

# THE CANADIAN FRIEND



**SUMMER 2020**

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## ABOUT

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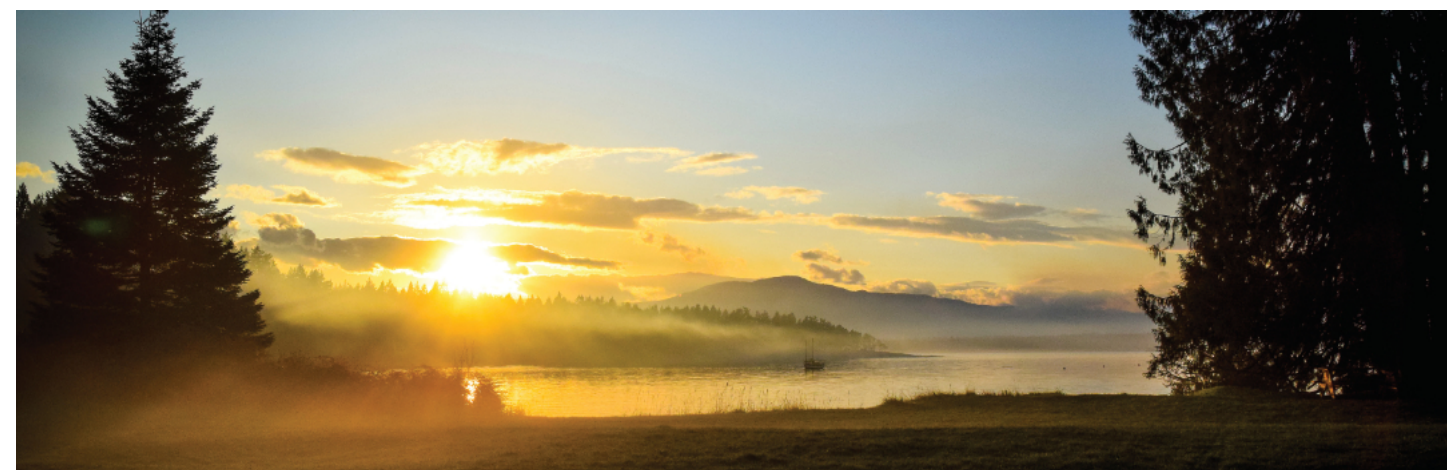
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Pandemics spread more than sickness. They can bring out the worst in us. The Quaker voice is needed now more than ever to spread calm, to spread justice, to spread peace.

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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, art, and suggestions and submissions for “Meet a Friend” (an interview of a Quaker) or “Gleanings & Quotations” (funny, interesting, or inspiring quotes).

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

#### Upcoming Dates

Autumn Issue	Sept 22 Dec 7	Submission Due Date ~Received in mail
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SPRING 2020

Dear Editor:

The varied definitions of capital and capitalism recently put forth in *The Canadian Friend* by Robert Kirchner<sup>1</sup> and John Fellows<sup>2</sup> are erudite and show the difficulty economists have in theorizing about basic elements of daily life.

To a non-economist like myself, capital, defined as “the means of production,” is the same as “asset,” a simpler term. Kirchner and Fellows mix up two categories when they define “capitalism” – the categories of *economic system* and that of *system of governance*.

Meanwhile, by defining capitalism as that which “sustains itself with violent expropriations of wealth, typically through state action, for the benefit of the ruling class,” Kirchner makes it by definition an evil. But people have always had assets of one sort or another – if only the asset of their skills and labour. At one time in the northeast United States, the great majority of families lived on small farms and owned the means of production – the farms were their assets. There was not a great and powerful “ruling class.”

Today, a couple with a small open boat can go out and fish, while other fishers have \$100,000 boats and fish on a large scale. For both occupations, their boat is their largest capital asset. World Vision International helps families to get a start

in entrepreneurship by providing sewing machines, so that the owner-operators can start a clothing business. The U.S. Small Business Administration provides loans to get small and medium businesses off the ground.

In an authoritarian country, the ruling oligarchy may indeed receive great riches from grasping control over key industries. In a democracy it is up to the voters to limit monopolies and anti-competitive practices through their representatives, and to promote equalization by a graduated income tax.

It has been increasingly recognized that ‘free market’ factors cannot regulate the economy for the good of all citizens. Think for example of the Irish Potato Famine. At that time small farmers and peasants all over Ireland were starving due to the blight on their crops – even while huge loads of wheat and grain were being shipped to England – because the English had the purchase price.

The free market could not help the Irish in a famine situation. Government action could have saved lives but was not taken. A million Irish died of starvation, and another million fled to North America. It is not any one economic system that distorts the income gap – it is the action or lack of it of the governmental system to maintain income balance.

Maida Follini, Halifax Monthly Meeting 🌱

1 This was in “What is Capitalism?” which appeared in *The Canadian Friend* (2020, issue 1), p. 19 onwards.

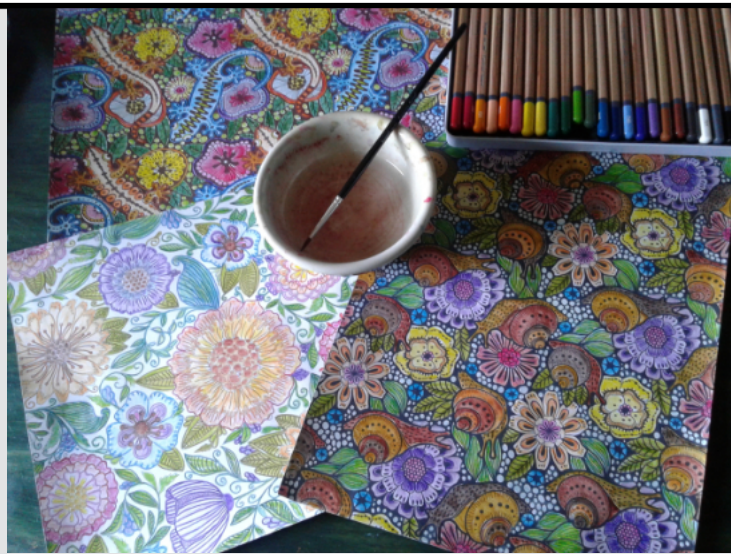
2 This was in “Look Upon Our Treasures: Quakers, Equality, and Capitalism,” part 1 & 2, which appeared in *The Canadian Friend* (2019, issue 2 and issue 3). All three issue are available at [quaker.ca/resources/the-canadian-friend](http://quaker.ca/resources/the-canadian-friend).



This issue’s beautiful cover is courtesy of Anne Trudell and the St. Lawrence Regional Gathering.

Anne, a member of Peterborough Monthly Meeting wrote, “In the afternoon session of the gathering we shared things that have been helping us cope with COVID-19 isolation and worry. I found colouring a great way to center. I would do it during some Zoom worship sessions that I attended and I got into some non-COVID podcasts as background too.

“The colouring was done with watercolour pencils – overlaying two or three colours and then brushing with a fine wet brush would blend the colours nicely, as well as intensifying just single colours. I have a set of 24 pencils and I was seeing what could be a ‘minimal’ colouring kit for future travel, or even just taking into the garden.” 🌱



## Memorial Minute for Marguerite (Clarke) Gayfer (1927-2019)

### Saanich Peninsula Monthly Meeting

Marguerite was one of the founding members of Saanich Peninsula Monthly Meeting, a faithful attender, our eldest in calendar years, and among the youngest in spirit. She was a most welcoming and hospitable person both at Meeting and in her home life.

The eldest of six children born to a Canadian mother and English father, her life was spent partly in England and partly in Canada. Retiring to Saanich with her husband Alan (d. 1991) in 1990, she remarried Dick Jeanes (d. 2015), and both were regular attenders at Meeting. She is survived by her son Christian and predeceased by son Alaric in 2004.

She was part of a large extended family and group of friends, spanning all of North America, England, and farther-flung parts of the world. Her grandchildren and great-nephews were especially precious to her.

She was a long-time volunteer docent at the Royal BC Museum, member of the Women’s Institute, choir member, symphony attender, and much more.

“Walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone...” This was Marguerite!



This photo, snapped by an anonymous passerby, shows Fred Bass and Gayle Raphanel from Vancouver Monthly Meeting at a climate strike rally in October 2019. The rally was organized by local group Sustainabiliteens and featured Greta Thunberg.

“It is shameful that for so long the ongoing climate and ecological emergency has been ignored,” Greta said. “It is the year 2019, and the people in power are still acting as if there was no tomorrow. ... Change is coming whether you like it or not.”



## Reflections from the Ad Hoc Committee on Financial Sustainability

by Rachel Yordy, Vancouver Monthly Meeting

Hello Friends! The joyful task has fallen on me to share a little bit about the work (and musings) of the CYM Ad Hoc Committee on Financial Sustainability (AHCFS) over the past year and a half.

In some ways I may be the least qualified to do so, as I was a late addition to the committee after CYM in Session last year – and I am also relatively new in the ways of Canadian Yearly Meeting and Friends more broadly. (Full disclosure: 2019 was my first time attending CYM!)

But I suppose that's also why I ended up on the committee... there was and is an earnest desire to ensure that the diversity of Canadian Friends is represented in terms of geography, demography, theology, proximity to a Meeting, and longevity of affiliation as we engage in the transformation of CYM.

As it turns out, committees are a rich place for rookies to learn more about the institutional side of Friends as we face the light and lead of our guiding body with curiosity, wisdom, and – I hope – some humour. I've learned a lot from some wonderful and weighty Friends on the journey together, and heartily recommend committee work to other newcomers!

The AHCFS set out to facilitate collective discernment processes at CYM in Session in 2019 and then asked Monthly Meetings and individuals to undertake their own discernment and feedback processes, with a series of queries to guide those efforts last fall. In early 2020, responses were then compiled (into a summary document and a source document of all responses) for Friends to read – individually, in CYM committees, with our Meetings, or in our families.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps some Friends would have appreciated a thorough qualitative analysis from our committee, tabulating the themes and their frequencies, teasing out the tensions between perspectives, the wounds, the needs. In fact, at a few points in our work, committee members struggled with what level of analysis would be helpful to undertake in our reporting. Would such a report be read and remembered? Would it ever be complete?

In the end, we decided we didn't want to speak for or offer conclusions about Friends' perspectives. Instead, we have highlighted some common themes and then let each response speak for itself.

The full source document offers a poignant snapshot of community perspectives in late 2019 and early 2020 – just before the pandemic began. In it, every voice is worthy of consideration. Hearing each other deeply and grappling with our diversity is part of what it means to be in and build community.

In reading it myself, I was struck by the range of wise recommendations offered by Friends for possible paths forward, the areas of deep need within our organizing body, and the willingness of Meetings and individuals to embrace change. I believe that engaging with these materials is important for anyone who cares about the future of CYM.

The committee sent out a thank you letter to all who contributed to this process over the past year. I feel called to share a couple excerpts from that letter again:

“We wish to sincerely thank each Monthly Meeting, Worship Group, and all those individuals who have contributed to our national consultation process... We were moved by the candour, insight and breadth of reflections shared by Friends in your consultations and individual contributions. We [heard] at once the humour in reflections like ‘if CYM were forming today it would be like Woodstock without the drugs,’ as well as the heartache of people not feeling welcomed/included at CYM in Session and earnest grappling with cutting services amidst our financial realities and constraints. We feel this document strongly reflects the diversity of Canadian Yearly Meeting and wish to honour that diversity of perspectives on its purpose and potential future.

“We recognize that CYM may serve a different role for isolated Friends and members of smaller Worship Groups and Meetings than it does for Monthly Meetings in larger urban areas; just as it may for Friends at particular life stages (childhood, young adulthood, family growth, and elderhood). We are excited about the opportunities to focus our efforts on areas of growth as these consultations bring greater clarity to areas of need and ideas for how to harness resources to support them.

“We also recognize that decisions made within the next year are weighty and will affect the medium and long-term trajectory of CYM – the very future of our national community. This is why we encourage Friends to undertake a prayerful reading of these reports now and continue to hold this process in the light.”<sup>2</sup>

One of the things I love most about Quaker community is the paradoxical nature of our being. On one hand, our commitment to equality means that we strive to honour our significant diversity and the unique ways that the ‘still small voice’ may speak to and through each of us. On the other hand, our call to seek unity and consensus in decision-making amidst that diversity requires releasing individual opinions into gathered worship and trusting that we will be led as a collective body. It is this mystical and often mysterious process that we are leaning into right now on a national scale.

It is with that balance between honouring our individuality and striving for unity that I encourage you to approach the reading of these documents and the decision-making ahead... for no one Friend has all the answers on how we should move forward, and different Friends and groups of Friends have unique needs to consider as we seek to nourish and bolster our communities from sea to sea to sea.

Part of me wonders how different our responses to these queries would be if we were engaging in our discernment processes now instead of 2019.



Above: Yearly Meeting, 1969. Below: Woodstock, 1969. (Canadian Friend cover, Aug–Sept 1969; Wikimedia Commons)



Video conferencing is revolutionizing the ways we're approaching committee work, local Meetings, and gatherings like Western Half-Yearly Meeting or Representative Meeting while it is unsafe to congregate in person.

Yet I believe that at the heart of this journey of discernment, our strengths, our struggles and our possibilities haven't actually changed that much. In a way the pandemic has made them even clearer – and may make it easier for us to be bold in our visioning and experimentation in the months and years ahead. I am excited to see what will emerge as we spiral deeper into this work.

While our Ad Hoc Committee's work is complete on one level, this is only the beginning of our spirit-led transformation with Canadian Quakers. And if that sounds a tad overwhelming, don't worry... even as the AHCFS is laid down now, there is

already a new committee<sup>3</sup> in place to carry the torch! (And yes, I write that with both humour and earnestness).

We ask Friends to hold this ongoing transformation process in the light, and to trust that we are also being held by our Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel. I recognize that not everyone is equally invested in the future of CYM. Yet I hope that you will join us in reading even parts of these documents and contributing ideas for the future. We need all voices at the table as we continue in our discernment together.

With fierce love, hope, and readiness  
Rachel – for the AHCFS 🌱

<sup>1</sup> The summary document is part of the [February 2020 AHCFS Report to Representative Meeting](#). The source compilation is part of the [Final AHCFS Report to CYM in June 2020](#). Both can be accessed via [quaker.ca/currentadhoc/ahcfs](#) (from the quaker.ca homepage>Business>Ad Hoc Committee on Financial Sustainability).

<sup>2</sup> The full letter is also available on [quaker.ca/currentadhoc/ahcfs](#) (from the quaker.ca homepage>Business>Ad Hoc Committee on Financial Sustainability).

<sup>3</sup> That would be the Change and Sustainable Transformation Working Group (CAST), whose first report and draft statement of purpose and priorities for CYM can be read at [quaker.ca/business/news/cast](#).

**Food: Sufficiency, Security, Spirit!**

Report from the 2020 Atlantic Friends Gathering Program Planning Committee

Atlantic Friends Gathering (AFG) is an annual event that brings together members and attenders of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) from across Atlantic Canada and beyond. This is a weekend for fun and fellowship for individuals of all ages. Organized by Atlantic Half-Yearly Meeting, AFG takes place over the May long weekend at Camp Geddie, which is located on the beautiful northern shore of Nova Scotia.

The AFG planning committee worked together in the spirit of Friendship and service to come up with an inspiring program entitled “Food: Sufficiency, Security, Spirit!” This idea was the brainchild of Sylvia Mangalam and Helen Lofgren, which we felt was spirit-led and timely. Presenters who were scheduled to attend include:

- Maurice Burgoyne, a young farmer from PEI Allowed Meeting;
- Brenda Leenders, from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank;
- Matt Legge, from Canadian Friends Service Committee;
- Lil MacPherson, a Nova Scotia food activist and entrepreneur;
- Ralph Martin, a retired professor of agriculture at Guelph University and the former founding director of the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada;<sup>1</sup>
- Lucy Sharratt, from the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, and;
- Gloria Thompson, from the Friends World Committee for Consultation.

A beautiful group of Friends also came forward and committed to work as support personnel for the weekend. The organizing committee was very much looking forward to AFG 2020.

Unfortunately, the coronavirus changed everybody’s plans. It was a difficult but necessary decision to postpone this year’s AFG program due to the global pandemic. But hope remains alive! We plan to resurrect this fabulous programming next year (with the same presenters) and join together in Friendship over the Victoria Day long weekend, May 21-24, 2021. We would love to see you there.

Jocelyne Tranquilla

Clerk, on behalf of the AFG Program Planning Committee  
Daphne Davey (PEI Allowed Meeting), Helen Lofgren (Halifax Monthly Meeting), Mary Petrie (Truro Worship Group) 🌱

**The Power of Enough, Online**

St. Lawrence Regional Gathering  
June 2020

In keeping with pandemic defences, our St. Lawrence Regional Gathering was held online. Twenty-five Friends joined together from their homes in a video meeting on Saturday, June 6. The gathering includes six Monthly Meetings and four Worship Groups in the area bounded by Montreal, Potsdam (New York), Peterborough, and Ottawa, with Thousand Islands and Wooler in the middle. Most of these were represented.

The program, organized by Peterborough Friends, skillfully provided variety and breaks away from the computer screen. The organizers used “The Power of Enough” principle, which was the theme of the 2019 gathering. This generated relaxed but spiritually disciplined sessions. It was easy to be a participant.

There were two morning worship sessions, consisting of stories from the pandemic. We heard an astonishing variety of experiences of how Friends are dealing with isolation and loss of routines. This proved to be healing and inspiring for everyone, because all of us are unbalanced to some extent. We strongly felt the movement of the spirit among us as we spoke out of the silence.

A stretch break separated the morning sessions. At mid-day there was a full hour of live music. Tim Kitz and Chrissy Steinbock (who perform together under the name *Wychwood*) provided instrumental and vocal accompaniment, artfully generated with words on our computer screens.

After this generous break, the group recovered from an accidental closing of the video connection and reassembled to worship and share works of art, mostly done during periods of isolation. We saw marvelous paintings, carvings, and stained glass. Beautiful plants and poetry showed that artistry extends well beyond the graphic. The art sharing was again organized in two sessions, with a generous break.

The gathering closed in unity with a business session embedded in periods of worship. We enjoyed this gathering so much that we will hold another session online in the fall of 2020. Plans for 2021 include a spring session in Ottawa and an autumn session at Sylvia Powers home, pandemic permitting.

Bert Horwood is a member of Thousand Islands Monthly Meeting, worshipping in Prince Edward County and Wooler. 🌱

<sup>1</sup> Friends who wish to purchase Ralph Martin’s book *Food Security – From Excess to Enough* can do so by contacting Dundurn Publishing ([www.dundurn.com/books/Food-Security](http://www.dundurn.com/books/Food-Security)).

**Tradition and Continuing Revelation (Part IV)**

Elias Hicks – A Plain Quaker with Progressive Theology  
by Maida Follini, *Halifax Monthly Meeting*

*This is the fourth in a series of articles showing 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, and the third looked at the life and thought of William Penn, who worked to create new democratic and tolerant societies based on Quaker ideals and his humanistic theology.<sup>1</sup>*

We will now move forward to Long Island farmer Elias Hicks (1748-1830), who was born thirty years after the death of William Penn and lived to the first third of the 19th century. The American Enlightenment was in full swing at the time, opening up new concepts of the relationship of humankind to the divine. Religious tolerance was an important aspect of the new philosophy, which challenged the state-sponsored churches and theocratic origins of several colonies and states. This culminated in the enshrinement of religious freedom in the new nation’s constitution.

Long Island had had its own experience in freeing itself from the religious oppression of New Netherland’s governor, Peter Stuyvesant, who had Quaker preacher Robert Hodgson publicly tortured in 1657.

Elias Hicks, although only having a common school education, was an avid reader and was aware of the controversies regarding the traditional theology of his time. Self-education based on wide reading and common sense grounded in practical farm work allowed Hicks to make progressive contributions to Quaker faith.

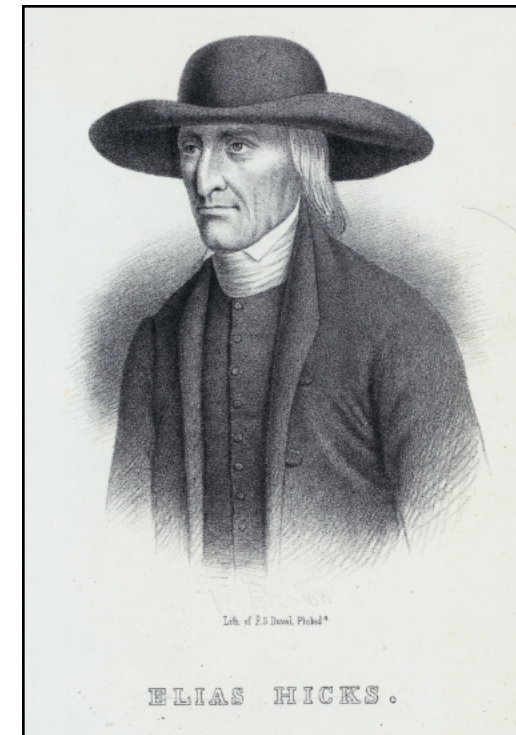
**Hicks’ Family**

Hicks was born into a family that had a long association with Friends. Elias’s great-grandfather Thomas Hicks, an Anglican and a Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, had visited and comforted noted Quaker preacher Samuel Bownas in 1702, when Bownas was imprisoned by the Anglican authorities for preaching in Hempstead. By the middle 18th century, there were many Friends Meetings in Long Island, and Elias’ father was a member of Westbury Friends Meeting.

Elias’s spiritual growth was gradual. As a youth he had raced horses, hunted and fished, played cards, and attended dances, joining in with other young people in the community. He began reading the Bible seriously in his late teens. He read the religious books owned by his family, including the works of William Penn, John Woolman, and Robert Barclay. In his mature years he borrowed books from his cousin Isaac Hicks’ extensive library, including Joseph Priestley’s *History of the Corruption of Christianity* and John L. Mosheim’s *An Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern*.

Elias married Jemima Seaman on January 2, 1771, at Westbury Friends Meeting. That spring, Elias and Jemima were invited to live on her

parents’ farm in Jericho and help with the running of the farm and the Seaman’s tannery. Elias and Jemima lived there for the rest of their lives, managing the farm and tannery. They had eleven children, of whom five lived to adulthood. Hicks divided his life between running the farm and tannery, and being deeply involved with the Society of Friends, both locally and throughout the Northeast. ➡➡➡



Lithograph by Peter S. Duval, (NY Public Library Digital Collections, public domain).

<sup>1</sup> These appeared, respectively, in *The Canadian Friend* of Spring 2019 (Issue 115.1, p. 7), Summer 2019 (Issue 115.2, p. 9), and Spring 2020 (Issue 116.1, p. 14) which are available from [quaker.ca/cympublications/the-canadian-friend](http://quaker.ca/cympublications/the-canadian-friend).

**Hicks' Ministry**

Over a fifty-year period between 1779 and 1829, Elias Hicks made 64 trips traveling in the ministry, with minutes from his home meeting, Jericho, and his quarterly meeting, Westbury. His trips took him to Friends' meetings in all the New England states, as well as New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, and Upper Canada (Ontario) as far north as Kingston.

Hicks proved a popular preacher wherever he went.

“By the time he was middle-aged, Elias Hicks was recognized as one of the two or three most effective Quaker ministers of the period. Immense audiences flocked to hear him, Quaker and non-Quaker....The governors of four states heard him speak, judges adjourned their courts that they and those in attendance might catch the message of the minister from Jericho, and twice the State House at Albany echoed his words.”<sup>2</sup>

**Hicks' Beliefs**

Elias Hicks believed, like George Fox and early Quakers, that every person had received within him a part of the Divine Spirit – the Inward Light, the Seed, the Christ Within. Hicks also held many traditional beliefs taught by other Christian sects. He believed in an all-powerful God who is our Creator and who can judge us – a God who is interested in our well-being and who showers us with blessings and the gifts of the created world.

Yet Hicks interpreted his beliefs through a particular perspective: that of the difference between the material physical world and the world of the Spirit. Hicks did not perceive God as a personage, but as an all-pervading spirit. Hicks said, “God is a spirit and nothing but spirit.”<sup>3</sup> As such, God is not limited to particular places or times. Churches and temples are not holier than other places – all places are holy. “The fulness of the Godhead dwells in us and in every blade of grass.”<sup>4</sup>

Because God as Spirit was all-good, therefore “power in the Divine Being is as fully limited by equity and justice as in any finite being.”<sup>5</sup> Hicks' view shows progress from earlier views of God. In the Old Testament, God could be an angry avenger.

And in the Calvinist view, God predestined most of humankind to a fiery eternity in hell, while saving only the elect.

For Hicks, the Eternal Christ, the Word, was here in the beginning and through all time, and is seen as inspiring humanity in the ages before Jesus and in far corners of the world where Christianity is unknown. This is the Christ who is the Word in the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

Hicks quoted from 1 Corinthians 1:24: “Unto them which are called, [we preach] Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” And he went on to explain,

“If Christ is the power of God and Wisdom of God, then certainly Christ the Saviour is God, inasmuch as it is impossible God's Power and Wisdom should be distinct or divided from himself... Christ is not distinct from God, but entirely that very same God.”<sup>6</sup>

For the traditional Christianity of the time, the belief that Jesus was born in a miraculous way as the (material) son of God and not as the son of Joseph was a crucial basis for his divinity. But for Hicks, Jesus became the son of God and participated in God's divinity through the Spirit of God descending to him upon his baptism (Matthew: 3:16-17). It was Jesus' spirituality which was crucial. It did not matter whether or not he was the (material) son of Joseph.

Like Penn before him, Hicks rejected the concept of the Trinity – that there are three separate persons who together constitute God. To Hicks, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and God the Father were different appearances and names for the same God.

**Hicks on the Crucifixion and Atonement**

Hicks rejected the view that God sent his son Jesus into the world to be crucified and thereby to atone for the sins of the world. He wrote that many thousands of righteous men and women had been persecuted to death by wicked men throughout history, yet:

“We do not believe that God sent any of these into the world purposely to suffer death in the cruel way they did, by the cruel power of the wicked. Neither do I believe that God sent Jesus Christ into the world purposely to suffer death in the way he did – any

2 p. 160, 161, and 162 of Bliss Forbush's *Elias Hicks: Quaker Liberal* (Columbia University Press, 1956).

3 p. 82 of *Dear Friend: Letters & Essays of Elias Hicks* (Editor: Paul Buckley, Inner Light Books, 2011).

4 p. 128 of H. Larry Ingle's *Quakers in Conflict: The Hicksite Reformation* (Pendle Hill Publications, 1986).

5 p. 90 of *Dear Friend: Letters & Essays of Elias Hicks*, as previously cited.

6 p. 149 of *Dear Friend: Letters & Essays of Elias Hicks*.

more than all of these. For I do not believe that God created any rational being and sent him into the world to suffer death for other men – because they were wicked and he was righteous – but it was the righteousness of all these that aggravated the wicked, and was the procuring cause of their hatred and vengeance towards them when they cruelly persecuted them to death. ... Their suffering was entirely opposite and inconsistent with the purpose and will of God. For if it was not, the perpetrators of those dreadful crimes and most atrocious deeds would all stand justified in his sight.”<sup>7</sup>

Hicks speculated about what Jesus would have done, if there had been no crucifixion. He would have continued his ministry on earth, “fulfilling the law, and turning the minds of people to the inward, and the law written in the heart, and by a life of perfect righteousness and self denial.”<sup>8</sup>

Penn had argued from scripture and from reason that God was a merciful and forgiving God, and he did not need a sacrifice to atone for people's sins. Like Penn, Hicks believed that atonement had to occur by change of behavior of the sinner. Hicks stated that atonement was not a one-time event, but that people must go through repeated atonements, as they make repeated errors. True atonement is, according to Hicks, a change in the life of the errant person, assisted by the guidance of the Inward Light of Christ.

Hicks went further than Penn and said that a humane person would rather suffer his own punishment for his sins than to accept an innocent person being tortured to death as a sacrifice.

“Surely, is it possible that any rational being, that has any right sense of justice or mercy, would be willing to accept forgiveness of his sins on such terms? Would he not rather go forward and offer himself wholly up to suffer all the penalties due to his crime, rather than the innocent should suffer?”<sup>9</sup>

Many churches ritualized the acceptance of Christ's sacrifice through the eating of bread and drinking of wine as the body and blood of Christ. For Hicks, this focus on the material blood and body of Christ was erroneous. And his preaching against this custom was shocking to traditional Christians.

7 pp. 78-79 of *Dear Friend: Letters & Essays of Elias Hicks*, as previously cited.

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

9 p. 173 of *Dear Friend*.

10 “Some Notes (such as they are) founded on Elias Hicks” in Walt Whitman's *Complete Prose Works: November Boughs* (David McKay, 1892), available from [www.bartleby.com/229/5021.html](http://www.bartleby.com/229/5021.html).

In a sermon quoted by Walt Whitman, Hicks said,

“The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. But what blood, my friends?... The blood of Christ – why my friends, the actual blood of Christ in itself was no more effectual than the blood of bulls and goats – not a bit more... That blood which cleanseth from the life of all sin, was the life of the Soul of Jesus.”

The Bible, Hicks said,

“Makes use of the outward blood, which is the life of the animal, as a metaphor and calls the life of the soul ‘blood’ because blood is a great part of the life in man... so the life of God in the soul is the blood of the soul, the blood of God, the blood of Christ the Saviour; but not the blood of that outward man, born of Mary, the son of Abraham and of David.”<sup>10</sup>

**Continuing Revelation**

The tenet of continuing revelation had allowed the Friends' faith to evolve and change over the years. Elias Hicks was nuanced in his view of the contents of divine revelation. He saw it as attuned to the needs of the individual. In any meeting, several Friends might receive divine revelations. And these revelations might be quite different, just as each person's needs might be helped by different messages. The divine spoke to the condition of the individual.

Hicks also saw revelations as adjusted to the needs of the cultures of the times – and changing with those needs. What was appropriate for humankind seventeen hundred years ago might not fit with his 19th century present, and what was just right for his own time might not fit for his descendants a hundred years in the future.

Hicks even hesitated to write down his beliefs, lest they become a dead tradition and a barrier to change in the future. The tenet of continuing revelation was the tool through which Quakers could adapt their faith to the changing world.

While the guiding process of faith did not change – a part of the divine spirit was written on everyone's hearts – the details of faith in action could change as later revelations guided humankind to previously unrealized insights. ➤➤➤➤

**The Orthodox-Hicksite Separation, and Further Developments**

During the final two or three years of Elias Hicks’s life, he faced opposition from Friends in Philadelphia and Quaker missionaries from Britain. The rise of the Holiness and evangelical movements in England and America, typified by Methodist preachers and revival meetings, affected Friends in both countries and revived a Christian religion focused on the crucifixion. For some Quakers, Christ as Saviour through atonement on the cross became the emotional centre of their faith.

The leaders of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting accepted creeds similar to those of the Anglicans, Methodists, and Presbyterians. The Bible was held up as the infallible highest authority and the Inner Light was undervalued. The atmosphere at gatherings became rife with mutual criticism and condemnation of each other’s point of view.

To avoid further disharmony, the followers of Elias Hicks retired and formed their own Yearly Meeting. So after April 1827, there were two Yearly Meetings – Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Orthodox) and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Hicksite). Other Yearly Meetings responded in different ways. New York Yearly Meeting continued its firm support of Elias Hicks’s preaching, and remained Hicksite.

The Hicksite-Orthodox split reflected more than theological differences. Hicksite Friends tended to be rural farmers and artisans, who retained plain speech and dress, and who viewed economic and technological development with a certain suspicion. (Hicks spoke against banks, canals, and railways, for example, and urged Friends to live less ‘worldly’ lives.) Orthodox Friends tended to be more urban (and urbane), with greater wealth and livelihoods tied to trade and industrialization. Urban Friends had tended to dominate Yearly Meetings because they lived near the Yearly Meeting headquarters, and some of the conflict over governance between the two factions amounted to rural Friends wanting more of a voice in Yearly Meeting affairs.

As Friends from the northern states began moving into Canada (Ontario or Upper Canada in particular, initially) and building settlements, they also started new Quaker Meetings. These Meetings were affiliated with their parent Meetings back in the States and maintained connection with either the Hicksite or the Orthodox Yearly Meetings.

Genesee Yearly, which included Meetings from the Genesee Valley in upper New York State, expanded to include new Hicksite Meetings formed in Canada by Friends from New York. Friends further west moved into the area around the Great Lakes and were affiliated with Orthodox Yearly Meetings in the mid-western states.

A further separation among Orthodox Friends in the late 19th century saw the emergence of small Conservative Yearly Meetings, who rejected further alignment with evangelicalism and the use of programmed services and paid ministers. Conservative Friends wanted to maintain the importance of waiting worship and the Inward Light, unlike Evangelical Friends. Meanwhile they wanted to remain firmly Christian, since they perceived Liberal/Hicksite Quakers as having moved beyond Christian faith to something more universalistic. Some Conservative Friends maintained other Quaker traditions, like plain dress and speech, after Liberal and Evangelical Friends left these behind.

Canadian Quaker Meetings eventually were affiliated with three yearly meetings: Genesee Yearly Meeting (Hicksite, which became Friends General Conference) which extended across the US-Canadian border; Canadian Yearly Meeting (Orthodox, which became Friends United Meeting) and Canadian Yearly Meeting (Conservative).

In 1955, a united Canadian Yearly Meeting was formed from these original three Canadian Yearly Meetings. This development paralleled the 1955 unification of some of the yearly meetings and branches in the United States. In both the U.S. and Canada, the three major strands of theology continue to provide the spiritual basis for Quakers who tend to follow either the Hicksite tradition based primarily on the Inward Light and continuing revelation, the evangelical tradition based primarily on salvation through the crucifixion, or a Conservative tradition that seeks to cleave closely to early Quakerism.

**The Great Chain of Nature**

One of these new insights involved respect for all life, not only human life.

As a youth, Elias would join other boys in their hunting. When they could not find acceptable game to shoot for the pot, they would shoot small song-birds for sport, to show off their skill at marksmanship. Later in life, Hicks identified indiscriminate hunting as against the code of the Creator as well as “contrary to our own true interest.”<sup>11</sup>

Hicks allowed that hunting for food was appropriate, but believed killing birds and animals just for sport was a criminal act. For “as all in the beginning was pronounced good that the good God made, there was a right proportion and a true medium and balance among the creatures that were to inhabit this lower world.”<sup>12</sup>

Hicks also criticized the way farmers, without wisdom of the uses of the ‘lower’ creatures, would kill those that fed on the crops “when a little care in frightening them away would have been sufficiently effectual.” Hicks pointed out that the “varmints” that people often kill – such as crows, hawks, foxes and raccoons – often feed on smaller creatures that eat crops. So if the varmints are killed, these creatures may reproduce without enemies, and spread “destruction and devastation over the fields.” Crows and foxes and other prey targeted by a proud hunter “may be as necessary a link in the great chain of nature and creation as his own existence.”<sup>13</sup>

**The Abhorrent Crime of Slavery**

Elias Hicks followed the example of John Woolman in working to end slavery. Woolman (1720-1772) was an early abolitionist who urged Friends to free their slaves and to not purchase any goods that were made with slave labor. In 1776-77, Elias Hicks was part of a committee of Jericho Meeting to visit Friends in the area and convince them of the evils of holding slaves. His own father freed his slave, and his father-in-law’s three slaves were freed. In Westbury Quarterly Meeting, 85 slaves were freed by their Quaker owners.

Elias petitioned with others to the New York State legislature to prohibit the importation of slaves into the state, and such

<sup>11</sup> pp. 12-14 of *The Journal of Elias Hicks* (Editor: Paul Buckley, Inner Light Books, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> p. 13 of *The Journal of Elias Hicks*

<sup>13</sup> pp. 13-14 of *The Journal of Elias Hicks*.

<sup>14</sup> pp. 144-148 of Bliss Forbush’s *Elias Hicks: Quaker Liberal* (Columbia University Press, 1956).

<sup>15</sup> p. 185. of *Dear Friend: Letters and Essays of Elias Hicks*, as previously cited.

a bill was passed in 1785. He advocated that Friends refrain from buying sugar, rice, and cotton produced by slave labor, and in 1794 New York Yearly Meeting endorsed a minute to that effect.

Hicks’ preaching against slavery offended some of the wealthy Friends in Philadelphia who held slaves, which resulted in an early display of disapproval of Hicks and his ‘radical’ testimony. In 1814 he published a twenty-four page pamphlet entitled “Observations on the Slavery of the Africans and Their Descendants” which was widely circulated in America and England and helped support the anti-slavery movement in both countries.

Hicks preached that “Every child of an African, born in America or elsewhere is born free” and that when held as slaves, they are held by immoral force, and they should not only be let go, but compensated for the harm done them.<sup>13</sup>

**Hicks and Simplicity**

Hicks was a progressive when it came to theology and human rights, but conservative about maintaining the plain way of life. He retained the simplicity, ‘old-fashioned dress,’ and plain language of early Quakers. He was opposed to displays of wealth, and to ‘frivolity’ such as dancing and the theatre, which he saw as forms of ‘worldliness.’

**What Hicks Gave Us**

Elias Hicks’ gifts as a ministering Quaker were widely recognized throughout the Northeast, and he was highly honored by Quakers and non-Quakers alike. Through his fifty years of ministry, Hicks held the far-flung Quaker meetings together, and preserved for us today the basic Quaker method of doing religion: quietly listening for the messages of the divine in our hearts.

Hicks performed a great service to the Society of Friends by emphasizing the near presence of the world of the Spirit, individual revelations, and the Light Within. Hicks wrote, “I am looking forward in the faith that greater and brighter things will be opened to a succeeding generation than I and the people of this generation can bear.”<sup>14</sup> 🙏

## A Parable for Our Times

by Brent Bowyer, Kitchener Monthly Meeting

Once upon a time, in a not-so-faraway place and time, there were some families who lived along a country road. Some were distantly related but couldn't remember how they were connected. They said, "Just because some of us have the same last name doesn't mean we're related!"

At one house, there were two sisters, Goforit, and Cant. They were pretty well opposites, one very enthusiastic about new things, the other always seeing reasons why something was too hard to try.

Not too far away lived Might, Could, Can, Wont, and Will. Might could think of lots of possibilities and used big words like 'hypothetically.' Could saw many things to do but wanted to look at both sides of the question. Can was willing to admit that a task was possible but wanted someone else to take the lead. That person was mostly Will, who was a person of action, always ready to jump in head-first. Wont had a chip on his shoulder and was determined not to go along with the others. He had a friend from Ireland on the next road named Willnt.

But down the road a little further lived a family of five that was quite different. They always looked back over their shoulders as they went from one place to another! Their names were Mightve, Couldve, Wouldve, Shouldve, and Shouldntve.

Couldve talked a lot about things that she hadn't done yet. Mightve agreed with Couldve, saying it was too late now but a shame that they had missed out. Wouldve did a lot of second guessing, thinking of how she would have done things differently herself if she had been in charge.

Shouldve was the biggest in that family. He often played with his neighbour, Wont. Shouldve carried a big stick or sometimes a sledgehammer. He was very angry about things that his family had not done right. He sometimes was very angry too about things he had not done right himself. Maybe he was a perfectionist.

Oh, I almost forgot Shouldntve. She was a twin of Shouldve. They thought a lot alike and often guessed what the other one was about to say.

You can imagine that with these different outlooks, there could be some strong differences of opinion. They quit visiting back and forth. They even quit talking to one another. Neighbourhood get-togethers were no longer held. Borrowed tools didn't get returned. Stuff began to mysteriously disappear from sheds and barns. Rounds of violence began; there were grudges and vendettas. Booby traps were set in the forest and fences were cut. Spiked belts were put on the roads. One time, the tail was even cut off someone's horse! It was everybody for themselves.



Photo: Brent Bowyer

Well, one winter, an enormous amount of snow fell, all within a few days. All the houses were nearly buried. The temperatures were so cold that the sap froze in the maple trees, and they started exploding. It sounded like guns being fired.

This went on for over three weeks. There was no way anyone could get out to get food and fuel. No one from the outside world could help, because it was just as bad elsewhere. It was terrifying, especially when they heard wolves howling close to the houses at night-time.

The phone lines were down, but luckily some of these people had cell phones still working. One woman heard an Inuk singer, Susan Aglukark, singing a song that went: "O Siem, we're all one family, O Siem, we're all the same."

Something almost unbelievable happened. It was like in the movie *Frozen*. After listening intently to the song, the woman started phoning others in the neighbourhood, saying, "Hey, you guys, we've got to work together or we're done for. We have to help each other!"

Somehow it worked. Don't ask me how! Goforit, Will, and Can were willing to help right away. And soon the others saw that they were right. It was the only way to survive! Even Wont agreed to try and do his part. After a while, news of all this spread to other neighbourhoods. A family on the next road over – where Must, Mustnt, Do, and Dont lived – also decided to try and treat one another better.

Maybe it was like in *Chronicles of Narnia* when Aslan roars and the snow of winter begins to melt, and the White Witch flees. As they began to work together, the snow began to melt! They began to listen to one another and talk to one another. They realized they weren't as different as they thought beforehand. Each of them was right some of the time, but no one was right all the time.

Shouldntve was right when she told everyone to quit making tunnels in deep piles of snow, saying it was too dangerous because the tunnels might collapse on little kids. Wont had the good sense to tell some drug dealers to get lost. Thank goodness for Goforit's energy and determination to quit just talking about things! She would just roll up her sleeves and start doing what needed doing.



Photo: Brent Bowyer

"O Siem, we're all one family, O Siem, we're all the same." They got the road opened. The older ones reminded the younger ones of how people used to work together in the olden days. Neighbourhood wood-cutting and quilting bees resumed. When someone's lawn mower or rototiller quit working, someone else shared theirs. When a barn burned down or a roof blew off, everyone came right away to help rebuild. One older woman who liked to bake started making bread, tarts, fudge brownies, and cookies to share with others up and down the road.

And when a deadly flu virus invaded and everyone had to stay isolated, some of the younger generation helped the older ones to use things like Zoom and Skype so they could see their grandchildren. Gardeners shared their harvest – zucchini, carrots and sometimes even maple syrup or strawberries. Life became peaceful and good again. Not perfect, but good.

And sometimes when we're walking down the road these days, we hear our one neighbour humming that song from long, long ago: "Big Yellow Taxi" with those words "Don't it always seem to go, that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone..." 🌿

### Out of Syria

He talked of miracles  
as we sat around the table.

We heard him say he thought he'd never get out  
Heard him describe how the shell slammed into the building,  
how the window shattered and collapsed  
how amazed he was that he was not hurt.  
How he thought he'd never get out.

(We knew) He had sent his wife, his children, his grandchildren  
(one of them newborn)  
out of Syria.

(We knew) They had suffered;  
he had worried, helpless, from back home –  
where home was being destroyed.

They had suffered  
Fear, privation, attack, abuse... he could not protect them.

And now, at last, he and his wife are together and safe with us.  
One daughter, a grandchild, and a grandchild-to-be  
arriving in a few days' time.

In the same voice as English classes and bus passes,  
he speaks of miracles and gratitude.

I watch the golden deltas of fine wrinkles  
that spread out from the corners of his eyes  
deepen with his smile  
as his smile deepens.

"With your help, and God's help, it is a miracle."

Carol Leigh Webking, Hamilton Monthly Meeting  
20 May 2019



## A Cancelled Meeting Reflection

by Bert Horwood, *Thousand Islands Monthly Meeting*

Sitting in silence at home when I would normally be worshipping with Friends, I felt led to write this brief reflection.

I started thinking that much of any religion grows out of the particular creation story that the religion has at its heart. For many of us in our youth, that story was the well-known one of Adam and Eve in the garden. The important part of that story in my upbringing was the first appearance of sin. Most everything else in the religion flowed from that fact of sin.

But today, while I concede that there is lots of sin around, its effects are feeble compared to those of the plague. I wonder where our very own novel coronavirus came from – what creative forces at work in the world shaped this thing?

I interrupted my worship to read a little virology on Wikipedia, arguably the new Bible. Coronaviruses are quite well known. The best opinion today is that they first emerged in bats and birds in roughly 3,000 BCE. They have evolved as cellular parasites in many different warm-blooded animals ever since.

Viruses are not something specially prepared for us humans. Bats, beluga whales, groundhogs, and birds – even plants, insects, and bacteria – are fellow sufferers.

Several lessons come from this information. We are not alone. We have not been singled out. We cannot cling to a notion of special status in the realms of life. The virus has evolved a beautiful mechanism for invading cells, taking over cell

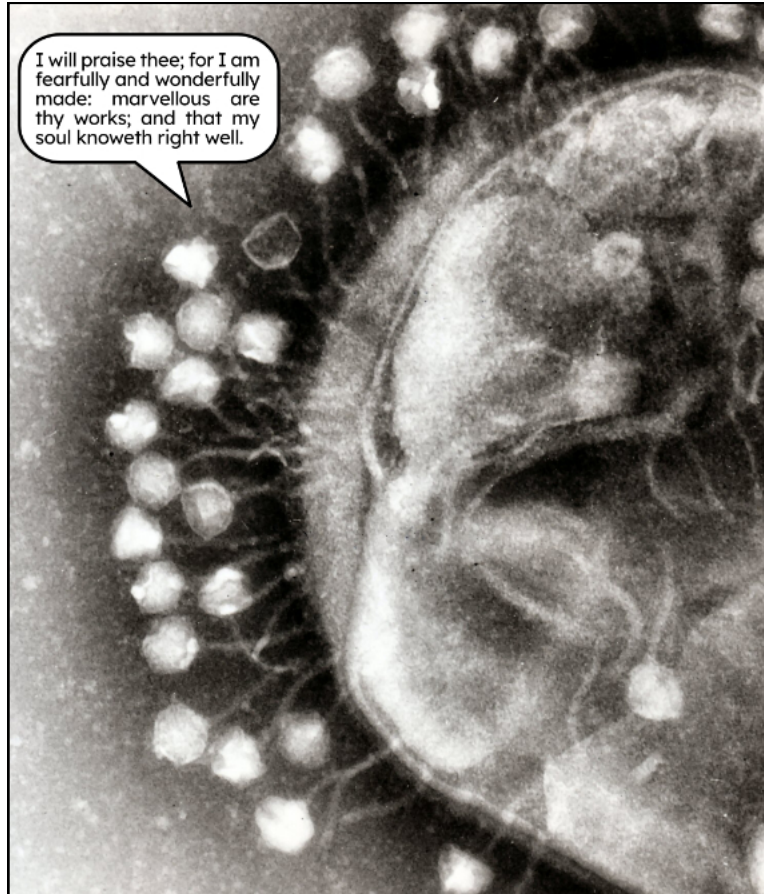
operation to replicate its viral RNA (which is like DNA), and construct a protein infective envelope for it. Then out it comes when the human (or beluga) host exhales.

If viruses had a creation story, they would thank their maker for giving them such an elegant way to live.

Another lesson is that we share life and death with the rest of the planet. We make our food out of other creatures: plant, animal, fungal, and, yes, viral. We in turn are food for others: fleas, yeasts, black flies, pin worms. It's only fair. We have no right to complain. I believe that the virus-human relationship, when fully understood, demonstrates the grandeur of the universal creative principle.

And I rejoice that we are able to catch a glimpse of it during an otherwise difficult time. I also rejoice in those who go beyond self-care to reaching out to care for

others. That makes us quite different from the virus, whose program is so limited. 🦋



How viruses pray, presumably. (Photo: Electron micrograph of multiple viruses attached to a bacterial cell wall; Dr. Graham Beards, [Wikipedia](#))

### GLEANINGS & QUOTATIONS

“Zoonotic diseases remind us, as Saint Francis did, that humans are inseparable from the natural world. In fact, there is no natural world. It's a bad and artificial phrase. There's only the world. Humankind is part of the world, as are all the viruses and carriers.”

— David Quammen (science writer, author of *Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic*)

## COVID-19 & Relationships with Our Nonhuman Neighbours

Where do we go from here?  
by Lydia Wong, *Ottawa Monthly Meeting*

After weeks of receiving “cancelled due to COVID-19” emails, I took a ruler and blue pen and methodically crossed out everything in my planner book that had been cancelled: “Lab meeting Tuesdays 12:00-1:00 PM.” Crossed-out. “Intensive 5-day statistics course.” Crossed-out. “Frisbee tournament in New Jersey.” Crossed out. “Mama visiting Ottawa.” “Visit sister’s farm” Crossed out and crossed out. “Research season in Colorado Rockies.” Very crossed out. Devastating for the data-hungry graduate student that I am. “Pay credit card bill and rent.” Not crossed out.

“Great,” I think to myself sarcastically. I skim bemusedly over my planner, now neatly decorated with ruler-straight blue markings and think about just how *disruptive* COVID-19 has been to my carefully plotted schedule and plans.

It's pretty clear: this virus has been extremely disruptive to everyone. With kids home from school, people forced to work at home, industries and businesses shut down, the economy plummeting, we can all agree that society's daily functions, schedules, and plans have been *severely disrupted*.

It's stunning to think that a virus whose particles<sup>1</sup> are a maximum of 140 nanometers in diameter can pull the economy to a grinding halt. (To put this in perspective, if you cut up a centimetre into approximately 70 000 equal slices, one slice would be roughly the size of the largest of a single COVID-19 viral particle).

Back in September this past year, hundreds of thousands of people all over the world flooded the streets demanding climate action and still the planes flew in the air. Some 140-nanometer viral particles get out, and suddenly the airlines shut down.

“How *disruptive* you are, you little COVID-19 particles,” I think to myself.

And yet, in thinking of these nanoscopic viral particles as disruptors to our methodically scheduled lives, it dawned on me that for much of human history, we humans have been – and still are – massive disruptors to the natural world and the land that we live on. The legacies of *Homo sapiens* as disruptors lie in the forests we have clear-cut to raise cattle,

the oceans we have fished empty only to fill with plastic, the mountains we have mined out, and the landscapes we have irreversibly ravaged with our ever-expanding, criss-crossing pipeline projects.

In a forest slated to be clear-cut for pipelines, the planner books of trees at this time of year might look something like this: “Initiate sap flow.” Crossed out. “Open leaves.” Crossed out. “Photosynthesis.” “Respiration.” Crossed out and crossed out. “Provide habitat, prevent soil erosion, absorb carbon, and retain moisture.” All crossed out.

“How *disruptive* you are, you little humans,” the land must be thinking.

Our disruptions have also gone far beyond the land. Their devastating impacts have also imposed massive disruptions on other humans. Over the past few months, the COVID-19 pandemic has redirected the media spotlight away from the Wet'su'weten demonstrations in northern British Columbia, but these pipeline projects are a prime example of human disruptions to the land reverberating upon the lives of other humans. *We Homo sapiens* are a highly disruptive species – to nonhumans and to our fellow humans alike. And we have been disruptors for very a long time. Much longer than a 14-day quarantine period.

Over the past two months, I've come across a handful of articles describing the COVID-19 pandemic as nature's “revenge.” “Mother Earth is getting us back!” the articles declare.

I try not to see it this way. The idea of revenge is such a human concept, and I hate to impose it on the good green Earth. Rather than seeing our relationship with the natural world as one between two enemies, I wonder if we can learn to see it as one between teacher and pupil, or elder and youth.

In the book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, author Robin Wall Kimmerer often describes plants, animals, and other members of the nonhuman world as our teachers and sources of wisdom and guidance. She writes that according to Indigenous ways of knowing, “humans have the least experience with how to live and thus have the most to learn.”

<sup>1</sup> Viral particles, or viroids, are viruses as they exist outside of cells, roughly analogous to a spore or seed that infects a host cell and hijacks its processes in order to reproduce. People who become ill with COVID-19 typically carry hundreds of viral particles which infect their cells, triggering the symptoms characteristic of the disease

Archaeology and evolutionary biology confirm this for us. The first human-like beings appeared on Earth some four million years ago. It sounds like a long time – until you realize that the first birds appeared on Earth over a hundred million years ago. The first mammals came about even earlier, at around 200 million years ago, fish at about 450 million years ago, and land plants at 500 million years ago. The earliest viruses? 1.5 billion years ago. I feel humbled to know that I am in the presence of so many elders.

Science writer David Quammen says that one of the reasons why humans are particularly vulnerable to disease outbreak might actually have to do with the fact that we are such a young species, evolutionarily. Other organisms that have been around for longer than us have evolved ways to effectively deal with disease.

Carpenter ants (and other ant and termite species) are one of my favourite examples of this. Considering that they live in colonies of thousands of individuals, I'm in awe of the fact that they are not perpetually consumed by disease. Their secret lies in what scientists call "trophallactic behaviour" – a fancy way of saying that ants with immunity to certain pathogens spread their immunity to other ants in the colony by sharing regurgitated food. This increases antimicrobial activity in immune-challenged individuals, bolstering the immunity of the entire colony. Behaviours like this don't just arise overnight. They take generations and generations for a species to evolve. But over time, the ants have done it.

I am certainly not recommending that we all go about regurgitating into one another's mouths. (For starters, that would be a tremendous violation of physical distancing protocols!) But given that we are the youngsters of the planet (with only a paltry four million years of evolution behind us), I wonder if we have some learning and changing to do.

I defer back to David Quammen who says in a podcast: "We should not let this crisis go to waste. We should use it as an opportunity to demand from ourselves and demand from our leaders substantive change, real, drastic change in the way we live on this planet, while we still have time."<sup>2</sup>

In many ways, I think we've started doing some changing. Within the span of a few weeks, the government has suddenly poured millions of dollars into supporting children, seniors, Indigenous communities, women's shelters, the unemployed, disabled, and homeless. This by no means has been enough –

COVID-19 is still disproportionately affecting the poor and under-privileged, but they are all good changes heading in the right direction.

Yet while our leaders frantically bail out our already broken societal systems, I wonder if the crisis COVID-19 has aroused is a call for change beyond the realm of social assistance. I wonder if we are also being called to fundamentally change the ways in which we see the world and to question our current understanding of *Homo sapiens'* place within the network of nonhumans that share the planet with us. COVID-19 is thought to have originated in live animal markets, but this is only one pathway through which animal disease spillover occurs. Sprawling urbanization, increasing globalization and relentless resource extraction have all been implicated in the rising occurrences of animal-originated disease.<sup>3</sup> I think few of us can confidently say that we have no hand in these processes.

It seems to me that somehow, we have crossed a limit and have disrupted a balance among our nonhuman elders that most of us have never cared or tried to understand. The youngsters of our human societies – teenagers and toddlers – are often associated with testing the limits of parents and other figures of authority. Perhaps this stage is a fundamental part of our learning to integrate within society.

While growing up, we push limits in the hours out past curfew, the kilometres per hour above the speed limit, and the defiant crayon scribbles across the wall. But after fair warning, most of us (I'd like to think) back off from pushing limits. We figure out what can be tolerated and what is ultimately good for us. We learn to play within the limits.

Take a step back and consider the human species as youngsters among all the nonhuman creatures that have been around for far longer than us. We have undoubtedly pushed limits – as attested to by the species harvested to the brink of extinction, the poisoned waters, the slivers of pristine forests, and the landscapes ravaged in our oil-hungry economies.

We have also been given fair warning that our disruptive behaviour has surpassed limits. The earliest scientific literature documenting the potentially devastating effects of overharvesting go back to the early 1900s. The fact that greenhouse gas emissions from human activity changes the climate has been known since the late 1800s. We've had fair warning for over a century.



Council meeting of the nonhuman beings. In attendance: representatives from the American Codfish, Aster, Bat, Bear, Bee, Beetle, Bluestem Grass, Caribou, Carpenter Ant, Cattail, Cecropia Tree, Coral, Corn Lily, Dragonfly, Frog, Fungi, Glacier Lily, Harebell, Kelp, Larkspur, Millipede, Monkey, Moth, Barrier Reef Fish, Salamander, Sea Star, Sea Urchin, Seahorse, Snail, Snake, Songbird, Stingray, Turtle, and Woodpecker communities. Regrets: Passenger Pigeons, Dodos, Great Auks, Woolly Mammoths, Golden Toads, Black Rhino. Not pictured: Bacteria, Protists, Single-Cell Fungi, Viruses. (Illustration: Lydia Wong)

Unlike our teenagers and toddlers, we haven't learned to play within the limits. Instead we march blindly, noses in the air, towards increasingly disruptive behaviour to the natural world, driven by a devout worship of perpetual economic growth. What must our nonhuman elders think of us?

I like to imagine that there was a recent a council meeting held among the plants, nonhuman animals, fungi, bacteria, and viruses. Different species presented their opening remarks. The cod fish voiced their concerns about overharvesting. The corals spoke of the massive die-offs they had seen among their people. The trees spoke of the clear-cuts and ensuing soil erosion.

"What should we do?" they asked amongst themselves. "The human people, our youngest brothers and sisters, haven't figure out how to live here and it's costing the lives of our

family. It will cost the lives of their own kind too."

"We've already tried to warn them," they say. "We've sent them so many messages, and the human youth, Indigenous activists, and scientists are all sounding the alarm bells, but no one seems to listen."

More discussion. Finally, they consult the oldest council members, the viruses, who have sat on the council for over a billion years. "Perhaps we will talk with the human people," the viruses say. "They might listen."

I know that the COVID-19 virus "talking with the human people" has resulted in immense suffering for many – especially those who do not have the privilege of comfortably self-isolating and singing "Happy Birthday" to the sound of an open faucet. >>>>

<sup>2</sup> "Shaking the Viral Tree: An Interview with David Quammen," *Emergence Magazine*, March 25, [emergencemagazine.org/story/shaking-the-viral-tree](https://emergencemagazine.org/story/shaking-the-viral-tree).

<sup>3</sup> Kate E. Jones and others, "Global trends in emerging infectious diseases," *Nature*, 21 February 2008, [www.nature.com/articles/nature06536](https://www.nature.com/articles/nature06536).

<sup>4</sup> Sarah Cox, "A dangerous road': Coastal GasLink pays to kill wolves in endangered caribou habitat in B.C. interior," *The Narwhal*, 13 April 2020, [thenarwhal.ca/a-dangerous-road-coastal-gaslink-pays-to-kill-wolves-in-endangered-caribou-habitat-in-b-c-interior](https://thenarwhal.ca/a-dangerous-road-coastal-gaslink-pays-to-kill-wolves-in-endangered-caribou-habitat-in-b-c-interior).

I am both disturbed and deeply saddened in thinking of those living in war-torn countries, remote regions, and under corrupt political circumstances whose innocent lives are snuffed out by this pandemic.

I am also inclined to think that broken relationships with the land and our nonhuman neighbours are often what lie at the root of social injustice, war, and corruption. If we remembered that the trees, wolves, and caribou are our elders, the Wer'suwet'en would not be experiencing such injustice and oppression at the hands of pipeline companies.<sup>4</sup>

To me this means that repairing our broken societal systems requires not only the outpouring of financial support from our governments, but ultimately a radical shift in how we perceive the natural world. Such shift will not come easily for many of us. Deeply ingrained in Western culture and scientific thought is a hierarchical structure with bacteria and viruses at the very bottom, plants and animals just above them, and humans at the top – apparently just a rung down from the angels and God.

In fact, so great is our hubris that scientists actually debate whether viruses should even be considered 'living,' due to their inability to reproduce without a host and to differences in their genetic structures in comparison with our own. Apparently, anything too unlike a human is not 'living.'

Society is nurtured on the thought that humans are the pinnacle of life. And yet the COVID-19 crisis seems to be challenging this hierarchy. We obviously aren't at the top – nanoscopic particles that we arrogantly consider to be 'non-living' have put entire countries into lock-down.

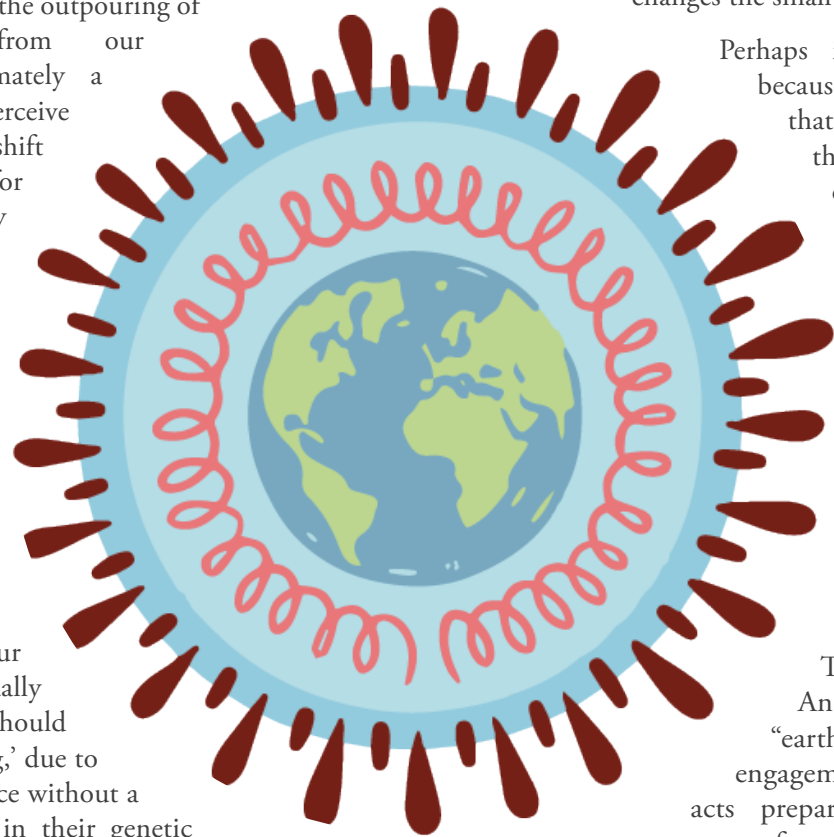
When we finally emerge from months of physical distancing, meticulous handwashing, and sneezing into elbows, I wonder where we will find ourselves. Many of us may come out of this pandemic with newly acquired habits – going for daily walks, new hobbies, and a routine string of video conferences may all be new additions to our lives.

I wonder if we can also come out with a new framework of thinking and new eyes to see the world around us. Re-envisioning our place among the nonhuman beings we share the planet with sounds like a massive undertaking. Perhaps it is. But I think for many of us, seeing the world this way changes the small things we do.

Perhaps it means we drive less because we know the fossil fuels that power our vehicles destroy the lands of our elder caribou. Perhaps it means we reject the use of single-use plastics, so that our fish elders can stay healthy in the lakes and oceans. Perhaps it means we painstakingly salvage paper because we know it comes from trees whose ancestors have been around for far longer than we can imagine.

These are all small things. And yet Ursula Franklin's "earthworm theory of civic engagement" tells us that small acts prepare the ground for the emergence of a common good.

And what might that common good be? Perhaps a fundamental part of being a human is to find the meaning of 'good.' I imagine that justice and respect for humans and nonhumans alike will be part of this good, but maybe it takes some listening to nanoscopic particles for us to really figure it out. 🐛



<sup>4</sup> Sarah Cox, "A dangerous road: Coastal GasLink pays to kill wolves in endangered caribou habitat in B.C. interior," The Narwhal, 13 April 2020, [thenarwhal.ca/a-dangerous-road-coastal-gaslink-pays-to-kill-wolves-in-endangered-caribou-habitat-in-b-c-interior](https://thenarwhal.ca/a-dangerous-road-coastal-gaslink-pays-to-kill-wolves-in-endangered-caribou-habitat-in-b-c-interior).

Note: Virus-globe illustration by Philippa Steinberg for the Innovative Genomics Institute, (Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0).

## Reconciliation Queries – Seeking Feedback

Canadian Friends Service Committee

Dear Friends,

In 2018 Canadian Yearly Meeting tasked Canadian Friends Service Committee with developing queries related to truth and reconciliation.

In response, CFSC created a small working group that has been developing these queries. We invite you to read these queries below and give us your thoughts on them. Please email all feedback to Jennifer Preston at [jennifer@quakerservice.ca](mailto:jennifer@quakerservice.ca) and Rob Hughes at [outlawimmigration@gmail.com](mailto:outlawimmigration@gmail.com)

### Preamble

As Friends engage in the work of upholding Indigenous Peoples' human rights, actively pursuing the decolonization of Canadian society, and building partnerships and practices of reconciliation under the guidance of and through respectful relationship with Indigenous people(s) in our local communities and across this land, we are committed to grounding our actions in our spiritual practices.

We acknowledge with gratitude that our principles, philosophies, and actions are grounded in the Quaker testimonies – including the testimonies to peace, equality, integrity, and unity and diversity, amongst others. We are grateful that our understandings of these testimonies are deepened and given direction by the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), the [Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#), and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's [Calls to Action](#) and [Principles of Reconciliation](#).

We honour the good work that Canadian Yearly Meeting and the Canadian Friends Service Committee are undertaking in support of Indigenous rights, decolonization, and reconciliation on national and international levels. We also honour the voices of Indigenous and non-Indigenous friends in guiding us to truth and love as we continue on this path. In light of the legacy (and continuity) of colonization, we hope this journey of listening, critical but loving reflection as individuals and communities, relationship-building, learning, and healing will continue for generations to come.

In this spirit, and building on the work CFSC has begun in this direction, we offer a few queries for Friends in their discernment and discussions. These queries and reflections are an invitation to challenge and inspire Friends individually and corporately as a faith body.

<sup>4</sup> See CYM Minutes on Truth and Reconciliation from 2015-08-03 and 2016-08-30 and [quakerservice.ca/resources/#Indigenous](https://quakerservice.ca/resources/#Indigenous) for related CFSC Resources.

In the queries, 'we' may refer to your local Meeting or Canadian Yearly Meeting as a whole. Overall, the queries ask:

How can we follow leadings of the Spirit, both individually and in our Meetings, to actively work towards the decolonization of Canada; recognition, promotion, and protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights; and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people?

To answer this, we can consider these more specific queries.

### Queries

1. How am I learning about Indigenous Peoples and building respectful relationships based in truth and understanding with them in the communities in which I live, work, and worship?
2. How can we increase our awareness of the local history of colonization and reconciliation efforts in our faith community?
3. What protocols or practices do we honour in our Monthly Meeting and collective gatherings to recognize Indigenous lands, waters, lifeways, and rights? How do we ensure these do not become tokenistic or rote over time?
4. In what ways can I stand in solidarity with the current concerns and rights of Indigenous Peoples? What protocols and permissions may I need to seek in this process?
5. How do I relate to concepts of 'home' and 'belonging' in the context of settler colonialism?
6. Do my actions support Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty?
7. Am I doing my own work in educating myself about reconciliation and decolonization? Am I aware of my own areas of ignorance, bias, and discomfort? As a settler, how can I do my own decolonization work and avoid shifting the burden of that work onto Indigenous people?
8. How are we doing our own work to decolonize and honour the rights of Indigenous Peoples as a faith community? How are we actively challenging the direct personal, structural, and cultural violence of settler colonialism where we encounter it? What does reconciliation require of us as Friends? 🐛

## Seeking Right Relationships

by Judith Brown, Ottawa Monthly Meeting

I was sad to read in the last Canadian Friend that Ojibwe broadcaster Jesse Wente believes that “reconciliation deserved to die.”<sup>1</sup> Though he did not say what he meant by the word ‘reconciliation,’ he did say that Indigenous and settler-colonist relationships needed to change completely.

CFSC has created a valuable web page ([quakerservice.ca/news/indigenous-voices-on-reconciliation](http://quakerservice.ca/news/indigenous-voices-on-reconciliation)) featuring four other Indigenous views of the word reconciliation. All five voices seem to agree the word ‘reconciliation’ has some problems, although there is a broad range of reactions.

For example, in the videos on the CFSC page, Naomi Bob (Snaw’nas’as First Nation, Lyackson First Nation, and Peguis First Nation) says reconciliation is a complex word that represents an imbalance of power in society and a responsibility that has not been met on the settler-colonial side. Sheryl Lightfoot (Anishinaabe from the Lake Superior band of Ojibwe) says the word is losing its meaning and it often lacks substance when it’s used. Reconciliation represents a lot of hard work to her. Whatever the reaction to the word ‘reconciliation,’ all voices, including Jesse Wente’s, are calling for better relationships.

Building toward right relationships has been the goal of a group of Friends who self-organized after participating in a conference at Pendle Hill in May of 2018 called “Truth and Healing: Quakers Seeking Right Relationship with Indigenous Peoples.”



Naomi Bob, in one of CFSC’s videos.

One outcome from this group has been the creation of the website called Decolonizing Quakers ([www.decolonizingquakers.org](http://www.decolonizingquakers.org)). The aim of this group is “to learn and act upon the truth of Quaker history with Indigenous Peoples, to acknowledge the wounds resulting from this history for all peoples impacted, and to engage in actions that move toward justice and recognize the dignity of all those concerned.”

Last year this group, led by John Meyer and with the engagement of others, began organizing a second conference. However, as a result of the pandemic, the conference idea has now been transformed into a series of webinars.

Now, with the support of the Canadian Friends Services Committee and others, Pendle Hill is sponsoring a series of six webinars, “Working Towards Right Relationship with Indigenous Peoples.”

- In the first webinar, on Monday, August 10, from 7:30-9:00 pm (Eastern Time), Haudenosaunee lawyer Will David (Senior Advisor with Inuit Tapirit Kanatami) and Chippewa lawyer Jerilyn DeCouteau will give a broad overview of Indigenous sovereignty and Indigenous-government relations in Canada and the United States.
- The second webinar on August 24 will feature two Canadian experts discussing the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: CFSC General Secretary Jennifer Preston and Sheryl Lightfoot, the Canada Chair of Global Indigenous Rights and Politics at the University of British Columbia.

<sup>1</sup> Page 6 of the [Spring 2020 issue](#) included quotations from a CBC radio spot, available online as: “Reconciliation is dead and it was never really alive”: Jesse Wente,” *CBC News*, 25 February 2020, [www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/jesse-wente-metro-morning-blockades-indigenous-1.5475492](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/jesse-wente-metro-morning-blockades-indigenous-1.5475492).

<sup>2</sup> Detailed descriptions on the webinars are available at [www.decolonizingquakers.org/right-relationship-webinars](http://www.decolonizingquakers.org/right-relationship-webinars).

## A Note from your Editor

Timothy Kitz, Ottawa Monthly Meeting

An interesting post from Kathleen Wooten ([quakerkathleen.org](http://quakerkathleen.org)) recently alerted me to an equally interesting anecdote about George Fox:

“In Leicester at a meeting held in a church to discuss religious issues: A woman asked a question from the first epistle of Peter, “What that birth was — a being born again of incorruptible seed, by the word of God, that liveth and abideth for ever?” The local priest said to her, “I permit not a woman to speak in the church.” This brought Fox to his feet, who stepped up and asked the priest, “Dost thou call this place a church? or dost thou call this mixed multitude a church?” But instead of answering him, the priest asked what a church was? to which George replied, “The church is the pillar and ground of truth, made up of living stones, living members, a spiritual household, of which Christ is the head; but he is not the head of a mixed multitude, or of an old house made up of lime, stones and wood.” This set them all on fire; the priest came down from his pulpit, the others out of their pews, and the discussion was broken up.”<sup>1</sup>

I don’t know what old George had against mixed multitudes, but it is heartening to see that silencing women raised his ire. It’s also good to be reminded that our churches – our Meetings, our spiritual communities – are not physical structures but each other.

We need physical things to meet each other, since we’re not floating spirits or abstract intellects. We need buildings or printed pages or wifi signals to experience each other, but none of these things are themselves our community – and we can pour the wine of our fellowship into new wineskins.

Or perhaps we simply need the earth beneath us, and the sun up above. (And what if we learned to not simply “meet outside,” but to meet to recognize and participate in our “kindred interconnection” with the world around us, as the [Wild Church Network](#) advocates?)

And now that we have learned to meet outside and with Friends far away, will we ever go back to ignoring these options? 🙏

<sup>1</sup> p. 43 of Samuel M. Janney’s *The Life of George Fox; with Dissertations on His Views Concerning the Doctrines, Testimonies, and Discipline of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: Friends’ Book Association, 1875), as digitized by Google Books.

Other webinars that are currently being finalized are:

- cultural appreciation vs. appropriation
- solidarity and guidance for engagement
- intergenerational trauma and healing among Indigenous Peoples
- truth, conciliation, and healing processes<sup>2</sup>

A great deal of spirit-led work was undertaken behind the scenes, balancing Indigenous, non-Indigenous, Canadian, and American content and voices. This webinar series will speak to the inhabitants of both countries. And, although it’s mostly designed for settler-colonists, it’s meant for anyone with an interest in these topics, non-Indigenous or Indigenous, Friend or non-Friend. The invitation to participate is wide open. You can register on the Pendle Hill website ([pendlehill.org/learn/fall-conference-2020](http://pendlehill.org/learn/fall-conference-2020)).

In Ottawa Monthly Meeting we have just begun a process for creating a land acknowledgment. Planning work is being done by half a dozen members of our Waters of Reconciliation Group (which has 33 participants in all). We have decided to move slowly to become more informed before we write our land acknowledgment. We want to engage everyone in the Meeting if possible. And we want to end in a place where we have a land acknowledgment and a better relationship with the Indigenous peoples living in Algonquin territory.

This series of webinars presents a great opportunity for learning, dialogue, and reflection which will help us do a little of that hard work that is required to achieve a form of reconciliation that is meaningful, much needed, and life-giving. 🙏

### A Cyber Ode to Rumi

by Keith R. Maddock, Toronto Monthly Meeting

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

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



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