”

The fuller version shows Fox realising that the power of God fundamentally upsets the order of the world – the very kind of religious and political practice Friendly Fire desires. Hye Sung wrote, “We believe in this experience. God’s love is not one-dimensional – it understands power, and is on the side of those being crushed, those who are robbed of power and self-determination. Sometimes hatred is a form of love – it’s something that can be grounded in our love for our siblings experiencing oppression, and even love for the oppressor. It’s a love that knows the mighty need to be torn off their thrones.”

“We see the Spirit-baptism similarly,” he added, “as not a one-dimensional experience of God’s love – as simply an experience of spiritual intoxication or empowerment (though this is a part of the package) – and I think even sanctification isn’t going far enough.”

Friendly Fire is asking us to be as truthful about the state of our world as George Fox was of his. And while this will not be easy, it may be filled with the spirit of community, of true welcome.

“There has to be an inward devastation, a crisis and revelation of darkness, and crucifixion,” Hye Sung concludes. “It is eyes to see the world, in all its hopelessness, and yet to know this presence that carries us along, making us not just willing but drunk on fighting what may very well be an impossible fight. Communally, in committed devotion to one another, I think we can know this devastation as faith.”

You can learn more about Friendly Fire and subscribe to their newsletter at friendlyfirecollective.wordpress.com. 🌱

Friendly Fire Collective’s Dissolution Reflections

Editor’s Note: John submitted this article almost a year ago now, but Friendly Fire recently released a statement announcing their dissolution.¹ I found the news saddening and the statement challenging, so am reproducing some excerpts here.

Feb 2, 2020

Friendly Fire Collective was always an experiment – always changing, re-forming. ... Over time, though, our expectations and visions came into conflict, as we continually failed to have a clear understanding of our mission, or a sense of our structure. ... A way forward together as a community feels not only impossible, but unnecessary. Instead of spiritual community, it is more important in these times to orient our lives around the work of liberation. ...

The church abolitionist rhetoric, grounded in “Quaker” apocalyptic idealism, was ultimately ultra-leftist.² ... We also found our orientation becoming church-like, despite our church abolitionism. Our stressing of discipleship and

fellowship led us away from the work of building revolution. Within a few months of forming, we fell out of coalition work around Abolish ICE and ceased to plan and collaborate with other orgs on actions. At our best, as an affinity group, we were a presence of care and faith in the revolutionary left. At our worst, we were an insular intentional community. ...

We must own the role whiteness played in our collective. As we had articulated a number of times in our analysis of liberal unprogrammed Quakerism – whiteness has a tendency of becoming the authority in horizontal, white-majority organizations – the same could be said about our organization, even as we sought to be accomplices and race traitors. What started out as a POC-majority organization became a majority white within months, and the difference was felt. ...

As we formally dissolve our collective, we all encourage those seeking to be faithful to God’s liberatory Spirit to join a revolutionary organization. The u.s.a. cannot be reformed into justice, but rather must be abolished. ...

As we look back on the last couple years, we feel a mix of deep sadness, but at the same time we feel an excitement and creative energy burning within us. This spirit, we know, is the spirit of Liberation which burns down in order to build up and breaks in order to bind. Friendly Fire may be coming to its end, but we know that this same Holy Spirit is working within the masses to make a way in the desert for the true kin-dom of G-d which will tear down every wall, burn down every prison, and break every chain. The work of revolution is only beginning. Amen. 🌱



¹ The full statement is currently available on the frontpage of their [website](http://friendlyfirecollective.wordpress.com/2020/02/02/friendly-fire-collectives-statement-of-dissolution) and specifically at: friendlyfirecollective.wordpress.com/2020/02/02/friendly-fire-collectives-statement-of-dissolution

² This is a critical term classically used by Marxists to accuse a group or person – anarchists, for example – of being more committed to ideological purity than revolutionary pragmatism.

Walking the Wildlife Park

by Joy Belle Conrad-Rice, Kamloops Worship Group

Clover the Kermode bear¹ walks on a path in front of the viewing platform where we visitors are waiting to be entranced by him. He sits down, rolls his head around in a semi-circle, sniffs the air with two dark undulating nostrils, and folds himself down onto the new spring grass, whereupon he eats it in little bits, pulling it up with his teeth, chewing deliberately.

It's a warm midweek spring day and I am walking the trails of the 106-acre Wildlife Park a few kilometers east of Kamloops, British Columbia. If I go the long way around the perimeter, I have the trail to myself and am unhindered as I make my way into the wooden enclosures that provide vantage points for watching, talking to, wondering about, and marveling at the various wild animals here. Most of them have been rescued after becoming orphaned, injured, or sick. They are safe, though, and while they are acting bored, they seem resigned to their fate, even content.

Except for the two silver coyotes. I see them trotting around their enclosure, sometimes following each other, sometimes diverting to a hollow log, a patch of new grass. Once or twice they cast a glance upwards towards me with what I interpret as more than a tinge of exasperation, as if to tell me, "yes, I know, we see you and yes, we have been here for years and we are still not used to being cooped up like this."

Are the coyotes relying on me to empathize with them? I doubt it. It's clear that as they glance up through the plexiglass, they are aware of my presence. But soon I will move on and they will still be there. See you next time, I say to them. It is what it is.

I talk aloud to the cougars, too. At the far end of their enclosure in a large open-ended wooden box, I can barely

make out the two large cats reclining. The older female cougar allows her companion to lean against her. He is a male cougar now about two years old, who was orphaned when a conservation officer shot and killed his mother, who had gotten into an altercation with some hikers. This youngster is lolling around in front of his foster mother, welcoming the warmth she is emitting and the security of her bulk. Is their consciousness like mine?

Anyway, the cougars seem healthy, as do the badgers, bison, white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk, moose, Rocky Mountain goats, porcupines, big horn sheep, two grizzly bears, three brown bears (two black and one tan), a trio of Arctic wolves, a dozen birds of prey (falcon, eagle, owl), and an unknown number of hoary marmots roaming around.

Ah, here comes a young couple and their toddler in a stroller. The man glances at me and returns my zippered smile. The woman is intent on pushing the stroller away from some bumps and ruts in the path.

As I wander farther, I pass over the steel tracks belonging to the mini-train and visualize it full of kids this coming weekend. They will scramble into the seats of the open cars, imitating the train's noisy whistle with glee, while waiting to get going on a route that will take them past most of the animals.

As I continue to amble, another group is walking towards me. It's a woman of middle age, an elderly man, a boy about fifteen, and a girl about six. It's immediately apparent to me that the woman is a caretaker of the others, who are unable to look after themselves. The man and the boy look at me and greet me and I say hi and nod my head and keep on walking. They appear happy to be there.



Clover the Kermode bear at BC Wildlife Park.

¹ Kermode bears, also known as spirit bears, are a rare BC subspecies of black bears that carry a recessive gene for white fur – the same gene that leads to red hair in humans and blonde Labrador retrievers. Spirit bears are sacred to the Tsimshian Nation, the Heiltsuk Nation, and other Indigenous communities.

Another couple is walking nearby, this time in the same direction I am going. They are taking turns keeping track of a little boy of about four, who darts here and there looking at all the animals and the fences and gates and hay and rocks on the path and, well, everything that little boys look at. He does not return my glance, but his mother does, nodding her head and producing a small thin smile. The dad is oblivious to all of us, his head bent over his mobile phone, his walking awkward.

In the distance a grounds worker is digging up soil near a mound of rocks, probably intending to make the terrain more interesting for whatever animal gets the surprise of being gated there. He is too far away to engage with directly. In his peripheral vision and other senses is he aware, anyway, of my presence? It's his daily job and he seems content.

As I round a small hill, I am aware of a fragrance in the air, so I look up and around. Of course, it's spring so the Saskatoon trees are blossoming. Bees of all shapes and colors are flying near them, finding their reward for coming out of their hives on a sunny day. I bend over to take a whiff of some blossoms and wait until a bumblebee flies out of my way before touching my nose to some ivory petals.

I am humming to myself as I round a corner and head towards the visitor centre. It will be warm inside, and I can use the washroom and drink from a water fountain. I can acknowledge the clerk in the souvenir shop and if I want to, engage her in chitchat about the weather, the animals, and the things they have to sell on the shelves.

I Hope Greta Would Approve of Me Doing Nothing

by Roger Davies, Halifax Monthly Meeting

This is my blanket
and this is my toque
and that is the temp
turned down

and this is me
not moving
not driving
not flying
not buying
not knotted

in the inside
by internet noise

but dreaming,
and leaning
into my pillow

and mulling over
what's needed...

and what's not

Instead I pass by the clerk and glide through the exit doors.

Clover the Kermode bear, whom I waited all winter to see, was late coming out of hibernation, late compared to the grizzlies and the brown bears. Odd that it is Clover's color – champagne – which lures many curious visitors here.

Spring is wake-up time for us humans, too, when we can be more easily in contact with other humans, animals, plants, the air, the noises, the odors, through every source available. Or we can decide not to.

I have not seen all the sixty plus different animal species in this wildlife park, but I plan to come again soon and scout out some that I have missed. A few animals – like a young bobcat – are in rehabilitation spaces and cannot be seen by people other than staff until they are recovered.

I wonder how many animals will be rescued this season and end up here? Which ones will be rehabilitated – others, not make it?

Next trip I will time my visit to correspond with the feeding of certain animals, feeding by a wildlife expert who will tell us about each animal, its history, its habits, its needs, and its future here. I look forward to this.

As I head for my car, I plan ahead to turn on the radio to my local CBC station as soon as I turn on the engine. It will be time for the noon news.

Today I am solitary, in contact, content. 🐾

Calla Haikus

Caroline Balderston Parry, Ottawa Monthly Meeting

Calla comes to meeting,
Mother's body sheltering:
Small soul held in love.
(26/11/17)

Huge Uncle Galen,
Hands holding tiny Calla:
Both squirm with pleasure.
(4/8/18)

Calla: open gaze,
Wiggly body, quiet heart,
Toddler-sized soul eyes.
(7/7/19)

“What Does Canadian Yearly Meeting Do?” The Role of Contributions Committee – Making the Invisible, Visible

Dear Canadian Quaker community,

Contributions Committee has learned that the budget for our committee has been significantly increased, as part of the tabled budget considered and approved at November's Representative Meeting. We did not seek this increase but are extremely appreciative of this decision. This will enable us to engage with members in a much more effective way.

We are working in a collaborative manner with other groups in Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM), such as Finance Committee and the Ad Hoc Committee on Financial Sustainability. We will develop right use of the funds as the vision of what is needed to coordinate our efforts effectively. Thank you.

What we have learned in talking with members over the years is that the role of Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) is often invisible to some individuals. Not as many members donate as needed to meet our organization's budget. For some, it is unclear what CYM does, and therefore why they are being asked to donate to maintain its existence. We are developing a variety of ways to inform members of what CYM does by listening to what members tell us about why they do not donate and what does lead them to donate.

This year Contributions Committee asked to author the End of Year Appeal letter. Often coming from the CYM Clerk, this time we wanted to speak member to member. In this letter we asked for comments and concerns to see if we could stimulate engagement with members, to ultimately receive more donations.

One member engaged in a reflective discussion with us. “Why should I donate to CYM?” he asked. “My Meeting meets all my needs.” He recognized he was a member of a large urban Meeting, and the benefits may not be as easily obtained in a rural, smaller Meeting. We informed him more specifically about what CYM does and heard his concerns. He donated shortly after our conversation. He asked that we be told of this, as it was clearly a response to our listening to and working with him.

What CYM does is tangible: in the last *Canadian Friend* many articles mentioned in passing “what CYM does.” A few examples include:

- funding of the Canadian Young Friends Yearly Meeting's gatherings;
- operating the quaker.ca website;

- offering free online courses to introduce interested people to our faith and organization;
- providing the annual gathering in which we conduct business in our unique way; and
- enabling representation to other organizations that allow us to have broader impact.

We are committed to raising the profile of all this activity and making it easy and clear for members to understand what CYM does.

Last year we produced a welcome letter that is now mailed to new members once their names are sent to our administration office, informing them of CYM's activities. Another way we plan to ‘make the invisible visible’ is to produce a pamphlet describing what CYM does. This will be distributed for Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups to share, and available on the website. New attenders and members who may not be aware of the role of CYM will then be able to easily find out what CYM does. We hope knowing this will lead to more support of CYM, financially and otherwise.

It is not simply CYM's concrete activities that keep members supporting the organization. It is Friends' experiences and their sense of community that lead them to involvement and support. We've been told time and again that relationships are what fuels our commitment to the Canadian Religious Society of Friends.

In their **last report**, Young Friends told us of the importance of their gathering, which is supported financially by CYM. They said that it “was felt to be both invaluable and transformative,” adding that they “continue to find joy, hope and community in the new life in our Yearly Meeting.”

Many share their enthusiasm for the experiences CYM offers. One member told us, “Through CYM, I find I meet inspiring people. You can discover untold riches amongst people you have not met before.”

What is it that inspires you in your work with CYM? Need more information about CYM? Let us know.

Feel free to write to us and share your thoughts by email or, if we're in a Meeting with you, let us know you would like to share.

One member shared the following thought with us, for example. “Our life is a ministry. Part of that ministry is to give as we are able to Canadian Yearly Meeting to continue the work that it does.”

A form to donate can be found on the back page of this journal. You can also donate online by visiting quaker.ca/contact/donate. We are grateful for any contribution you are led to offer.

We're here to support relationships member-to-member. It's how we'll build a sustainable future.

Together.

Sincerely,

Penni Burrell, Contributions Committee Clerk

Annapolis Valley Monthly Meeting

Contributions-Clerk@quaker.ca

Rotary Peace Fellowships by Svetlana S. MacDonald *Coldstream Monthly Meeting*

Since February 1992 I have been a member of Rotary, an international service organization established in 1905. Over the years I have found that much of the work Rotarians do is in line with work that Quakers undertake.

For the past seventeen years, Rotary has funded graduate studies for what are called peace fellowships. This sounds to me as if the scholarships were made for Quakers, so I thought it appropriate to share that information with Friends.

Rotary offers two different peace fellowship programs: the master's degree program and the professional development certificate. Both require significant work experience from potential candidates.

The certificate program lasts three months, while the master's program lasts from 15-24 months and includes field experience between the first and second years of the program.

The certificate program is held in Thailand. The master's program is offered in five different countries: the U.S., Japan, England, Australia, and Sweden.

The Rotary Foundation awards up to fifty fellowships in each of the two programs. These cover not only tuition and fees but also room and board, as well as round-trip transportation and costs of research and field expenses.

For anyone interested in pursuing such peace programs, information is available online and I encourage Friends to investigate these opportunities:

www.rotary.org/en/our-programs/peace-fellowships



CAMP NEEKAUNIS NEEDS YOUR HELP!

Have you ever been to Camp NeeKauNis, and experienced its healing beauty and community? Do you have a leading to serve Quakers in Canada in a concrete way? There are many ways to contribute to sustaining this Quaker-based camp that has touched the lives of many.

There is a large demand for use of the facilities – for summer programming, by Quaker bodies, and outside rentals. Camp Committee is fortunate to have a core of dedicated people supporting the camp through donations of money, time, and energy. Without them, Camp NeeKauNis would not be the viable and enriching place that it is.

But more help is needed. Our core of dedicated people is currently very small compared to Camp's needs. There are singular tasks pertaining to publicity, website management, and fundraising that need doing. These tasks must be done in accordance with an annual schedule and can easily be done from a distance. Volunteering for them is an opportunity to contribute remotely, in a very effective, simple, and satisfying way.

There is also help needed with discernment around how Camp NeeKauNis can best serve our national community. Camp Committee sees great potential for using this asset as a means for strengthening the vision of Friends' work in Canada – for outreach, spiritual retreat, and as an ideal setting for nurturing care and commitment to the health of our planet.

Please consider if you, your Monthly Meeting, or other members of your community feel led to help, either by taking on small jobs remotely, or by joining in our discernment around how to best to make use of this extremely valuable asset, which has nurtured Quaker community for more than ninety years.

For more information, contact the Clerk of the Recruitment and Management Subcommittee, Ben Bootsma, at benjbootsma@gmail.com.



Canadian Yearly Meeting

91A Fourth Avenue
Ottawa ON
K1S 2L1
CANADA

613-235-8553

888-296-3222

Fax: 613-235-1753

cym-office@quaker.ca

www.quaker.ca

I WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT CYM

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

Donate Monthly (account withdrawals or by credit card):

\$_____/month beginning: _____(month/year)

Enclose a void cheque for pre-authorized withdrawals.

Bank withdrawals occur on the 15th of each month.

Credit card #: _____ Expiry: _____

Cardholder Name: _____

Cardholder Signature: _____

Visa Mastercard American Express

Make a One-Time Donation of: \$_____

Cheque Enclosed (payable to "Canadian Yearly Meeting")

Credit card #: _____ Expiry: _____

Cardholder Name: _____

Cardholder Signature: _____

Visa Mastercard American Express

Donate On-Line via www.canadahelps.org / www.paypal.ca

or by e-transfer to cym-office@quaker.ca

CanadaHelps charges 3.5%; Paypal charges 1.6% + 30¢ per transaction. There are no fees for e-transfers!

CONTACT THE CYM OFFICE FOR ANY OTHER DONATION INQUIRIES.

PLEASE SUBMIT THIS FORM AND ALL RELEVANT INFORMATION TO OUR OFFICE. THANK YOU!

PUBLICATIONS MAIL

AGREEMENT NO. 40012338

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:

The Canadian Friend, c/o CYM
91A Fourth Avenue, Ottawa
ON K1S 2L1

SUBSCRIBER ADDRESS