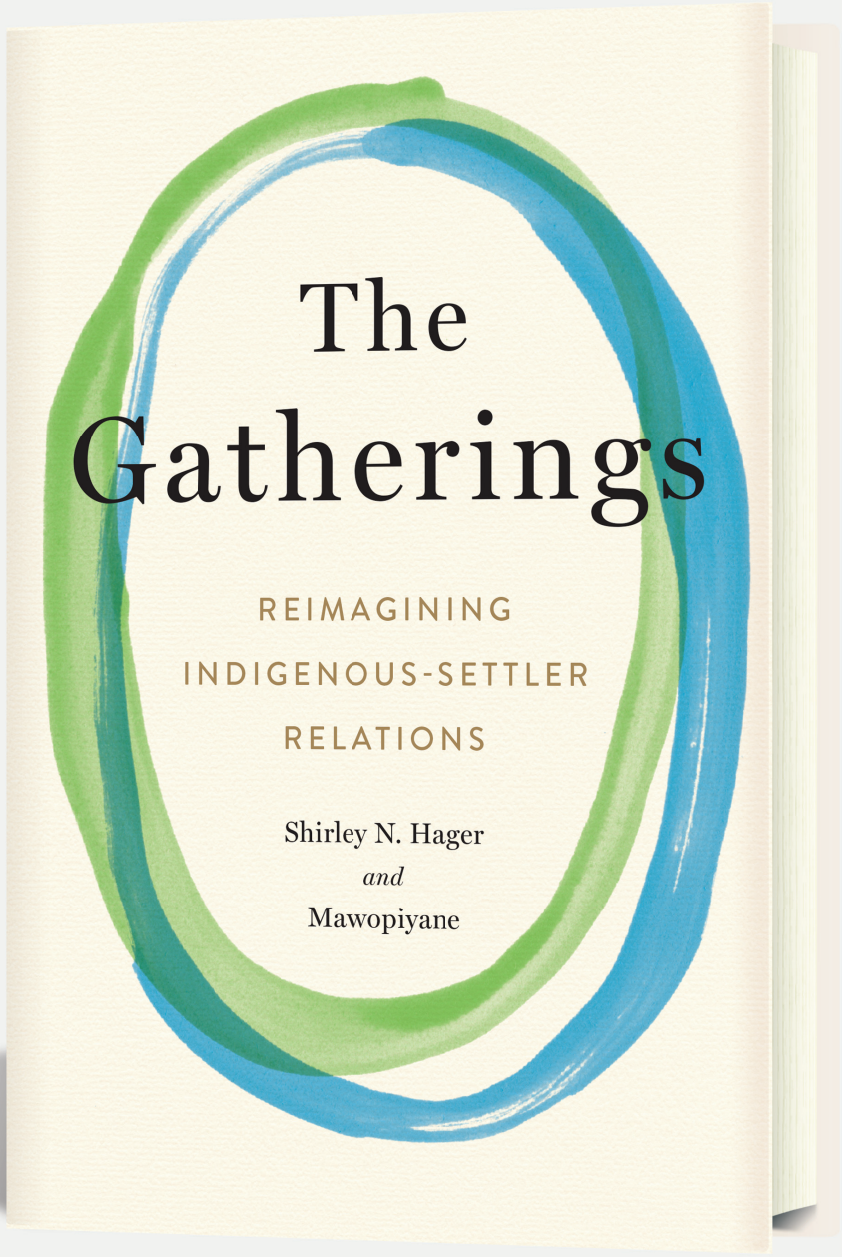
THE CANADIAN FRIEND



QUAKER NEWS & THOUGHT

WINTER 2021 VOLUME 117 NUMBER 1



New from **Aevo UTP**

Thirty years ago, in Wabanaki territory, a group of Native and non-Native individuals came together to explore some of the most pressing questions at the heart of Truth and Healing efforts in the United States and Canada. *The Gatherings* tells the moving story of these meetings in the words of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. Reuniting to reflect on how their lives were changed by their experiences and how they continue to be impacted by them, the participants share the valuable lessons they learned.

"*The Gatherings* brings together voices and perspectives, rarely shared so openly and bluntly, on the long road and commitment needed to cultivate understanding across cultures, and particularly across Native/non-Native communities."

HOLLY WILKINSON
Executive Director, WholeHeart, Inc.

"*The Gatherings* calls me back to the deepest roots of my own faith tradition. Several times it brought me to tears. There is deep healing here, and truth, and an even deeper love."

NOAH MERRILL
Secretary, New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

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Cover: October Prayer (acrylic on canvas, 42" x 42")
Artist: Jean E. Sonmor

"After the first hard frost, I noticed rhubarb laying in a circle of colour, like prayer flags. This made me think of how we humans are attracted to that form, especially in our spiritual practice. We all come from communities that once sat shoulder to shoulder in circles for comfort, for warmth, for sharing, and for prayer."



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

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 or
Canadian Friend Editor c/o CYM Office 91A Fourth Ave, Ottawa, ON, K1S 2L1

Upcoming Dates

Summer Issue	May 15	Submission Due Date	Autumn	Sept 7	Submission Due Date
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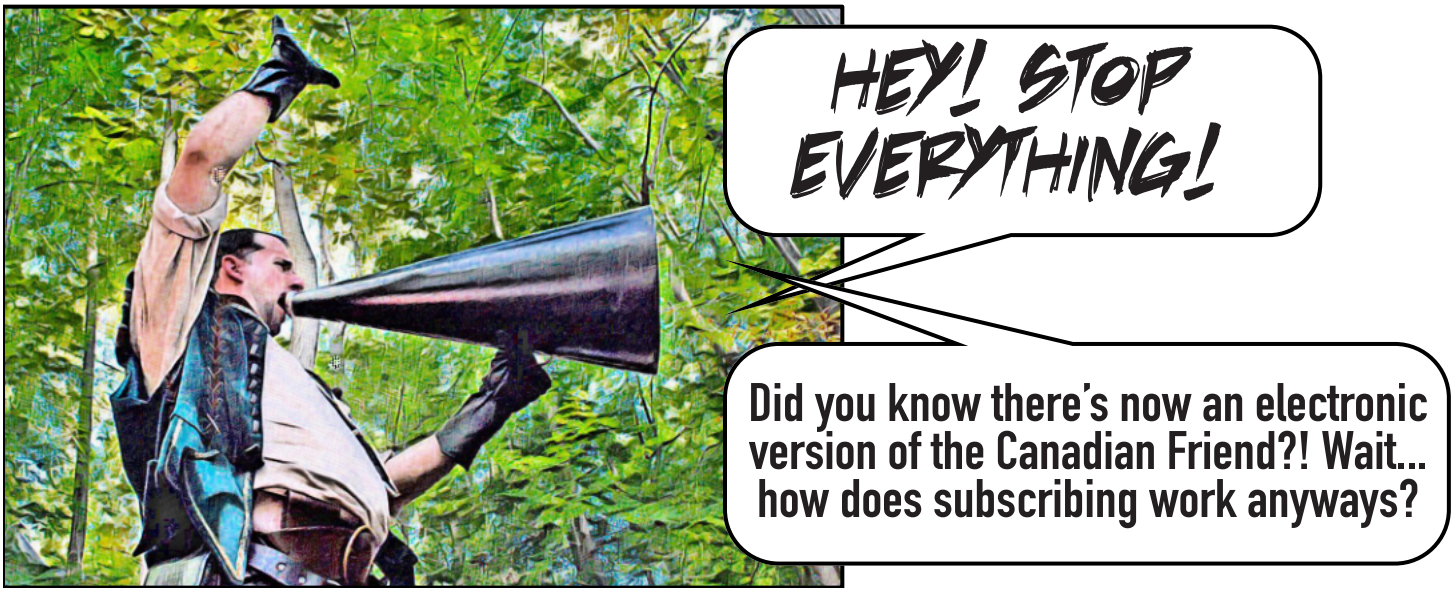
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Classifieds	$0.50/word	$0.43/word

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



ABOUT

The Canadian Friend is the magazine of Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM), published three times a year. It is paid for by donations and funds administered by the Yearly Meeting, to further the work and witness of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Canada.

Any interested member or regular attender of affiliated Quakers Meetings in Canada can be added to the **group subscription** at no cost. Donations to defray the magazine's costs are deeply appreciated from those with financial means to do so.

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Peterborough Monthly Meeting

Zoo and Zoom Meetings

by Martha Butler, Peterborough Monthly Meeting





A sparse meeting in a large room; September 13 at the zoo.

Friends in Peterborough have been able to meet during COVID, although we miss seeing some who self-isolate due to underlying health issues. In the good weather, we met outdoors, including several meetings at the zoo! We now alternate meeting by Zoom with in-person distanced Meetings in a large room.

Recently, we had a sharing of poetry – hopefully this will happen again soon. Some are meeting to look at poverty in our area, reflecting a growing concern with homelessness and food insecurity. Although we didn't find ourselves able to help with a request to bring refugees here, several of us signed on with an application that is going forward from the local Unitarian Fellowship.

Before COVID, we had a workshop with Friend Matthew Legge, author of *Are We Done Fighting* and Peace Program Coordinator of Canadian Friends Service Committee. Reading it has helped a number of us to learn Quaker perspectives at a time when we can't meet in a regular study group.

(The spirit of our Meeting is shown by their letting a relatively new Friend write this report!)

Wooler Monthly Meeting

Grand Opening!

by Dan Nelson, Wooler MM

After many decades of service, the former outhouse and woodshed at the Wooler Meetinghouse, built by James Fox and Charlie Nelson, was torn down and replaced with a new outhouse and woodshed – complete with electric lights and steel siding and roof!

The ceremonial opening took place following Meeting on September 27th.



L-R: Dale Nelson, Elizabeth Rolston, Laird Nelson »

Reconnecting with Western Half Yearly Meeting over Zoom

by Ro Fife, Saanich Peninsula Monthly Meeting

As we adjust to our new reality during these challenging covid-19 times, one of the unexpected happy consequences for me has been the opportunity to participate in Western Half-Yearly regional gathering, albeit on-line.



Some collective art from an intergenerational activity at Western Half Yearly Meeting.

Traditionally Western Canadian Friends have gathered twice a year for a half-yearly meeting, alternating the location between British Columbia in May and prairie locations in Alberta or Saskatchewan at Thanksgiving weekend every fall. Participating in Western Half Yearly Meeting (WHYM) has always been a demonstration of significant commitment. The geography of WHYM encompasses Friends from the Manitoba/Ontario border to the Pacific Coast of British Columbia – a distance of over 2,000 kilometers. Yet many dedicated Western Friends spend their Victoria Day and Thanksgiving long weekends on lengthy family car drives, arriving to stay at rustic camp facilities, packing along their meals for the weekend and entering into an often-frenetic weekend of fellowship with Friends.

Covid-19 has forced a significant change to our pattern. Back in the spring, Western Friends quickly got creative and began to explore ways to continue our meaningful gatherings for fellowship and community building. Then, with the Zoom meeting platform and technical support from knowledgeable Friends, western Friends again gathered virtually this past Thanksgiving weekend. With this change, it seemed easy to join these gatherings and resume involvement – and renew friendships and connection.

What We Gain

Meeting as an on-line gathering has enabled Friends to remain connected regionally in this most challenging time. I was pleasantly surprised to meet up with old acquaintances. I have lived on the south end of Vancouver Island for some 25 years with a previous sojourn in Northern Alberta in the early 1990s. I had irregularly attended both Fall and Spring WHYM, but I had not participated directly in a WHYM gathering in over 15 years.

Typically I have begged off my attendance to the gatherings due to the cost and lengthy travel demands, as well as work schedules and family commitments. But joining in on-line made it simple and manageable to participate with the group, and there were other Friends participating who would not have been able to physically attend.

Highlights

Worship fellowship was a highlight for me, as it seems well suited for using a Zoom platform to share in a small group setting. Big thanks to Beth Curry for coordinating these groups. I find these smaller configurations very appealing for building community and strengthening fellowship.

Another highlight was the Saturday night presentation, led by Rick Juliusson, a member of Cowichan Valley Monthly Meeting. He shared candidly and in a heartfelt way about his experience living and working in the greater Minneapolis area in the midst of the murder of George Floyd and the protests that followed this past summer. Almost thirty Friends were able to join in this evening of learning. Similarly, the spring gathering was able to host CFSC staffer Keira Mann to present the work of the service committee without the need of extensive travel and increasing our carbon footprint.

Another helpful addition at this fall's Western Half was the enhanced use of breakout rooms, particularly after larger Zoom sessions – such as Meeting for Worship and the evening presentation. This added opportunities for Friends to

mix and mingle and expanded the community feeling of the gathering. As well, these gatherings have continued to expand the use of other dialogue and chat tools such as Discord.

Continued Challenges Ahead

Friends are still learning, as is the world around us, what online communication and gatherings need to assist in connection and community building. Breakout rooms and chat groups work for some, but we are all aware that there are still many barriers to an online-only gathering – including the challenge of spanning multiple time zones and technical capacity limitations for some Friends.

Finally, we will need to face another challenge of the Pandora's Box which these on-line meeting models have opened. Moving forward, when Friends can resume in-person gatherings, we will need to find ways to continue to include remote Friends who have been able to re-engage by joining in virtually. With patience and creativity, ways will open to expand our gatherings and continue to build our community fellowship.

I particularly want to express deep appreciation to tech-savvy Friends, including folks from Calgary Monthly Meeting and Victoria Friends Meeting, for sharing their expertise and infrastructure to assist with Western Half Yearly on-line. This on-line Friend thanks you for your time and patience and leadership to help us stay connected. It has been very meaningful to reconnect from the comfort and safety of my own sunroom, and I deeply value the welcoming response of the Western Half Yearly community.

Upholding Far-Off Friends Just Got Easier

by Abigail Maxwell, Britain Yearly Meeting

What did I know of Canada, from England? I had a few cultural references: Margaret Atwood, of course, Robert Bringhurst, the band Rush, "Cardinal" from the TV. Pierre and Justin Trudeau, tar sands, a few confused memories of hearing of the acquisition of Canada for the British Empire, told as derring-do rather than colonial politics. I had met some Canadian travellers and immigrants.

One of the blessings of this year has been worshipping on Zoom. For me, it is as deep as worshipping in person, and worship at Pendle Hill has helped me be more disciplined with a daily practice than ever before. We are together in the present moment, even if for them it is morning and for me afternoon. I have a Bible and *Quaker Faith & Practice* on the table by my computer, and I can look up and out of the window, from my wooden chair, or see 25 Friends on my screen. We can support each other in Quaker community, and way may open where we can support each other in Quaker action too.

One of many sadnesses was the cancellation of Britain's Yearly Meeting Gathering, where we would have met for a week together. At least for typical attenders – white, middle-class, privileged people – our gathering in person in Bath would have been a wonderful coming together in close community, a week of deep conversation, sharing, and encouragement. I heard of CYM2020 when worshipping with Pendle Hill, and wanted a more extended experience of worship. I also wanted to uphold Friends in their virtual gathering.

So instead of the British gathering, I joined Canadian Friends in worship and worship and worship-sharing, and got a taste of the spirit of Canada from the gentle ministry. A highlight was a baby in Vancouver being shown to her wider community and welcomed. I love the idea that one presentation described, of "Two Rows on the Grand," of Indigenous people and the descendants of settlers coming together in a journey over days, an antidote to that imperial daring, and I would not have heard of it but for the YM.

There was no business. When we meet together in person for business, I hardly know what unconscious primate perceptions make me feel that the atmosphere changes when we come together into unity on a matter. I don't know how we could signal that through Zoom – perhaps if those 25 tiny pictures all showed people looking directly at the camera with a broad smile. What is the same, on Zoom or in person, is that a group of people are clear enough to take the next step forward, and they put that step into agreed-upon words. What is the same is the Leading and the Way. We will grow accustomed to Zoom business, in time. I hope the Ministry and Counsel reps' meeting went well.

I ended the week with affection for a few more of those tiny pictures on my Pendle Hill worship screen, knowing a little more of the lives and struggles of my Friends, brought together in love around the world.

Tradition and Continuing Revelation (Part V)

John Greenleaf Whittier – Quaker Farmer, Poet, Editor, Politician & Abolitionist

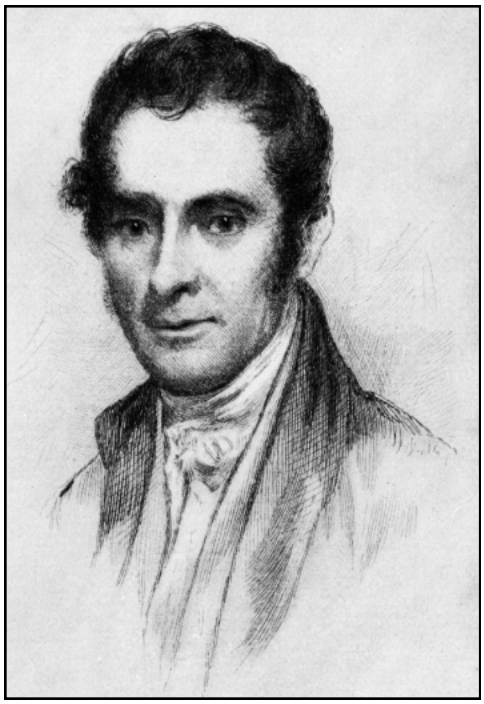
by Maida Follini, Halifax Monthly Meeting

This is the fifth 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, (1624-1691) and the birth of the Quaker movement, while the second turned to his contemporary Robert Barclay (1648-1690), the first great Quaker theologian. The third looked at the life and thought of William Penn, (1644-1718), who worked to create new democratic and tolerant societies based on Quaker ideals and his humanistic theology. The last instalment explored Elias Hicks (1748-1830) and his progressive, metaphorical interpretation of biblical and traditional aspects of religion.[1]

We now turn to John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892) and his optimistic belief that God was a loving and merciful spirit who cared for humankind. Whittier was a man of wide-ranging vocations: farmer, poet, journalist, politician, and advocate for social justice. Whatever he did, his life reflected Quaker values, particularly as he used his pen to advocate for an end to slavery.

Family and Early Life

John Greenleaf Whittier was born in 1807 to John and Abigail (Hussey) Whittier in Haverhill, Massachusetts. His ancestor Thomas Whittier had arrived in Massachusetts Bay colony in 1638 and eventually settled in Haverhill, where he first built a log house, and, after marrying and having ten children, a substantial frame house in 1688. This was where his great-great-grandson was born, and it is still standing, now a museum honoring the poet. Thomas Whittier's youngest son Joseph married Mary Peasley, who was from a Quaker family, and the descendants of this marriage followed the Quaker religion.



Whittier at age 29 (from 1898's *American Bookmen* by Howe, M. A. De Wolfe – public domain, via Wikimedia).

John Greenleaf Whittier grew up in a three generation household that included parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. The family attended Quaker Meeting at the Amesbury Friends Meeting.

John and his younger brother Matthew shared chores and worked with their father and uncle on the farm. But unlike the more robust Matthew, John was slender and delicate and suffered spells of ill-health throughout his life, consisting of recurring heart pain and chronic headaches. Nevertheless, he strove to be active all his life, although he had to give up many opportunities because of ill-health.

Whittier the Poet

Whittier very early showed his interest in making rhymes. He scribbled verses on the wooden beams of his mother's loom, and at school filled his slate with rhymes that he passed around amongst his fellow students.

Whittier started his career as a published poet at the age of 18, when his older sister Mary, without his knowledge, sent in a poem of his to the *Newburyport Free Press*. The poem, "The Exile's Departure," was not only published, but the editor commented that Whittier's poem "bears the stamp of true poetic genius."

The editor of the *Free Press* was William Lloyd Garrison, who, although only a few years older than Whittier, was a skilled printer and journalist. He became a life-long friend of Whittier, which began when Garrison paid a visit to Haverhill to meet the young poet. He tried to convince the Whittier parents to provide their son with more than an elementary school education. But the father, who was labouring to pay off a mortgage on the farm, replied "Poetry will not give him bread."[2]

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1 The article on Fox appeared in *The Canadian Friend* issue from Spring 2019 (Issue 115.1, p. 7), Barclay in Summer 2019 (Issue 115.2, p. 9), Penn in Spring 2020 (Issue 116.1, p. 14), and Hicks in Summer 2020 (Issue 116.2, p. 9), all of which are available from quaker.ca/cympublications/the-canadian-friend.

Whittier, determined to gain further schooling, worked to earn his tuition by making and selling slippers and by teaching in a small district school. He earned enough to support himself for two terms of schooling at Haverhill Academy. He entered in May 1827 at the age of 20 and studied English literature – Shakespeare, Sterne, and Swift – history, travellers' adventures, as well as the French language. This was the end of Whittier's formal education, but it was the beginning of a life-time of study of a wide range of literature. Whittier's self-education throughout his life was to be his university.

A Beginning in Journalism

At William Lloyd Garrison's recommendation, Whittier was employed as editor of a Boston paper published by William Collier & Son, the *American Manufacturer*. This gave him his start in journalism, which he pursued for the next decade. Between 1829 and 1840, Whittier edited several other journals – the *Haverhill Gazette*, the *New England Weekly Review*, and *The Pennsylvania Freeman*. He also contributed poems to a wide variety of journals.

While editing the *New England Weekly Review* in Hartford, (1830-1831) he met a wide circle of writers, academics, and politicians who were leaders in Connecticut's capital city.

Changes in the Whittier Household

The household in Haverhill was growing smaller. Whittier's Uncle Moses died following an accident in 1824. Whittier's father passed away in 1830. In March 1831, Whittier returned from Hartford to help his mother settle his father's estate. In January 1832, he resigned his editorship of the *Review*, it being impractical to continue editing at a distance.

Whittier now had the responsibility of maintaining the family farm at Haverhill and seeing to the support of his mother and sisters. He continued sending in poems and articles to various journals, and participated in local politics. Whittier himself had some electoral success, being elected to the Massachusetts General Court (the state legislature) in 1835 and 1836.

Garrison and Abolition

Whittier's friend Garrison started *The Liberator*, an abolitionist weekly in Boston in 1831 and founded the New England Anti-Slavery Society the next year. In March, 1833, Garrison wrote to Whittier, urging him to take up the cause of the "two million of our countrymen who are doomed to the most horrible servitude which ever cursed our race and blackened the page of history…This is the time… for any friend of his country to put forth his energies, in order to let the oppressed go free. …Whittier, enlist! your talents, zeal, influence – all are needed."[3]

Whittier was quick to answer this call. In June, 1833, he published a tract entitled *Justice and Expediency, or Slavery Considered with a View to its Rightful and Effectual Remedy, Abolition*. This pamphlet was intended to convince slave-owners and citizens that abolition was a safe, just, and peaceful remedy for the evils of the slave system.

In December, 1833, Whittier became a delegate from Massachusetts to the founding meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia. Both the national and the local societies grew rapidly, with participation including a large number of Quakers, as well as the more liberal ministers of northern churches, progressive academics, and enlightened businessmen.

It is hard for those of us brought up in the 20th and 21st centuries to realize that at first Northerners as well as Southerners opposed freeing slaves, and that the abolitionist movement was that of a minority of courageous activists who faced greater political power and the violence of angry mobs. Yet many Northerners were far more concerned with saving the union than with the well-being of African Americans. The southern states would not have ratified the American Constitution without slavery being allowed. Northerners feared the South would secede and form a separate nation – which in the end is exactly what it tried to do.

Both Northerners and Southerners justified their support of slavery by arguing that the African race did not have the same human feelings and needs as the white race – in other words, they rationalized their views by racism. Many Northerners saw the abolitionists as dangerous radicals trying to split the nation, ruin their commercial livelihoods, and destroy the constitution.

Whittier and his sister Elizabeth were in the midst of this as they followed the earlier example of the abolitionist Quaker John Woolman and of contemporaries like the radical William Lloyd Garrison and the English abolitionist leader George Thompson. Garrison invited Thompson to come to America and deliver a series of anti-slavery speeches. »»→

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2 quoted on p. 40 of George Rice Carpenter's *John Greenleaf Whittier* (Houghton, Mifflin & Co, 1903).

3 quoted on p. 118 of Carpenter's *John Greenleaf Whittier*.

In September, 1834, Whittier and George Thompson were heading to speak at an abolitionist meeting in Concord, New Hampshire, when a mob beset them, pelting them with stones, rotten eggs, and mud. They found shelter in a friend's house, but the angry mob surrounded the house, firing off guns. Their host harnessed his horse to his carriage and brought it near a side door. Whittier and Thompson got in, the driveway gate was suddenly opened, and the horse galloped through, outdistancing the mob before they knew what had happened.

The next year, Whittier's sister Elizabeth was at a meeting of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, at which Garrison and George Thompson were guest speakers. A mob broke up the meeting. Whittier, who was at his seat in the legislature nearby, hearing of the disturbance, rushed to the aid of his sister. He found the ladies had left safely, but the mob had caught Garrison and was dragging him through the streets with a rope around his body. Rescued by town officials, Garrison was taken "for safekeeping" to the town jail, and advised to leave town the next day.

More Changes in the Whittier Family

Whittier's brother Matthew, with whom he shared the farm work, married in 1836 and left Haverhill for Portland Maine. The same year, Whittier's older sister Mary married Jacob Caldwell of Haverhill. Whittier was spending much of his time on abolition activities and on his journalism work. In 1836 he sold the farm, and moved the family residence to a cottage in Amesbury. Whittier's mother, Abigail Hussey Whittier, was still with him, as was his younger sister Elizabeth. The new Whittier residence was on Friend Street, within easy walking distance of the Friends Meeting House.

Starting in May, 1836, Whittier edited the Haverhill *Gazette*, which was owned by his sister Mary's husband, Jacob Caldwell. Even in Haverhill there were disputes between the anti-slavery faction and the supporters of slavery. The *Gazette* supported the Whig Party, which would not commit to openly condemn slavery. In this somewhat uncomfortable situation, Whittier resigned from the *Gazette* in December, 1836.

The Pennsylvania Freeman

In 1837, Whittier received an offer from Benjamin Lundy, the Quaker editor, to take on the editorship of an abolitionist paper published in Philadelphia. He accepted and moved to Philadelphia.The first issue of the *Pennsylvania Freeman*[4] edited by Whittier came out March 15, 1838. In it, Whittier "pledged the entire devotion of his energies to the cause of Universal Freedom."[5]

Whittier wrote articles in the *Freeman* about how Philadelphia's Independence Hall itself – where both the United States Declaration of Independence and Constitution were debated and adopted – was now being used for a biased legal process that found African Americans (whether free-born or refugees) to be "slaves," giving them over in handcuffs to Southern "owners."

In the second edition of the *Freeman* Whittier printed his poem, "The Farewell of a Virginia Slave Mother to her Daughters Sold into Southern Bondage," the refrain of which is:

> Gone, gone, — sold and gone,
> To the rice-swamp dank and lone,
> From Virginia's hills and waters;
> Woe is me, my stolen daughters!

During the nearly three years that Whittier edited the *Freeman*, he learned much about the part that Quakers took in the Underground Railroad. All its work had to be done in secret, with refugees from slavery taken to safe houses where they could be hidden until transportation could be arranged for the next leg of their journey north. Sometimes the refugees were helped with changes in clothing, wigs, and different hairdressing to disguise them.

Whittier, a member of the Orthodox branch of Quakers, worked with individual Quakers who were committed to freeing the slaves, whether of the Orthodox or Hicksite branch. For example, Hicksites James and Lucretia Mott were leaders in the abolitionist movement and worked alongside their African American colleagues in multiracial groups, while many other Quakers wished to remain out of the controversy.

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4 Originally the *National Enquirer*, the newspaper's name was changed to the *Pennsylvania Freeman* when Whittier took over.

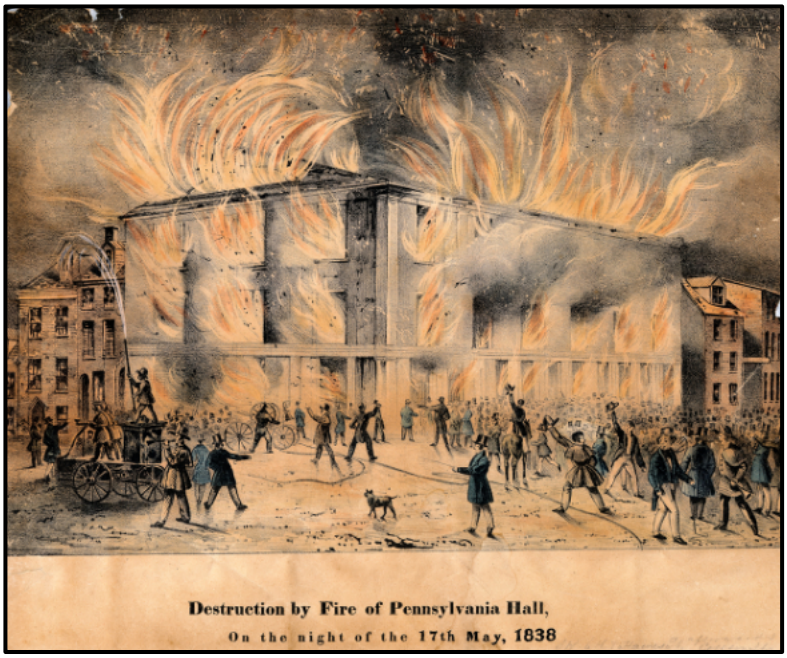
5 p. 215 of Pickard's *Life & Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, as previously cited.

6 p. 228 of Pickard's *Life & Letters*.

Pennsylvania Hall

Mainstream churches often refused to allow abolition meetings to be held in their buildings and the Quaker Meetings were no more welcoming. So abolitionists built Pennsylvania Hall with contributions totalling $43,000, providing a place where liberty, freedom, and the abolition of slavery could be discussed. The auditorium and galleries together could hold up to 3,000 people.

A full schedule of meetings of different societies was planned for the dedication week of May 14 to May 18. Letters were read from former U.S. president John Quincy Adams and others, followed by an oration on liberty and a lecture on temperance on May 14. On May 15, the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women met and Whittier read his celebratory poem "Pennsylvania Hall."



Lithograph by John Casper Wild (courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia)

On Wednesday evening, May 16, an audience of about 3000 listened to speakers who included William Lloyd Garrison, Maria Weston Chapman, Angelina Grimké Weld, and others. Outside, a pro-slavery mob had gathered, throwing stones to break the windows, but the speakers continued until the meeting was finished. To ensure the safety of the African American attendees, the white women took the arms of their coloured friends, and left the building together. They were met by a barrage of rocks and jeers, but were not physically harmed.

The mob gathered again outside the building the next day. The hall manager requested that the authorities disperse the mob, but the mayor and city authorities did nothing.

In fact, the city's lawyer ordered the police not to make any arrests. After a brief statement which was a wink-and-a-nudge, the mayor left the scene to the mob, which immediately started attacking the building. Forcing open the doors, the pro-slavery mob rushed in to smash, loot, and start a fire, which soon spread throughout the building.

The copy for the next issue of the *Pennsylvania Freeman* was inside in Whittier's office. The poet disguised himself in a long white coat and wig, and entered the hall, as if one of the looters, and was able to save his editorial papers. Luckily, the press, type, and other printing necessities were in a different building. Whittier had the presses running early the next morning, and the next edition came out while the ashes of the fire were still smouldering.

Whittier began his editorial of that morning: "18th of Fifth month, half past seven o'clock. Pennsylvania Hall is in ashes! The beautiful temple consecrated to Liberty has been offered as a smoking sacrifice to the Demon of Slavery. In the heart of this city a flame has gone up to Heaven. It will be seen from Maine to Georgia."

Whittier's poem, "The Relic," described Pennsylvania Hall in ashes, but affirmed that "A voice which slavery cannot kill" spoke from the ruins. Sadly, the pro-slavery mob went on in the next few days to attack the homes, churches, and public buildings of the free African Americans living in Philadelphia. They set fire to the "Shelter for Coloured Orphans" and attacked Bethel Church, home to an African American congregation.

Over the next year avnd a half, Whittier continued editing the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, sometimes in Philadelphia, and sometimes sending in his editorials while criss-crossing Pennsylvania, speaking for the abolition cause. After almost three years of these demanding activities, Whittier was seen by a physician who diagnosed a serious heart condition and advised him to lead a quieter life. On February 20th, 1840, he published his last editorial in the *Freeman* and soon was on the way home to Amesbury. ⟶

While Whittier had given up his editing of the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, he had not ceased his support for the abolition of slavery. Whittier had considerable influence on the leading men in Massachusetts politics, both Whigs and Democrats. As it became more and more evident that neither party would openly support abolition, Whittier and others formed a new party, the Liberty party.

Whittier was then nominated for Congress in the North Essex district. While he was not able to win a seat in Congress, his running for a third party prevented the two parties who countenanced slavery from achieving a majority, and kept the North Essex seat unoccupied for several years. He continued writing letters, visiting Friends, and speaking to politicians on behalf of abolition.

Poetry and the War Against Slavery

The peaceful proposals made by Whitter and others to end slavery without war were not put into practice in any effective way. In April, 1861 the South Carolina Militia fired on the U.S. Army's Fort Sumter near Charleston, and the Civil War began. Both before and during the Civil War, Whittier wrote poems for freedom. Whittier's poetry, like Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, helped change the opinions of many in the North who had failed to realize the barbarity of the South's "peculiar institution."

Whittier had long addressed politics and liberation in his poetry. His poem "Ichabod" was a sad rebuke to the great orator Daniel Webster, who defiled his good name by supporting the Compromise of 1850. Among other things, this package of five bills allowed bounty hunters to come north like hounds after prey and recapture refugees from slavery. It also meant that Northerners who assisted escaping African American refugees could be thrown in jail.

The poem "Garrison" is his tribute to his friend and colleague William Lloyd Garrison, who gave his whole life to the cause of freeing captives from slavery. Whittier's poems also included a tribute to Toussaint L'Ouverture, a former slave and the most prominent leader of the Haitian slave rebellion and revolution that won freedom for all slaves and Haitian independence from European colonizers.

> And men shall learn to speak of thee
> As one of earth's great spirits, born
> In servitude, and nursed in scorn,
> Casting aside the weary weight
> And fetters of its low estate,
> In that strong majesty of soul
> Which knows no color, tongue, or clime,
> Which still hath spurned the base control
> Of tyrants through all time![8]

In "The Slave-Ships" Whittier wrote about the ship-captain ordering ill and weakened slaves thrown overboard.

Once the war was over and emancipation achieved, Whittier could spend energy on other aspects of his life: his Quaker faith and poetry on other topics of interest to him. His long poem "Snowbound," written after the war, describes his own family home, his beloved kinfolk and friends. It became a tremendous success, bringing in tens of thousands of dollars, and providing Whittier for the first time a comfortable living for the latter half of his life.

Quaker Faith

The Quaker testimony that all persons had "that of God within them" supported Whittier's years of efforts towards freeing African Americans from the scourge of slavery. This testimony, pointing to the basic equality and value of all souls, helped Whittier be free of the pervading racism of his age – the racism that valued "property" above human beings.

Whittier had worshipped for his first twenty years in a Meeting which followed traditional process: sitting in silence to wait for a spiritual message from the Inner Light, which would then be shared. His poetry illustrates the differences between the quiet worship of Quakers and the rituals of other faiths. For example, "The Brewing of the Soma" describes the ritual of the ancient Vedic Hindus, who used the juice of the soma plant in a drink of milk and honey to give them an experience of ecstasy and joy.

Whittier contrasts these excitements with the quiet and order of Quaker worship:

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

8 "Anti-Slavery Poems: Toussaint L'Ouverture" in John Greenleaf Whittier's *The Poetical Works in Four Volumes* (Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1892, available on bartleby.com).

9 "The Brewing of the Soma," from p. 448 of Whittier's *Complete Poetical Works* (Houghton Mifflin, 1894).

10 Whittier, letter to the *Friends Review*, 2nd month, 1870.

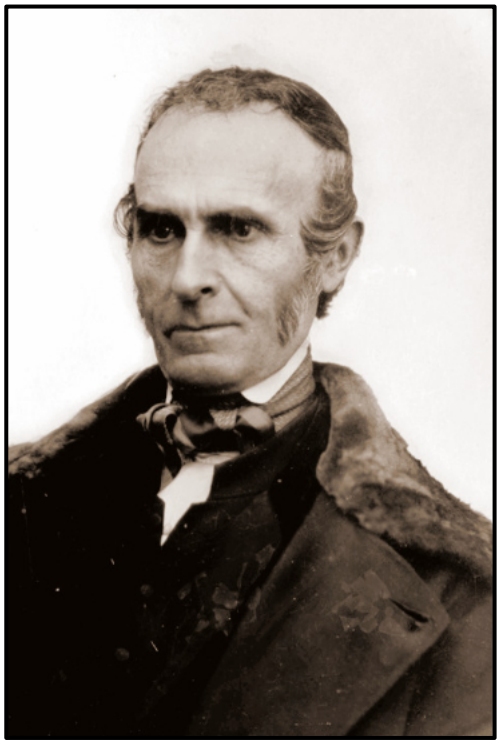
Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.[9]

After the schism in 1827 between the Orthodox and the Hicksite Friends, the New England Yearly Meeting chose to ally with the Orthodox Friends. Orthodox Quakers were now somewhat admiring of aspects that evangelists used in the Methodist sect. Whittier found that the religion he had absorbed from his parents and the local Meeting in Amesbury was being changed. Whittier wrote in a letter to the *Friends Review* of Philadelphia:

> "We hear complaints of a want of educated ministers; the utility of silent meetings is denied;…there is a growing desire for experimenting upon the dogmas and expedients and practices of other sects… But for myself, I prefer the old ways."[10]

In a letter to his cousin, Ann Wendell, Whittier wrote critically about the revival of ceremony in religion:

> "Has thee noticed the general tendency towards the old trust in man,— in priests, sacrifices, and ghostly mummery and machinery? To me it seems fair to swallow up everything save Quakerism of *the old stamp*, which has this advantage, that its distinctive characteristic is the entire rejection of *all* ceremonial, the total disbelief in the power of pope, priest, or elder to give a ransom for the soul of another. Well, let the world, sick of doubt and infidelity, go back and try once more the old superstitions which the Voltaires and Gibbons and Humes of the last century exposed to scorn and derision."[11]



Ambrotype photograph of Whittier, around 1850 (courtesy of the Boston Public Library and Wikimedia).

Whittier was not in a rush to change his ways. Contemporaries of Whittier commented on his retaining the old-fashioned "Thee" and "Thy" of original Quakers, indicating equality of people.[12] When questioned, Whittier's response was that it was the usage of his people for two centuries, and it was his mother's language of which he remained fond. He used the traditional Quaker way of indicating dates: e.g., "12th month, 6th day" which Friends used so as not to constantly refer to pagan gods and goddesses like Woden and Freya. He also continued the wearing of a Quaker broadcloth coat and the broad-brimmed hat.

Regarding music in the service, Pickard quotes him as saying,

> "Our folks have got to talking too much; they even want a glass of water on the table and some of them want singing in the meetings. I tell them if they want singing, they must get the world's folks to do it for them, for two hundred years of silence have taken all the sing out of our people."[13]

Whittier "loved best the old-fashioned Quaker meetings in which the silence was not broken unless some weighty word pressed for utterance."[14]

The Relation between Humanity and God

In the face of old superstitions that an all-powerful God caused all the miseries that fell upon human beings – storms, shipwrecks, plagues or strikes by lightening – as punishments for sin, Whittier saw these as acts of nature. The mainstream denominations were much affected by the Calvinist belief that all human beings were saturated with sin. ⟶

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11 pp. 278-9 of Pickard's *Life & Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, (Houghton, Mifflin & Co, 1907).

12 As a plural pronoun, 'you' originally indicated deference when addressing a social superior, a distinction still largely preserved in the 'tu' and 'vous' of French.

13 p. 283 of Pickard's *Life & Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, as previously cited.

14 p. 282 of Pickard's *Life & Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*.

This view presented God as a merciless tyrant, exacting punishment either in this world or the hereafter for the sins of mankind. Humanity was seen as helpless in avoiding its fate and could only beg to be saved by the intervention of Jesus.

Whittier had a far different view of the deity. He held fast to the view that God was loving and merciful, a spirit who cared for his people and worked for our good. He was not a distant indifferent God but a loving father, ever ready to help his errant children. Nor were men and women helpless, but rather were able to help themselves and turn to the good, when presented with the example of Jesus and other models of the good.

Whittier expressed his theology through his religious poetry, writing:

> So to the calmly gathered thought
> The innermost of truth is taught,
> The mystery dimly understood,
> That love of God is love of good,
> And, chiefly, its divinest trace
> In Him of Nazareth's holy face;
> That to be saved is only this, —
> Salvation from our selfishness,
> From more than elemental fire,
> The soul's unsanctified desire,
> From sin itself, and not the pain
> That warns us of its chafing chain …
> That the dear Christ dwells not afar,
> The king of some remoter star,
> Listening, at times, with flattered ear,
> To homage wrung from selfish fear,
> But here, amidst the poor and blind,
> The bound and suffering of our kind,
> In works we do, in prayers we pray,
> Life of our life, He lives to-day.[15]

Whittier was a poet, a journal editor, and an influential politician. As a life-long Quaker, he believed that humankind was expressing God's goodness when we carried out good works and beneficial prayers. Slavery was the greatest sin in Whittier's time, and his efforts towards liberating enslaved African Americans demonstrated this faith through action, as a work expressing God's spirit.

Apocalyptic Times

by Eric Schiller, Ottawa Monthly Meeting

I have read the New Testament many times, but somehow one obvious fact has eluded me. Jesus and the early Christians strongly believed that the end of the world was near. They were eagerly waiting and working for a new world to come – the kingdom of God on earth.

How did I miss this? I simply tried to spiritualize the records assuming that the references were describing the need for my own spiritual renewal.

Looking again at the gospel of Matthew (chapters 24 and 25) it is now impossible for me to deny that the record says that Jesus expected the kingdom of God to come soon. A key figure involved in this would be the Son of Man (not necessarily Jesus), who would come to bring judgement and usher in the new kingdom realm.

This apocalyptic world view was also firmly held by the early Christians – as shown by the epistles to the Thessalonians, for example. These were some of the earliest letters written by the apostle Paul.

The early Christians foresaw a time of tribulation and trouble, but in the end a more hopeful kingdom of God would emerge. There was evidence of difficult times ahead. But their hope was in a triumphant ending.

The spread of this early Christian message accomplished two things.

(1) This hope of a new world to come focused their minds and proved to be a powerful motivator for action; and

(2) The action they produced was positive and uplifting, despite the obstacles in front of them.

Now 2000 years later it is clear that their expectation of an imminent end of the present age did not occur. Or did it? With their buoyant resurrection hope, their movement eventually triumphed over the ruling Roman Empire. This was not actually the change they originally envisioned. Neither was it the perfect kingdom of God that they sought.

What has all of this got to do with us today? The majority of the world's scientists are telling us that we are also living in apocalyptic times. The polar ice caps and glaciers are disappearing even faster than the scientific models have

15 Whittier, "The Meeting," on p. 447 of *Whittier's Complete Poetical Works* (Cambridge Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1892).

predicted. This will have dramatic effects as world temperatures soar, such as rising sea levels and weather disruptions like wildfires, hurricanes, droughts, and floods. These environmental changes will bring all kinds of social consequences.

To see possible effects upon our thinking, let us try and find some lessons from the New Testament.

(1) Our impending environmental crisis should help us to focus our minds and motivate us to dramatic action. So far this has not occurred for most of us, but the potential for rapid, drastic, and global action is there. Our present COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that we can act rapidly when faced with a world-wide emergency.

(2) A positive world view can help us get through this. This may be a far stretch in the present climate crisis. However, the sooner we act the better may be the outcome. A better world may be possible, but only if we immediately take the necessary actions.



Image: Albrecht Dürer's rendition of the *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, from his 1498 woodcut series, *Apocalypse with Pictures*. The horsemen appear in chapter 6 of the Book of Revelations and are usually described as famine (with scales in hand), war (sword), plague (bow), and death (pitchfork). Famine has scales because Revelations describes a minimum daily grain ration costing a whole day's wages (i.e. the poor are on near-starvation wages), while luxuries like oil and wine remain untouched (i.e. the rich are fine).

About Drifting Away from our Roots

by Margaret Slavin, Peterborough Monthly Meeting

I will begin what I have to say here with our friend Mark Jokinen. No capital F here—Mark hung out with Friends for a great any years, but now he hangs out with the Baptists. When he married his wife Karen, he moved into a congregation that centres on its commitment to Jesus Christ. Mark says that in all his years as attender and Resident Friend in Ottawa and then a pillar of the Allowed Meeting here in Peterborough, Karen was the first to ask him whether he was a Christian. Did he know Jesus? Mark hadn't thought about it. But he had fallen in love with Karen, and so he looked into it.

Mark is a very honest man, a poet and bookseller with an education in science. He likes research and facts. Mark studied the New Testament and its commentaries, and one day he discovered that in fact he did know Jesus. It was an emotional moment, I believe. He has published a collection of poetry about this seeking and finding.

I had told my friend Mark all along that the Spirit we Quakers had so often spoken of – although very seldom do we speak *to* the Spirit, at least not in public – that to me it was perfectly obvious that this experience could be called, if Mark wanted to, an experience of the risen Christ. Why not? What else to call it when we had grown up surrounded by the Christian narrative? So I wasn't surprised when he made this discovery, but I think he was.

Mark went on with his studies – a bookman is often also a scholar – and he wrote a paper on unresolved issues with the naming of the four gospels. His paper turned out to be original work and was published in a theological journal.

Mark retains Quaker friends, and apparently his journey among Friends continues to niggle at him. Recently he has been delving back into the changing editions of *Faith & Practice*,

checking out a hunch he has that we are drifting from our roots. It is one thing to be a group which is open to continuing revelation, but it is another to lose track of the theological and Christian framework within which we sit in expectant silence and discern leadings that may take us into strange and dangerous places.

Tom Fox, the American Friend who was executed a few years ago by Islamic extremists in Iraq, went there to that part of the globe as a member of a Christian Peacemakers Team, accompanying ordinary people experiencing sanctions and war brought in by Tom Fox's country, the United States. He knew that he was taking a huge risk by remaining, and he did this accompaniment under a banner that includes the word "Christian." Their slogan is "Getting in the Way."

I just mention the execution of Tom Fox, not only to remind those who do not know of his action, but also to underline that it is not just Friends from the sixteenth century who are and were led by a sense of our Society's Christian roots.

So Mark has been looking into this. He wrote a paper, recording his findings and expressing his concern. He gave it to me to read and asked for my feedback. Mark knows full well, from his twenty years or so as an attender in our Meetings, that our most ancient testimony has been the making of peace through nonviolence; collectively, we take seriously the commandment not to kill. In this context, Mark traced the references concerning our testimony around abortion, the intentional killing of a human fetus. He documents that this former concern has dropped right off the Quaker radar. Even when circumstances challenge us to make a stand, on this issue we are silent.

I was irritated. Why did he choose abortion as his litmus test? I do see its relevance. Personally, I have always felt that an abortion is a morally ambiguous act. I completely support the right to have assistance with an abortion, especially early in the pregnancy. And I do think that there is no point in quibbling about whether the destruction of a fetus ends a potential human life. Most pregnancies, if allowed to continue, will result in a human child. So, while I also honour the seriousness of taking a potential human life, I accept that my peace testimony is a working hypothesis, not a rigid rule. In making love, as in every other human encounter, assume that you are not going to kill, and be creative in your intention to maintain nonviolence.

Wealthy women will always be able to avoid giving birth to an unwanted child. It is poor women who die in backroom abortions. So I say, do not wear a brooch in the shape of a little plastic fetus foot unless you plan to spend most of your time visiting the unwanted adults who were not aborted and are now languishing in prison.

I put off replying to my friend Mark. Instead I sent him an email with a nice recent article from Friends Journal about continuing revelation and told him that it spoke my mind.

Fine – then I was tooling around on Facebook one day and I ran into a posting by Wesley Glebe from Edmonton. Wesley too was concerned that we are drifting from our historical roots, including our beginnings in Christianity or maybe all the way back to the early Christian church.

Wesley is a member, not an attender, and his tone was more than concerned. It sounded closer to broken-hearted. He was going off Facebook for a while, or at least the Canadian Yearly Meeting Facebook page, because he was coming to the painful conclusion that modern-day Canadian Friends are perilously close to being no more than a kneejerk reflection of the more radical elements of the political left.

Wesley's litmus test was Indigenous blockades of railway tracks. Earlier this summer, First Nations and allies in several places, including one on the Tyendinaga reserve in Ontario, not far from where I live, successfully blocked trains going either way across Canada. Many holidays and business trips were rudely interrupted. People who didn't deserve a big bad blot on their two weeks nevertheless got it. Our governments refused to force the issue. Police arrived but the blockades were allowed to continue. No storm troops were sent in. Nobody was shot dead. But for many of those affected, it was a lot more than an inconvenience. And economically it hurt not just the railways and the big corporations, but workers and their families. It was a strategy and approach with many sides to it, all of them hurting.

Wesley saw it start to happen, and he knew what would come next. All over the country, Friends not only did not deplore this First Nations action, but they applauded it. Some joined it. Some sent supplies for the Indigenous folk who were camping on the track. Many sent messages of support. There was no discussion that Wesley saw at all about the many moral sides to such behaviour. What there was, was a huge consensus that any Friend who had been paying attention at all would be in solidarity with the blockades. I certainly was.

Wesley felt that if he were to even raise any other conversation about this, that he would be seen as a pretty bad Quaker. Somehow the tradition which had drawn him to it, with its expectant silence and its openness to divergent views, did not have a space for a Friend who felt upset about the railroad blockades.

When I read Wesley's posting, I saw the parallels with Mark's longtime concerns. I let go of my irritation. Voices are speaking, I said to myself; Spirit is moving among us and here are two voices that have dared to speak out. Pay attention, even if you do not understand.

So I held all this in the Light. Which means that I mulled it over, and from time to time when I was holding people in the Light intentionally, I also intentionally did a kind of mind gesture – one where you return to the place where you know you are completely not in charge, and that Spirit is, and that into your hands I place this matter of the life and future of the Society of Friends.

A few other strands came into this cluster of associations. During 2004 to 2006, I travelled on the now-defunct Greyhound bus from one side of Canada three times, visiting every Meeting and Worship Group in Canadian Yearly Meeting. (Well, except for one, which was in the United States, and which Spirit replaced with a visit to the Meeting in Bar Harbour, and a free car ride all the way back across the continent to Potsdam, New York).

During those two transcendent years, one conversation I ran into took place in Coquitlam, B.C. There was a dynamic little worship group there, meeting mostly around a book by a French woman mystic about Light. Her name was Jeanne Guyon. In 1685 she published *Short and Very Easy Method of Prayer; Which all can practice with the greatest facility, and arrive in a short time, by its means, at a high degree of perfection*. Guyon wasn't a Quaker, but she is said to have influenced early Friends as much as George Fox.

I went for one of those nice long walks with Earl Morris, the man who was maintaining this group. I clearly recall the image he gave me, and which I have passed on to many others since.

When you first come into Friends, he said, you are reassured and drawn in by the challenge of simply living in the Light. There is no creed, no rigid moral code, not even necessarily sacred stories that everyone must share. He pictured the people in a group standing together tall, bearing on their uplifted hands a sort of plate, a light (in both senses) burden that together they could all share, and there was almost no sense of weight. And then, he said, people keep throwing stuff up onto the plate.

At first it is easy to continue to lift them up: there are the testimonies of peace, simplicity, equity, integrity, community, maybe environmental awareness too. (This was 2005, so environmental awareness felt like an emerging testimony, not quite yet arrived).

Then more and more gets piled on. You must be in solidarity with Palestinians. You must be knowledgeable about and in solidarity with the struggles of Indigenous peoples. You are committed to prison abolition. You must be a pacifist and wear a white poppy. You probably vote NDP (now he would have something to say about voting Green). The rights of women have to be a whole lot more than lip service. LGBTQ2S+ is a sequence that rolls off your tongue. You strongly oppose the cutting of old growth forest, and nowadays in the west he would speak about all the Quaker arrests resisting pipelines.

I remember it was amusing how he added more and more to the imaginary plate, including specific local issues about transit and parks and tent cities and councillors. I recall laughing when he added that no one must bring any item made with peanut butter. A sensitivity must be displayed to all allergies, including dog fur and of course cats. But it was the peanut butter that made me see what he was pointing toward.

In the image he was making in my mind, the happy group with their upright arms holding aloft the large light plate had now bent and crumpled, some were on their knees, the plate was falling sideways and tilting onto their backs. It had become very heavy, and quite a few who were semi-crushed under it wanted out.

I don't remember that Earl Morris said anything about drifting away from our roots, or in particular anything Christian. This was despite the fact the book they were all meeting around was from a contemporary of George Fox – and so she was breathing the same heady air of that tumultuous time, and her book has been republished as *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ*.

This image raises the issue which may be more in Wesley's posting than in Mark's article. The issue is not of the roots we have left behind, but the commitments we have taken on as if our identity can be no other. If you are a Quaker, it follows that you are in solidarity with the railway blockades. You will be studying white fragility, campaigning to stop single-use plastics, taking lessons in a First Nations language while risking jail over any pipeline, and you have made a placard to take out into the streets calling for defunding the police.

Early in my travels in 2004, I arrived at Coldstream Meeting in Ontario just as they had their winter retreat, and they had invited in Chuck Fager. If you are a Quaker, you likely know Chuck Fager. Knowing him is up there on the plate, the one that has you staggering to stay upright. ⟶

Chuck is an American Friend, a prolific humorist and essayist who worked or may still work near a US military base, running a hotline and support program for soldiers who want to get out of the forces and feel trapped.

Chuck's message that day has stayed with me in a quite central way. He spoke of listening to Spirit, to leadings. How am I to live my life, in the Light? I realize now that he spoke too of this same issue that has troubled our friend Mark and our Friend Wesley, and the Friend in Burnaby.

Chuck challenged what he saw as our fixation with media. This was before social media, and so his insight must be even more applicable today. Because Friends are trying so hard to keep informed and to be moral and responsible, he said, we spend more time than we may like to admit following the news. And then we feel that sense of leading – that 'I cannot stand by' and watch children being put into cages or migrants lost at sea or the Arctic ice caps melting and the seabirds sickening and dying because they are eating bright bits of plastic. This pain I feel must be the hand of God, guiding me to sign up for a webinar or for an educational tour of Palestine.

And it may be. But wait, said Chuck Fager. Take a look, he said, at your track record. You are whatever age you now are. You have had years of trying to live in the Light, of listening in the stillness, of hearing the still, small voice. Of being faithful in the making of bread and the raising of children and the planting of trees. By now, you have developed priorities, through your prayerful faithfulness or through the rough rude push and pull of the forces in your life.

Look back. Where have you been? What has been your passion, your actual action and development within yourself and in your nonvirtual world? Are you a gardener? Did you travel to El Salvador or Iraq or to a confrontation between settlers and First Nations? Are you trained as a witness? Do you have a certificate from Alternatives to Violence? Sit with your track record. Maybe write it down. This is how you have been led. Do not think that the latest news atrocity is for you.

At that time Iraq was in the news, and Chuck said, "Have you learned Arabic? Have you already travelled to Iraq? Do you have a friend who is from there? No, none of these things? Then I suggest that you do not have a leading to go to Iraq. You think you do, because of the newspaper and the television news. But you don't. You are being called differently, and it is very important to discern your call."

I don't have his exact words, and of course you may already be arguing with them. A few weeks later I stayed with a woman who had never been to Africa, and was no longer young, but had a very strong leading to go to Africa. A short time later, Way opened and she went, and she has been a strong worker and advocate in certain Africa-based programs ever since.

But I hope you see the point. Our Society is faithfulness, and listening, and lifting one another up with a tender heart. There will be room forever to educate ourselves, about the statistics that affect women and the unborn, about the moral implications of living on stolen land, about the bias and distorted perceptions we all bear from the worlds that shaped our souls, but no one issue can contain and own the will of God.

Love God with all your mind and heart and strength and your neighbour as yourself. This is all the law and the prophets. Walk humbly with the Spirit who calls you, do justice, love mercy. That is all that is required of you, whether or not you call yourself a Friend.

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Reply to Isabelle Joy Yingling, 613-890-6615, isabelle.yingling@gmail.com.



Reconsidering Simplicity

by Bertha Small, Ottawa Monthly Meeting

I am pondering the intersection of simplicity and technology, which seems particularly troublesome to me in the current covid world. I choose to be relatively technologically impaired. I choose not to have a smart phone, joking, I think, that I do not want the NSA to track my every move, but more seriously trying to resist the consumption pressure to acquire rapidly obsolescent devices whose mineral components cost some of my Congolese friends their lives and landscapes.

However, when the commuter train system abruptly changes their schedule, I have to phone my daughter (on my old flip-top phone) to find out when the next train is coming! I choose to have an elderly laptop whose dangerous swollen battery was replaced by a clever new Canadian with a hole-in-the-wall shop after Apple staff, at the original source of the lap-top, turned away in disbelief when I explained that I wanted a repair, not an upgrade. My machine is, however, too feeble to allow the updates needed to be able to do anything other than simple e-mail.

My stubbornness means, for example, that I do not participate in Zoom. I confess that this allows me the pleasure of avoiding meetings at the clinic where I work, and I imagine that my absence is tolerated as I am known to be 'awkward' and near retirement anyway. I recognize that I am lucky, as an elderly physician, to have much more control over my work environment and requirements than most. I also live with one set of grandchildren, with the other set not far away, so I do not need technology to see them. I worry about my patients who have no computer access or training, who cannot communicate in French or English, some of whom cannot afford a telephone of any sort.

Having tried to declare my particular point of view, I offer some queries with which I am struggling.

As technological aides and remedies have historically provoked unforeseen problems of massive impact, when is it sensible to invoke the precautionary principle?

As we seek new ways to do things in a world of intermittent lock-downs and quarantines and long-term social distancing, how do we distinguish between tools that are needed to protect the vulnerable, to sustain human interconnectedness, and to promote exchanges of information and opinion – and those tools designed to permit us to pretend that nothing has changed or needs to change?

Are we listening to our elders, our non-human fellow travellers so beautifully evoked by Lydia Wong in "COVID-19 and Relationships with our Nonhuman Neighbours,"[1] or to the echo-chamber of convenience?

1 This was in the last issue of *The Canadian Friend* (2020, issue 2), p. 17 onwards.

Reaching for Reconciliation

by Marilyn Keyes Roper, New Brunswick Monthly Meeting

Judith Brown's article in the last *Canadian Friend*, "Seeking Right Relationship," spoke to my condition. I, too, feel that the word "reconciliation" is an unequal term when applied to many Indigenous-settler attempts for improved relations. That is because as a liberal, white middle-aged Quaker woman in the early 1980s I had no clue about the depth of my ignorance and arrogance.

Although I was steeped in experience and understanding of "white privilege" with regard to Black and Hispanic people in the USA and active in the Civil Rights and peace movements, my eyes only began to be opened to the realities of Indigenous-settler disparities while participating in a series of weekend Native/Non-Native gatherings in Maine and the Maritimes in the 1980s and '90s. Only with a new way of seeing brought about during many lengthy talking circles and getting to know the Wabanaki people involved (Maliseet, Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, and Mi'kmaq) could I begin to comprehend the Indigenous viewpoint, and the magnitude of injustices and generational trauma they experience, so as to begin to rise to the level of an equal partner in reconciliation efforts.



Members and attenders of New Brunswick Monthly Meeting at the Peskotomuhkati Nation lodge on the Schoodic (St. Croix) River with Chief Hugh Akagi, attending Summer Solstice weekend 2019. (Photo: Vince Zelazny).

One example of a different way of seeing was that I used to talk about taxes on "my" property at Eel River Lake, in southwestern New Brunswick. Whoops. Not my property at all, I learned, but the land I pay taxes on that belongs to the Creator – which, by the way, was given to the Wabanakis to live on and protect. As an ally, I can and should help them protect the land, but it is their ultimate responsibility now and since time immemorial to do so. I also learned that there had been no land claims settlement in New Brunswick, as there was in Maine in 1980. The land in New Brunswick has never been ceded by the Wabanaki. Their Peace and Friendship Treaties with the Crown did not involve surrendering their rights to land or resources.

As one of the representatives from New Brunswick Monthly Meeting on CFSC for several years in the mid-1980s, I also learned a great deal from the experience and wisdom of such mentors as Phyllis Fischer and Betty Peterson, and have admired over the years the work of Jennifer Preston.

Participation in Indigenous endeavors, *if invited*, continued the education of myself and my husband.

This included visiting members of the Native Brotherhood in a maximum-security prison in Renous, New Brunswick, for a dozen years, traveling to Oka in 1990 with the Tobique Peace Convoy from Nequtkuk First Nation (Maliseet) in New Brunswick, later driving a Maliseet friend there to deliver sacred medicines while we served as third-party observers, walking behind Anishinaabe Grandmother Josephine for several miles in Maine on that national water walk from the Four Directions several years ago, and attending numerous Wabanaki events over the years.

None of the above would have been possible had my husband and I not participated in and hosted one of the Native/Non-Native gatherings, mentioned above, at our former summer place in New Brunswick. Nor would we have been able to offer our home in Houlton, Maine (3 miles from the border) for several months to one of the gathering participants – a Mashpee Wampanoag elder and his son who could not cross the border into Canada because of non-recognition of his traditional marriage of many years to a Mi'kmaq woman in Esgenoopetitj First Nation (Burnt Church), NB. Nor would we have been able to try to help some of the inmates we met at Renous when they returned to the general population. Nor had the interest and some background to serve for 25 years on the American Friends Service Committee's Wabanaki Program and lobby for needed changes in Maine and the Maritimes to help rectify some of the outrageous wrongs that continue today.

Cross-border action is sometimes necessary in matters such as the official renaming of the St. John River to its original Maliseet name, Wolastoq – a current effort.

Since 1982 we have been members of New Brunswick Monthly Meeting, which, for the past decade has been trying to help Chief Hugh Akagi of the Peskotomuhkati Nation (Passamaquoddy) regain federal recognition of the Peskotomuhkati's First Nation status and some of their traditional territory in southwest New Brunswick. It is heart-wrenching to learn about former reserves taken away illegally, as these once-welcoming people were overrun and robbed of their means of obtaining food, with the resulting decline into poverty. On the Summer Solstice of 2019, New Brunswick Monthly Meeting met for a retreat at a beautiful lodge on the Schoodic (St. Croix River), courtesy of Chief Hugh, who spoke to us. This lodge is now under the care of the Peskotomuhkati Nation, along with the neighbouring 2,500 acres granted to them by the federal government.

Most of all, the friendships forged over the years in these gatherings have been one of the greatest gifts I have received in this lifetime. Heartfelt caring helps me understand not only a new way of seeing, but the current trials and tribulations of Wabanaki peoples due to injustice and greed past and present. Last January (before the border was closed due to COVID-19), a dear Maliseet friend, Alma Brooks, visited us, bringing gifts of a small copper cup, a small turtle and a poem. She asked us to pray for the waters. We are.

To journey with us through our experiences in these gatherings, you can soon read the candid thoughts of seven Wabanaki participants and seven non-Natives, including Betty Peterson. The University of Toronto Press is publishing an insightful book about the gatherings to be available in March 2021. It is entitled: *The Gatherings: Reimagining Indigenous-Settler Relations*. (See this issue's inside cover for details.) In it, you can learn what happened to that unceded land in New Brunswick that we used to pay taxes on – a rightly ordered drop in the bucket toward reconciliation.

Marilyn Keyes Roper and her husband of 65 years, Harrison, quit their jobs in the Philadelphia area and moved to northern Maine in 1982 in order to live under the taxable level and thereby not fund war and preparations for war in the USA. They have been members of New Brunswick Monthly Meeting for over 35 years. They have two sons, two grandchildren, and two great grandchildren nearby in the Bangor, Maine area. Marilyn has an MS in Archaeology and her publications are on the origins of human warfare.



Who is God, Anyway?

And What Does That Have to Do with Quakers?

by Beverly Shepard, Hamilton Monthly Meeting

George Fox would probably have been scandalized that anyone would dare – nay, even think – to ask such a question. God was God, Fox talked with Him regularly (oh, yes, "Him" for sure), and though God was in everyone, He was still a Supreme Being, certainly worthy of being prayed to, since He was in charge of things.

George was not alone in this view, though his do-it-yourself mode of communication with God *was* revolutionary, at least among Christians. This concept of God was widespread, prevalent in many different religions, including some of those, such as Islam, considered infidel by most Christians.

The revolution in thought since then has been gradual, more of an evolution, and today the range of ideas about G/god/goddess, Creator, Holy Spirit, the Divine, Lord, or whatever she/he/it is called, is wide and deep and capable of accommodating almost any notion. This is true in human society in general, numerous long-standing religions (even those staunchly monotheistic), Quakers in particular, and practically every individual Friend I know.

Certainly my own ideas about God have gone through profound changes since I was a child, and even since I was a thinking adult. I was raised in mainstream Protestant Christian tradition, which was not only the dominant religion in North America at the time but pervaded most public schooling. Consequently, it was ingrained in me that religious beliefs that included more than one deity, or a sacred being anywhere else but in the Trinity, were wrong: primitive, sacrilegious, and, well, just wrong. The people of the book had the God thing right, but even the other two peoples, Jews and Muslims, were not quite there. The classic Greek and Roman pantheons were, of course, simply sources of amusement, and paganism? – totally out of it.

That Heaven-dwelling, all-powerful, male supreme being was what I was taught to pray to. But outside the supervision of parents at bedtime prayers and the prescriptions of church and Sunday School, I prayed often in a silent, secret way to a less-defined and more intimate God. Not only did my own inclinations in this area widen my concept of the Divine, but my choice to become a scientist was hugely influential in my religious beliefs.

My science is biology. I have looked deep into the structure of (once-)living creatures with an electron microscope. I've studied the rationale for taxonomy and the evidence for evolution. I've observed, with care and open mind, organisms from microbes to six-storey-high trees. And all of my study has clarified for me the belief that there is that of God, not just in everyone, but in everything.

Our incredibly complex and (except for rogue humanity) well-ordered planet is one in a solar system orbiting around a star, which is one of approximately a billion stars in our galaxy, which is one of many millions of galaxies in the (known) universe. I have a lot of trouble believing that it's all just an accident. Yet praying, for my own relatively trivial needs, to a single omnipotent and omniscient God sometimes feels a bit presumptuous.

So where does all this leave me? I believe in a Creator: the people of this land with the closest historical connections to the world use the word that I think best describes whatever is both holy and powerful. But for day-to-day experiences of the sacred I look to the divine spirit that is much closer to hand: that of God in my family and friends, in the trees around my home, in the birds and chipmunks and coyotes who live here with me, and who knows? maybe even in the huge rock sitting by the drive. That omniscient, omnipotent, and *omnipresent* God has generously bestowed her/his spirit on his/her creation so that I can also pray to God in those around me, to the gathered holiness in all beings, and be heard and answered.

At least, that is the (somewhat fluid) state of my beliefs at present. I'm a child of God and still learning, so it could change. Fortunately, I am a Quaker, so this is okay. We are hugely varied in our beliefs, which is part of our richness.

There are three events I often remember that exemplify a beautiful, accepting, celebratory view of each other and our diversity.

One took place in 1991, when I was worshipping in a very old Quaker Meeting in northern England. One of that Meeting's elders gave ministry, in which he said something about "man" – in the old-fashioned, "this-means-everyone" kind of way.

I sat for about a minute, channelling a devout feminist in our own Meeting, and then I said, "And woman, too." I immediately regretted it: what kind of guest was I? At the rise of Meeting I hustled over to the man who had spoken and said, "I'm sorry I spoke as I did. I knew what you meant, and I should have just heard the meaning."



A hanging alpine valley in the Rocky Mountains. (Photo: Jackie Bonner).

He gave a huge grin, put a hand on my shoulder, and said, "You made me laugh!" We accepted each other with love. It was beautiful.

The second was about 1996, when I was directing Intermediate Camp at NeeKauNis (13-14-year-old campers). I had arranged for two Indigenous elders from the Enaahtig Healing Lodge and Learning Centre not far away to come talk to the kids about Indigenous spirituality. When the two imposing, solemn-looking men arrived before lunch (to which I'd invited them), the kids took one look and disappeared.

I gave Neil and Norm a tour of the Camp, saying, "I don't know much about your beliefs and I'm feeling rather nervous, because I'm afraid I'll make some gross mistake in something I say."

Neil laughed and said, "Of course you will! That's why we're here!" They gave their presentation, and at the end, those twenty once-intimidated kids ran up and enveloped them with hugs. (It still makes me tear up to think about it!)

The third was in our own Meeting. A few years ago we held a Claremont Dialogue with the question, "What are your beliefs about the Divine?" The variety in our answers was enormous. We have self-described atheists, agnostics, pagans, Christians, non-Christian theists, traditional Quakers, and more. We all listened to each other with respect and interest, feeling we were learning "to know one another in the things which are eternal" (*Advices & Queries* #18).

None of us felt disrespected or doubted. We were a spiritual wildflower meadow, rich with an array of plants, varied and still growing. I – and I'm sure many others – felt privileged and blessed to be part of a community so accepting and celebrating of each other.

Some of our *Advices & Queries* affirm the rightness of this diversity. From #7: "Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come?"

And from #17: "Each of us has a particular experience of God and each must find the way to be true to it. When words are strange or disturbing to you, try to sense where they come from and what has nourished the lives of others. Listen patiently and seek the truth which other people's opinions may contain for you. Avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language... Think it possible that you may be mistaken."

I do love that last sentence. Imagine the peace that could happen in this world if everyone took that advice seriously! Who has the truth? We all seek it. We try to claim it. Most likely, each of us has a bit of it. Let's share. We can only be the richer for it if we do.

A Summer of Diminished Joys

by Kate Baggott, Pelham Executive Meeting (Niagara Quakers), new Camp NeeKauNis Committee member

"Resume Diminished Cares and Woes" is the last guidepost out of Camp NeeKauNis. Departing campers need the reminder that responsibility and obligations await before they drive the 400 highway out of Waubaushene.



It's the arrival at camp that brings calm and community. Since 1930, Quakers have been caretakers on this traditional territory of the Wendat, Anishnaabeg and, more recently, Haudenosaunee peoples. When the first campers (members of the Boys & Girls Club of Toronto Meeting) attended, they must have loved the summer respite from the city pollution and the Great Depression. Since then, programs for every generation have been offered to both Friends and those comfortable with our shared values of integrity, peace, simplicity, equality, justice, and unity with creation.

Rustic cabins surround Nelson-Hall – the kitchen and community hub built in 1932 and named after the Nelson and Hall families. Nelson-Hall still welcomes Friends for shared meals, games of cards, times of silence, and the inevitable ritual of washing dishes in that three-step process of cleaning, rinsing, and disinfecting unique to community camps.

Diminished Joys

Traditionally, Camp NeeKauNis offers programs for children, youth and teens, families, the Quaker community, and for adults over 55. Generally, each of our programs can serve between 20-60 campers, leading to tight-knit groups who look forward to spending time together at camp year after year. It's a special time. Camp is an escape from the day-to-day worries of work and school and concern for appearances and status, into the safe respite of nature and spirit.

That escape didn't happen for campers this year. NeeKauNis, like other sleep-away camps in Ontario, was closed by COVID-19 for the 2020 season. It was truly a time of diminished joy.

The Camp Committee, though, did not leave Nelson-Hall or the rest of NeeKauNis to the mice or elements to weather the pandemic alone.

Diminished Woes

Instead, work crews met in safe numbers of fewer than 10 from May to October, under the dedicated oversight of our Physical Development (PD) subcommittee. In terms of camp's physical condition, this is a time of diminished woes. After a summer of effort that respected the boundaries of physical distancing, volunteers have made improvements and safety enhancements to camp buildings and grounds.

The trails are groomed and there is a new one behind the wash house for future explorers to hike. The grass has been cut and the gardens tended. Dead and dying trees that threatened to fall on our buildings, including the Meeting Center, have been trimmed or felled. The wood has been cut and stacked to dry for the wood stove and firepits for years to come. Leaks in plumbing have been repaired. There is a new water heater in the kitchen, and new LED light fixtures have been installed. (Gone is the hum in the annex!) And a new coat of white paint means the kitchen is looking bright and refreshed.

The volunteer work crews began renovation of Haslam Cottage, one of our heritage buildings. The back hallways are wider, the back rooms and washroom have been re-wired, the walls are framed, and doors are hung. It will be insulated and have new paneling put in place in the spring. Returning camp friends will also notice the beautiful new steel roof which will protect Haslam Cottage for many decades to come.

Past, Present and Future

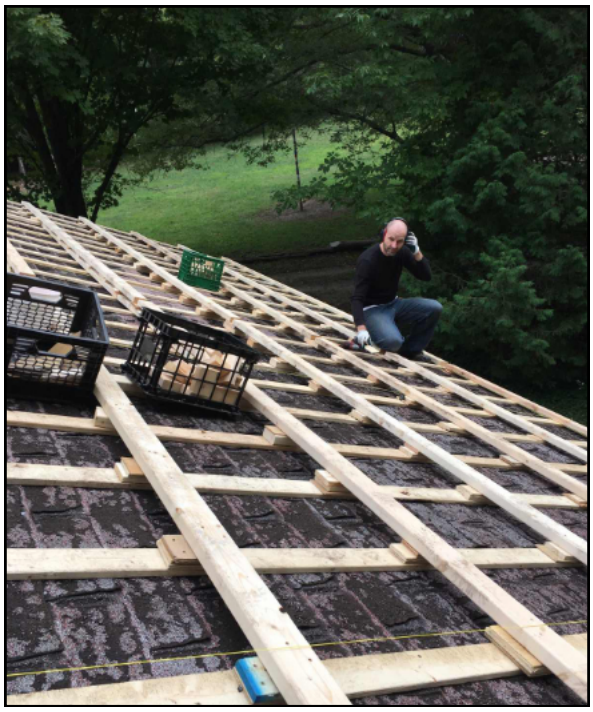
The list of chores and tasks each team completed and checked off the list is long. As we did each of them, we were reminded constantly of our history and felt the support of work crews from the past ninety years.

The reminders weren't just spiritual. That Quaker practice of archiving and transferring knowledge was there as well. It was in the black and white photographs screwed to walls, in the boxes of mementoes we stored lovingly in the Meeting Centre to be returned to their places next season. Those who cared for Camp before us inspired us to work for the future – a time when we can be together at NeeKauNis again, in whatever shape that will take.

Access to the eternal power of nature helped motivate work crews too. The waterfront was unused all summer, so the dock did not go in. The canoes and kayaks stayed in the boathouse. High water levels over the last two years have slowed down waterfront renewal plans, but those are only human plans. The Canada Geese still swim in Sturgeon Bay, the wild turkeys still look annoyed when humans appear, and herons and osprey continue to fish as the waves lap at the stones on shore.

It was one summer without campers. It was one summer to invest in the future of Camp NeeKauNis. One summer of hard work and diminished joys is not a huge sacrifice of human effort and time. The financial picture, after a year without rental income and camper fees is a little more difficult to paint. For the past several years, the Camp Committee has applied for a grant from the Samuel Rogers Memorial Trust (SRMT) and we are grateful for their continued support. Camp's insurance premiums







alone are now $16,000. Our insurance broker hopes we will be able to receive a rebate given the reduced risks due to not having our programs running in 2020.

The continuing generosity of Friends toward Camp NeeKauNis, and our careful stewardship of our assets, inspires great hope that our community will overcome any loss we have incurred. We received with gratitude and joy several large donations from Monthly Meetings and a special grant from the SRMT to help with reroofing Haslam. Creative solutions are in abundance. Laird Nelson donated a dozen of his beautiful handcrafted walking and hiking sticks for an online auction early this summer, raising just over $600.

Camp NeeKauNis does not receive funding from the CYM General Fund and so we are grateful to be starting off 2021 where we would usually be financially. Donations made by e-transfer, cheque, and through the online giving platform Canada Helps are always welcome. If you'd like to review your own options for donating to NeeKauNis, please visit www.neekaunis.org and click on 'Donations' at the top.

Sturgeon Bay, the wild turkeys, the newly renovated Haslam Cottage and our improved kitchen at Nelson-Hall are all there and waiting for us. We don't know what the guideposts leading us away from the pandemic will say yet, but we do know there will be time to renew joy and community at Camp NeeKauNis in our future.

Reflections on a Pure Principle

by Bert Horwood, member of Thousand Islands Monthly Meeting, worshiping with the Prince Edward County Worship Group

> "There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages has had different names. It is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no form of religion, nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In every person where this takes root and grows, of whatever nation, they become kindred."
>
> — John Woolman

For many years I have found comfort in this statement of John Woolman. At first I thought the source of comfort was its crystalline simplicity and its assertion of inclusion for me personally, as well the rest of the human race. Now I've felt moved to reflect more deeply on the statement. What follows is the fruit of that reflection.

In many respects, the power of the statement lies in what it does not say. But to respect the statement I must focus, not on omissions, but on what it does say.

First, Woolman writes of a "principle." It is not a spirit, nor a person, but rather an active element of God. This principle, Woolman says, is pure, which I take to mean that it is not adulterated or mixed with other elements. It has no barnacles, no qualifying complications, no add-ons. The pure principle is located, not in the soul, nor conscience, but in the mind. This means that the principle is situated where it can act upon and be acted on by mental processes of each person. This interaction is not easy or automatic because the principle is "deep and inward." In other words, some profound and serious mental process is required to interact with it.

Because the principle is independent of the times, cultures, and religions, it is found everywhere and everywhen. Woolman writes that regardless of the religious state of people, the principle remains pure. It is not contaminated by residing in the minds of members of strange and foreign faiths. It is not spoiled by ancient or future beliefs. This is a powerful claim that the principle from God holds its pure character regardless of the state of faith of the person who houses it.

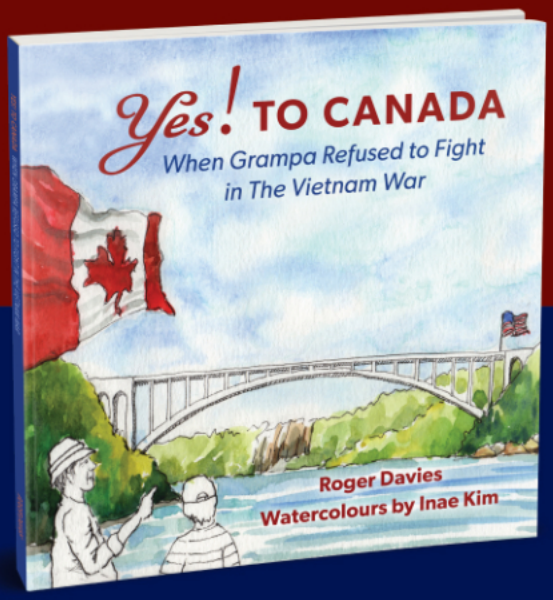
The principle is fully independent of religion, requiring only perfect sincerity on the part of any person. Ulterior motives are not allowed. But I note that Woolman places this sincerity in the heart rather than the mind of person. I think that he is not thinking of the anatomical brain and heart when he uses the terms mind and heart, but rather, the sincere heart refers to a right emotional condition and clean intent rather than cognitive processes. Superficial or glib processes will not enable a person to access the principle. Neither will processes grounded in unworthy expectations. Processes that take the attention deep into one's self enable awareness of the principle to grow. From this comes the perfect sincerity of heart needed for growth of insight and understanding. Within the fully sincere heart the principle grows, increasing its influence in the life that houses it. I detect echoes of the mustard seed analogy.

It amazes me that so much is contained in such a brief statement. And that so much of world-wide theologies, doctrines and creeds is left out. It is not helpful in an appreciation of this remarkable statement to dwell on the many credal elements which it omits. But two deserve mention. One omission, highly radical for Woolman's time, is that he does not equate the principle with a person, let alone a male person.

The omission of love in particular is especially striking. The only thing required of a person is the hard internal work to come to stand in perfect sincerity with the principle.

The statement gives rise to some difficulties. In many cultures, for example, human sacrifice was an important ritual practice. Mutilation is still widely practiced in some cultures in a fully sincere conviction of its sacred necessity. Is Woolman including those? On the face of it, he makes no judgement of any practice however personally or culturally reprehensible it may be.

Woolman's universalism is complete, crossing all the boundaries that separate us by claiming that all those who nurture the principle within them are relatives, some would say of one family. He has maintained gender neutrality by using kindred for the relationship. From that relationship it gives as all a place to stand entirely free from sectarian requirements.



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