

THE CANADIAN FRIEND



Steve Fick

QUAKER NEWS & THOUGHT

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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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Cover: Dharma Pentecost
Artist: Steve Fick
"In the New Testament Pentecost, the presence of the Spirit is said to have manifested in tongues of fire that descended from above to rest on each disciple's head. In a vision that came to me in ceremony, the Spirit, rather than descending from above, was breaking out from the Centre within, wherever two people chose to keep their hearts open in spite of the differences between their minds."

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 for 2022
Summer Issue May 15 Submission Due Date Autumn Sept 15 Submission Due Date
July 15 ~Received in mail Dec 7 ~Received in mail

Dear Editor,

I found Beverly Shepard's article [in the [last issue](#)] on "Who is God Anyway?" delightful. Her experience reminds me of mine in some ways. I grew up in the United Church of Canada and acquired its approach to divinity. However, it was in college where a professor led a group of us in an extra-curricular study of the gospels prepared by Henry Burton Sharman that I acquired my feeling for at least some of the words of Jesus that I still respect today. The professor incidentally was a Quaker, although I didn't know it at the time.

Well, occasionally over the years I have felt moved to quote some of Jesus' words in Meeting and the response here in

Ottawa has not been encouraging. Quite a few years ago a visitor responded immediately in a loud, clear voice, "WHITE NOISE."

I have not quoted Jesus often since then, but have a few times over the years without such a dramatic response, so I thought we were getting a little more tolerant. But recently I did it again and the immediate response was another voice urging people to "listen in tongues." So we haven't reached your level of openness yet, Hamilton, but we are working on it.

Sincerely,

Peter Harkness

Ottawa Monthly Meeting 🌿

A Quaker Response to Collapse

An epistle from Friends at Woodbrooke

Submitted by Carol Bradley, Annapolis Valley Monthly Meeting

To Friends and Seekers of Truth everywhere,

from a group of Friends from both sides of the Atlantic as we gather in worship to discern "A Quaker response to climate collapse" on Zoom in the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is an epistle agreed with participants of a Woodbrooke course led by Jackie Carpenter in May 2021.

The subject of climate collapse (the title we started with) or societal collapse in a time of climate breakdown (the title we developed together) is of such overwhelming importance that we wish to share our findings.

Our understandings are diverse. Some of us feel that collapse is now inevitable, with a real possibility of the end of life – at least the end of life for human beings and many other species – while others believe that moving forward to a sustainable future is still possible and even likely. Our differing viewpoints do not prevent us from experiencing a sense of relief in the discussion itself.

As Quakers, we believe in speaking the truth as we understand it, even when that truth is unpopular or unpleasant. We cannot know what the future holds and 'The End Of The World As We Know It' (TEOTWAWKI), may or may not be inevitable, but it seems clear that our lifestyle of driving, flying, and denial of the spiritual nature of this finite Earth and its eco-systems cannot continue. Humanity is facing a time of extreme challenge and holding onto hope for a miraculous turn-around may be avoiding the truth.

We recognise that many people are already facing challenges and disrupted lives. Perhaps the time has come for more people to speak about this and for Quakers to help

Make Detroit the engine of a Green New Deal rally (July 30, 2019) by Paul Becker
(flickr/creative commons)



Hamilton Monthly Meeting

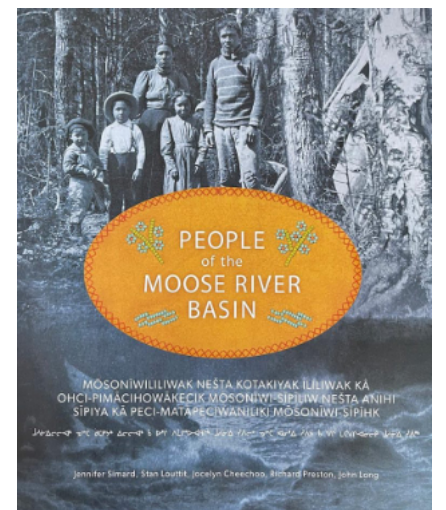
by Beverly Shepard

Hamilton Monthly Meeting is blessed with some excellent writers! Sheldon Clark (member of Yonge St. Monthly Meeting but long-time sojourner in Hamilton) recently has published a third volume of poetry, and Dick Preston was part of a team that produced a book about an Indigenous community.

Sheldon says: "*Still Voices* is a brief book of poetry accompanied by strong visual images, which reflect the sacred and the profane. Topics range from farm experience, to contemporary life, to religious expression. Readers will discover both delight and fresh perspectives that will inspire their own reflections about faith and practice." Many Hamilton Friends now own copies of *Still Voices*. This book, along with *Voices Extended*, and *Poetry and Prayer Sketches*, is available on Amazon. They are also available from Rock's Mills Press, which can be contacted at: customer.service@rocksmillspress.com.

People of the Moose River Basin is a people's history, with contributions by over forty of the people who have called it home. Its purpose is for them to pass on stories to the younger people. The Moose Cree writing team (Jennifer Simard, Stan Louttit, Jocelyn Cheechoo, Professor Emeritus Dick Preston and Dr. John Long) crafted a history aimed for grade 6 reading level, for students and anyone else interested in reading a non-academic, generously illustrated "people's history." This book has had a small initial publishing run to provide free copies to the Moose River people themselves; the commercial publication is in process. We'll let you know when we know!

(**Editor's Note:** As of February 2022, www.moosecree.com/people-of-the-moose-river-basin still says "For the public at large, ordering information... will [be] announced at a future date.") 🌿



them. Studying the fear of death and hearing about terror management, we find that death-anxiety drives people to adopt worldviews that protect their self-esteem and worthiness, so they feel they play an important role in a meaningful world.

This may be an illusion, but we know it is hard for human beings to change from deeply embedded belief systems. We find that helping each other cope with a change of attitude, tending to grief (which includes helping children face their grief), and thinking in new ways about the future are becoming increasingly important practices.

In sharing ideas about "hope" we discern that for some of us, moving from feeling hopeful (possibly as a form of denial of an unpalatable truth) to a state of acceptance can leave us hope-free, not hope-less. Reframing the future enables us to reach an understanding that the end might be nigh, but that life and love goes on.

We discover this reframing to be a powerful and even joyful process of unburdening, finding it helpful to be free to discuss what living well and dying well might really mean. Giving up expectations of having to rescue the future personally is enormously liberating, and allows us to focus on living simply, staying local, and building community in the present.

Once we accept that climate collapse may be an imminent possibility that could happen suddenly, like snow sliding off a roof, we may choose to change the actions we currently take to reduce our damage to the world. As we become more aware of the loss of habitat for people and wildlife and the anguish of inequality, we are inspired to work to reduce harm. Whatever the future may hold, we believe that it is important to walk forward with a sense of joy, love, and compassion for ourselves and for all of creation, working to reduce inequality and injustice in all places.

In our discernment, we find an acceptance of the real possibility of collapse to be liberating. It becomes a relief and pleasure to talk about how to live with what is. It may lead us to listen with greater compassion to those around us struggling to come to terms with their fears and difficulties, and to take steps to help them live and die better, helping one another up with a tender hand. We consider that Quakers could be poised to become midwives and comforters of the challenging times ahead of us.

You may contact the group through: jackie@friendshipcohousing.org.uk



Our Enduring Heritage

Yonge Street Friends Burial Ground, Newmarket, Ontario

Quakers in the Thirteen Colonies

During the 1770s Quakers living in North America had large families and, like many settlers at that time, found that land for younger family members was becoming scarce and expensive. So began the great westward migration.

During and after the American Revolution, Quakers found themselves in a precarious position. Both the British forces and the American rebels and were suspicious of where the Quakers' affiliations lay, since the Quaker Peace Testimony led them to refuse to bear arms or participate in military service. The Quakers strong sense of community revolved around their religion, their membership in a Monthly Meeting, and to a hierarchy culminating in a Yearly Meeting.

Timothy Rogers and his Family

Timothy Rogers (1756-1834), a convinced Friend, was said to be "the best man for settling a new country." In his journal, he articulates the evolution of his spiritual life as he visited Quaker Meetings in the eastern United States. In 1795, travelling as a companion to Quaker minister Joshua Evans, Timothy visited Quaker communities in Nova Scotia and Upper and Lower Canada and met Friends in Pelham (Niagara Peninsula) and Adolphustown (on the Bay of Quinte).

Peter Hunter, the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, wanted to attract United Empire Loyalists and British veterans of the American Revolution as settlers to Upper Canada. Quakers were neither veterans nor loyalists, but Timothy Rogers convinced Hunter that they would make good settlers and received an initial grant for forty 200-acre farms. Interestingly, under the British Militia Act of 1793, Quakers were exempt from service in the militia but were required to pay a fine, a requirement that Quakers saw as recognition of their peace testimony.

Yonge Street Meeting

Timothy and his family were part of a group of Quakers that had moved northwards into Vermont. He had a prescient sense that the US-Canada border was not safe, and he understood Friends' need for more land and security. He convinced his wife Sarah that they should move their family of eight children north up the line (now Yonge Street) in

Upper Canada to what would become Newmarket (in Whitchurch and East and West Gwillinbury).

They travelled in winter, arriving in May 1801 with the necessities for starting pioneer life: oxen, horses, seed, tools, guns (for hunting game), cooking pots, bedding, clothing, and more. To keep a 200-acre land grant, a family had to build a cabin and clear the roadway in front. Clearing land, building a one-room log house, and planting crops was the first order of business. A gristmill to grind wheat and a sawmill to mill lumber were soon erected on the Holland River east of Yonge Street.

These new settlers had the skills necessary for a community, and more Quakers followed from Pennsylvania. That same year Timothy took his certificate of removal from his meeting in Vermont to Pelham Monthly Meeting.

Yonge Street Meeting and Friends Burying Ground

The first Meetings for Worship at Yonge Street were in cabins, but as the community grew, the need for a meeting house soon became apparent. Yonge Street Meeting was set off from Pelham Monthly Meeting in 1806. Three daughters of Timothy Rogers – Hannah, Mary, and Lydia – had married the three sons of Wing Rogers, and in 1807 Asa and Mary Rogers sold a parcel of land on the west side of Yonge Street to the Yonge Street Meeting.

Tragedy struck this Quaker community in 1808-09 in the form of a typhus epidemic that, combined with malnutrition, measles, influenza, and tuberculosis, took more than thirty lives in the community. Timothy and his wife Sarah lost their five married daughters, with some of their husbands and children. The first parcel of land acquired by Yonge Street Meeting was used for a burying ground.

The wooden markers and field stones that likely marked those graves are long gone. The Yonge Street Meeting House, constructed in 1810-12 on a second parcel of land adjacent to the burying ground, is still in use today by Yonge Street Monthly Meeting. The original plans specified a larger building, but with so many deaths the dimensions were reduced. Meanwhile, Timothy Rogers had moved with his younger children to Duffin's Creek in Pickering, in yet another stage of his expansionist plans.

Yonge Street Friends Burial Ground in the 21st Century

Ownership of the burial ground eventually passed to the Yonge Street Monthly Meeting Progressives (Botsford Friends Church). In 1980, when the Botsford Meeting was laid down and the Botsford Meeting House (Newmarket) sold, the burial ground was transferred to Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM).

Today the Yonge Street Friends Burial Ground is owned by the CYM Board of Trustees. The Yonge Street Friends Burial Ground Committee (appointed by CYM Trustees) cares for the maintenance of the cemetery and grounds, with an administrator (currently Evelyn Schmitz-Hertzberg) responsible for the business affairs, subject to the Bereavement Authority of Ontario. The burial ground remains an open cemetery for the use of members and regular attenders of the Religious Society of Friends and their immediate family members. Quakers may purchase lots for interment of coffins or urns, and there is also a scattering ground for ashes.

Preserving Quaker Grave Markers

The material and design of Quaker grave markers went through many changes through the last two centuries. The earliest extant markers in the burial ground – the "old whites" dating back to 1820 – are simple limestone slabs 12–15 inches high, 12 inches wide, and 2 inches thick. The first granite stones appeared in 1910.

One problem compounding the early lack of markers is that prior to the 1966 Ontario Cemeteries Act (which specifies record keeping for all burials), the records for the Yonge Street Friends Burial grounds do not indicate interment locations! This lack of precise detail lends a sense of anonymity to the individuals buried there. David Newlands noted that pioneer Friends "put emphasis on Friends community as the focus of life. The close kinship ties in the meetings were the web that

supported the strong emphasis on the community. In a real sense the Friends community experienced in a corporate sense the death of a member, with the realization that was the fate of all being shared by the community in worship."

The limestone grave markers worn down by age and air pollution have been further damaged by frost as the soil heaves and settles. Some stones have been broken or even removed by vandals. Other older gravestones are missing bases (keys) and lean over from lack of support; still others fell and slowly disappeared under the sod. Mowing the grass

(done since the 1900s with social pressure for park-like grounds) can chip the edges of the stones, letting in moisture that causes the stones to crack. Cement used for repairs also interacts negatively with the limestone.

The Restoration Project

Under its mandate for care and maintenance

of the cemetery – including the historic stones – the Yonge Street Friends Burial Ground Committee has undertaken a restoration project using the services of Tom Klaasen (of Memorial Restorations Inc., Sarnia, Ontario), a recognized specialist in the care and restoration of gravestones and monuments. His work for the first phase of the project, completed in November 2020, was excellent. The second phase will begin in the spring of 2021.

Some fundraising has already been done: the Committee has received funding from the Samuel Rogers Memorial Trust and the A.S. Rogers Trust Fund. The Canadian Yearly Meeting Trustees continue to support this work, but additional contributions are needed. Those who would like to support this project can make tax-deductible donations by cheque, payable to "Canadian Yearly Meeting" with "Yonge Street Friends Burial Ground" (or "YSFBG") on the memo line. Please mail donations to the CYM Office, 91A Fourth Ave, Ottawa, ON K1S 2L1.

Evelyn Schmitz-Hertzberg,
Yonge Street Friends Burial Ground Committee 🌿



Gathering the ‘scattered communities’ in Covid times

by Sue Nicholls, Development Manager for Rookhow Quaker Meeting in the UK

Greetings from Rookhow Quaker Meeting in the Lake District, United Kingdom.

We thought you would like to hear of our experiences of reaching out to Friends in a time of covid. Rookhow, built almost 300 years ago, is one of the oldest Quaker Meeting Houses in the heart of ‘1652 country’ in the north of England, where the Quaker movement was born. Sitting in twelve acres of ancient oak woodland a mile from Margaret Fell’s farm at Force Forge, Rookhow was built as a business monthly meeting for the ‘scattered communities’ of the Society of Friends. Rookhow continues to gather together Quakers of all ages locally and nationally, welcoming guests to its converted stables and activity groups to Quakers’ Wood.

When lockdown necessitated the closing of the centre, just when vital renovation work was about to start, we set up regular Zoom events for all ages. The Rookhow Zoom Café is still open to people from the local community and continues to provide a lifeline to those in social isolation. We’ve held all-age Zoom socials that have been hilarious: with scavenger hunts, games, singalongs and



(a favourite) Zoom Wink Murder. Each session finishes with someone reading a bedtime story and a short epilogue for children and adults to say what they’re grateful for.

As well as the monthly Meeting for Worship on Zoom, we’ve held a later night Epilogue for 20 minutes every Monday evening at

9pm, with someone sharing a reading or poem. As this has been so popular, we expect this to be a regular event in post-Covid times. With people now joining from across the UK, we would like to extend this invitation to our Friends in

Canada. To log in, go to the Rookhow website (rookhow.org.uk/meet-with-us). There you can also find examples of our all-age Zoom games, which are there to be used and shared.

Rookhow has just launched an appeal for its ongoing development work with Quakers and disadvantaged groups, as well as to restore the historic Meeting House, which is in need of attention. To support our appeal, please visit: rookhow.org.uk/support-rookhow



The Birds’ Luck

I sit at the table
and watch
the birds
at the feeder

Flying
in and out
back and forth

I wonder
what it feels like
to be a bird
during Covid

No one stops them
at the border
or do they?

Do they ask
to see ID
or stick something
up their nostrils?

(Do they have
nostrils?)

Do they say
they are not to fly
and must stay home
and not chirp
or sing
to others?

They come together
in big flocks

Uh oh
There could be
a fine.
More than 10!

Oh well
I’m glad they haven’t heard
about that
and glad
I can see them
at our feeder

As I say
to our far-away
grandchildren

We’re told
to stay home

But when we can
we’ll fly up
to see you
like the birds.

Carol Bowyer
Member of Kitchener Monthly Meeting and active participant
in Lucknow & Area Worship Group
Feb. 2021



Photos by Brent Bowyer



Many Hands

Ahmad asks my appointment time,
Will waves me inside,
Lynn confirms my time,
Philomena screens for symptoms,
Greg gives me a fresh mask,
Angie asks my birthday,
Caroline confirms my condition
(caregiver for a family member),
Ming motions to cubicle V-6,

Jaquiline holds a needle
her skilled hands
end a year of fear.

The big moments in life
are a series of small acts
done with great care.

Tim Alamenciak
Kitchener Area Monthly Meeting

Thoughts Relevant to Speaking Out of the Silence

If only I could change the way it all came out,
a different choice of words perhaps
or a tender look to make them more appealing;
like a song to stir a resonance within
that inattentive ears might miss, or hearing
in the inner ear an instrument off-key;
if only I could change the key – a minor one
that vibrates like the country song ‘Regret.’

But, oh, the song is sung, and I am left
standing in the dusty road that winds its way
uphill to the town they call ‘Alone’ –
if only I could change the things I said,
if only I could still the lion roaring in my soul,
if only I could stop the mind from spinning,

K.R. Maddock (c. 1989)

Now, What is Poetry?

Now, what is poetry?
If you say it’s simply a matter of words,
I will say a good poet abandons words;.
If you say it is simply a matter of meaning,
I will say a good poet abandons meaning;
“But,” you ask, “without words, without meaning,
then where is the poetry?”

To this I reply: “Get rid of the words and the meaning,
And the poetry is what remains.”

Wei Yingwu (c. 737-792)
(A Chan Buddhist of the T’ang Dynasty, translated by Keith
Maddock while exploring ancient Chinese poetry)



AROUND THE FAMILY



This photo is of Friends gathered for Yearly Meeting at Pickering College in the 1980s. It was sent in by Virginia Dawson, who wrote "After Tony Richmond of Yonge St meeting died, his daughter passed this photo to me. Tony can be found in the bottom right-hand corner of the photo alongside some other members of Yonge Street meeting."

A lively discussion in the Canadian Quaker Facebook group identified the following Friends:

Fred Franklin, Jane Zavitz, Kathleen Hertzberg, Vivian Abbott, Margaret Heather Dixon, Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta Arnold Ranneris, Bill McMechan, Pete Cross, Jim Adamson, Myra Pollard, Rosemarie McMechan, Andre & Betty Hurst, Soo Newbury, Chris Springer, Michael Phillips, Dorothy

Franklin, David McKay, Bertha Pollard, Arthur Clayton, Elizabeth MacInnis (then Horvath), Dorothy Parshal, Carl Stieren, Ellen Pye, Elizabeth and Pierre Began, Sylvia and Anna McMechan, Colin McMechan, Gordon Hirabayashi, Jack Ross, Susan Pepper, Ed Bell, Philip Martin, Sue Hill, Betty Huggard, Betty Polster, Edith Adamson, Dorothy Muma, Dorothy Janes, Peter Wood, Connie Mungall, Paul Dymont, Sarah Preston, Ruth Walmsley, Sheila Brown, Barbara Bazett, Helen Thomas, Jo Vellacott, possibly Dan Cooperstock.

If you can identify more Friends (or can definitively say which year this was), feel free to send their names to editor@quaker.ca.

GLEANINGS & QUOTATIONS

"There is enough choice of simultaneous activities and enough diversity within groups such as Worship-Fellowship, Special Interest, and Ad Hoc committees, that each person attends a different and individual Yearly Meeting nowadays. ...

"I am one of those Friends who have moved from an initial serious minded dedication to attending all the business sessions in my first Yearly Meetings (with resultant mental indigestion, confusion and a numb rear end!) through a rather guilty sneaking out to enjoy those close annual visits with Friends from afar, the Quiet Room, sunshine and the children's program. Now, finally I have graduated to a guiltless feeling that there are some gifts I bring to Yearly Meeting and gifts I receive from it."

— John E. Hawkins, "Canadian Yearly Meeting" on p. 9 of *The Canadian Friend*, October-November 1974

REFLECTIONS & CONCERNS

Farewell to the CYM Food Co-Op The End of Canadian Quaker Pretensions to Simplicity? by Sheila Havard, *Coldstream Monthly Meeting*

This is unashamedly an opinion piece, and it is my duty to reveal my bias. My first reaction when I read about the anticipated demise of the CYM Food Co-Op was an indignant thought: "there goes the last vestiges of our testimony of simplicity." The CYM gathering had already abandoned the "simple meal" at a previous CYM session – also much to my regret although admittedly there were some compelling reasons. I recall in the London Friend's House UK of the 1950s and 1960s that a fruit lunch would be served for the price of a regular lunch and the proceeds donated to charity. Such a donation was also part of the purpose of the CYM simple meal.

The Food Co-Op has served in-person CYM annual gatherings well for years. It enabled families and young people, among others, to bulk buy, get to know each other by cooking and cleaning up side by side, and eat a much healthier and more ecological sustainable diet than is served by the campus cafeterias. But it had been clear from a Food Co-Op meeting held at the last in-person gathering that even faithful Food Co-Op adherents harboured doubts about its sustainability.

While I understand the arguments in favour of laying down the Food Co-op, I still feel an acute sense of loss, and I know

I am not alone in this. But as Mark Burch of Winnipeg Monthly Meeting emphasized convincingly during his Quaker Studies talks at CYM in 2014, sometimes the apparently simple is in fact inherently complicated. (In his case, he found that life off-grid in the bush, with the huge amount of manual labour involved, was not the simple life of which he had dreamed.)

In the case of the Food Co-Op, the search for local organic food had increased costs with the result that CYM was repeatedly subsidizing the co-op, even though it was supposed to be supported solely from what co-op members paid. In addition, it was proving more and more difficult to hire a coordinator and set up all the equipment required.

On February 6, 2021, following a couple of threshing sessions open to any interested Friends, CYM's Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business came to the foregone conclusion that the Food Co-Op should be laid down. I am not the only one to mourn its passing. But perhaps we should nevertheless collectively ask ourselves how we as a Religious Society live out our testimony of simplicity – or indeed if we do so at all. 🌱

Over 170 people have taken part in the free
Are We Done Fighting? workshop series.
Past participants have highly recommended it.

**"The book and the course itself was
FAR MORE than I had anticipated.
The facilitators were knowledgeable,
sensitive, and supportive. I am sad it is
over.... It was so wonderful."**

— Are We Done Fighting? workshop participant (from anonymous feedback survey)

Contact Matt Legge at Matt@QuakerService.ca to schedule the series for your Meeting. Find out more and get on the wait list as an individual at <https://QuakerService.ca/Register>



Photos of the 2005 Food Co-op by Donald Alexander.



Reflections on Living Intentionally & Living with Covid

by Tony McQuail & Brent Bowyer

Lucknow Worship Group (Kitchener Monthly Meeting)

Finding a Way Ahead During Covid

When the need for isolation and limited gatherings first started, our Worship Group, Lucknow Worship Group of Kitchener Monthly Meeting, began gathering digitally. We also moved to a weekly Meeting for Worship, from our twice monthly in person gatherings. Not all Friends were comfortable with this format – some because of hearing challenges and some because of technical challenges – but it was better than nothing.

Though we typically start our Meeting for Worship with ten to fifteen minutes of singing from the Friends General Conference hymnal and a group-produced collection of songs, we found that singing did not work well because our internet connections did not allow us to be synchronized. Yet it was good to be able to see each other, check in on how things were going, and then share worship together. The check-in was particularly valuable for Friends who had a small or no other social interactions during the period of isolation. It offered an opportunity to share their particular circumstances and a chance to feel heard and connected with others.

It was a relief when we were able to start meeting in small groups during the summer (our worship group is a small group) and we had many outdoor venues at different attendees' homes. We were aided by the fact that three of our member families have outhouses, so there were toilets available that did not require entering a house and that were surrounded by fresh air. We used hand sanitizers, maintained physical distance, and limited food to finger food that did not require serving utensils, so we missed our wonderful potluck meals of shared food and close companionship. We held the in-person Meetings twice a month. Some brought their own bag lunch to eat following the Meeting, and this offered a time for physically-distanced socializing as we could visit with others while we ate *and* shift our seating so that we could visit with more people.

We also offered digital meetings on the alternate Sundays but dropped them after several months because of limited participation. We did realize that the in-person meetings were not meeting the needs of all attendees, as some were feeling the need to stay more quarantined because of high-risk individuals in their close families.

In the fall we experimented with three types of Meeting a month. One was a digital meeting. One was a walking meeting. For this we would walk silently together outside for about ten minutes – then pause for a silent period, gather as a group, and have an opportunity to share spoken ministry. Then we would walk again, pause again, walk again, pause again – the idea being that by walking we'd stay warm and by pausing we would be gathered together where we could hear spoken ministry. A third in-person meeting was held in some form of shelter – possibly a heated garage, a barn stable, or a home – where we could be masked and physically distanced. Our hope was that, while not all may prove acceptable or doable for all our attendees, hopefully at least once a month one of these formats would be accessible to all of our attendees in the Lucknow Worship Group.

Our First Walking Meeting for Worship

Using a public trail offered more exposure for our worship group. Most found passing a few other hikers on a Sunday morning was not too disruptive of their worship experience – we would quietly say, “Hi,” or smile in passing. Rail trails or well-maintained and relatively level trails offered better access for Friends with mobility issues. The walking required a different type of focus and awareness, and the presence of natural features along the trail provided a grounding and sense of connectedness to nature for some. Some had a sense of “forest bathing” in the cleansing and healthy pleasure of breathing forest air. For some, the walking in nature was also an opportunity to be in the present moment.

Some lessons from Walking Meeting for Worship were:

- It's a big help to have someone who knows the trails, detours, obstacles like closed trails and bridges, and suitable places to stop.
- Fairly flat ground helps with accessibility.
- A slow speed that doesn't require so much attention and allows receptiveness to the surroundings seems best.
- An hour and fifteen minute walk doesn't require too long a trail (1.5-2 km?) if three or four stops of five to six minutes each are made.
- Layers of clothing will make comfort possible – this is pretty important!
- In cool or cold weather, getting out of the wind helps a lot.

Worship Sharing on the Power of Intention

Now in January 2021, with further restrictions imposed on face-to-face meetings, we are presently meeting via Zoom every Sunday. Once a month we have a discussion, mostly in a worship-sharing format, of a topic that one of the group has chosen. A recent one was on the importance of intention. Our prompt asked:

When, in your life, did you feel that things rather magically fell into place (that the path was cleared, doors opened) and, more importantly, why do you think that this happened?

This meeting was a very rich and moving time of deep sharing. As has sometimes happened in the past, we had a feeling of being on holy ground. Sometimes the thoughts shared in meeting might benefit a wider audience, and so we offer the synopsis below of several of those sharings to Friends in CYM:

- I've found that I need to become very clear about my values and then align my intentions with those so that my actions reflect my values. One example that comes to mind is the buying of our farm many years ago. I was young and knew nothing about real estate but knew that I wanted to do something to make the world a better place, not just protest against all the bad things. For me that meant growing healthy, organic food in a sustainable way. So I took the risk and the pieces fell into place.
- When younger, I was a singer. I had a dream of making a recording. But life intervened. I was also a single mother, and it just wasn't possible, time-wise, for it to happen. But later, a way opened for me to attend a workshop on dream interpretation and that has become my passion in these later years. Sometimes you just have to go with the flow and adjust your intentions.
- While meeting my spouse was coincidental – in a church-basement coffee house 50 years ago – subsequent events were very intentional. I knew she went to Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship at the university and went there in hopes of seeing her again. It took some sleuthing to find her phone number, but the pieces fell into place after that.
- For me, it's not so much intentions that are important, because I so often find that my intentions are influenced by expectations of the surrounding culture. It's more being open to doors opening, to leadings, that is important. Several years ago, I had a very well-paid job in the healthcare field. I was a team leader and respected by my colleagues. But I began to feel that there was something missing, that I needed to explore another side

of life. So I quit that job and worked for several months as a WWOOFER, a volunteer on various organic farms. Each day gave me a wonderful connection to the natural world and a chance to reflect and clarify what was important to me. I settled into a new life in a different community and started a Bed & Breakfast. Part 2 was the need and opportunity to help aging parents who were in their late 80s and early 90s. That too was a rich and rewarding experience. Part 3 currently is supporting my daughters during the COVID pandemic by being there with their children to help them with online issues.

- Only a few years ago, being near retirement, my wife and I bought a motor home. We were able to have some wonderful trips visiting cousins and our children – one of these shortly before her passing. Doing what seems important at the time is important; we don't always have forever.
- A joint response, collated from spouses: The two of us were doing well at farming but at a certain point wanted to contribute more to deal with world issues. Our church at the time, along with other churches, was a partner of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank for Third World food needs. We were involved as volunteers and thought that growing projects would work well, as farmers like to work together for a cause. Up until then Ontario had only bagging projects, and out West they mostly took donations at the elevators. Gradually, for one of us, it became a paid job and was very successful as the media helped a lot. We met a lot of wonderful people, designed a sign for the fields, and had close to 150 Ontario Growing projects. There were also suppers, concerts, city and farm twinings, gardening projects, etc., to attend as Ontario Coordinator. But after several years, the time demands became hard to cope with when we had the farm work too. Also, there was more need to speak to groups all over the country, and that wasn't my thing at all. So it was time to hand it over to someone else. There is a time to let a previous leading go as well as to follow it.
- I was a young mother just divorced and moved back home with my young daughter. After living with my parents for some months, I knew we needed our own space. I had little money but went out house-hunting. I saw a small home that looked just right. I went home and asked my daughter to draw a picture of what she thought a perfect house would look like. It was just like this one I'd just seen! To make a long story short, we were able to get it and lived there for a few years. My daughter wanted a kitten but I told her how expensive it was what with food and vet bills. She decided to raise the money



Listening to the Light: Absurdity or Mystery?

by Bert Horwood
*Prince Edward County Worship Group,
Thousand Islands Monthly Meeting*

Some years ago I made a poster to help advertise the location of our cozy new worship room deep in the bowels of Unitarian Place in Kingston. The poster read “LISTENING TO THE LIGHT.” It did not evoke comment until I used the expression in conversation with a wise Friend recently. She thought it was dangerous nonsense. My immediate reaction, one of defensiveness, gave way over time to less emotional reflection. This essay is the result.

Chris Ravndall, who taught a course on prayer at Pendle Hill for many years, was clear that humans do not have a sense organ for detecting spiritual messages. He did not deny that there are spiritual messages and that we can know their content. I think he is right. The reality of those messages is the reason that we invent metaphors for our experiences of the inward spirit. There is a related problem because at the heart of all spiritual experience is an ineffable mystery. The resulting mystical language may well be nonsense when heard or read out of context – for example ‘the still, small voice.’

A famous use of the ear is George Fox writing “I heard a voice saying . . .” Fox also used visual metaphors (commonly called visions), as is in, “I saw a great people gathered.” Accounts of the lives of saints contain the words, “the sweet smell of sanctity,” thus calling on the olfactory sense to validate sacred status. There is a hymn we used to sing, “Oh taste and see that the Lord is good” and later in the same verse: “He has cut off my rags and clothed me with gladness.” (As a teenager I wondered if gladness would be opaque or transparent.)

Metaphors and similes, like all analogies, are both useful and deceptive. Their use is nearly obligatory to describe or explain a spiritual experience for which there are no other words. Quakers find it useful to use the term ‘opening,’ ‘leading,’ and ‘guide’ for spiritual nudges not attributable to the senses. Metaphors show how a rare and special event is similar to a familiar one. Thus an incoming idea may be like a voice, an image, a taste, smell, garment, doorway or path. Using a metaphor conveys a feeling of both the intimacy and urgency the inward spirit is expressing.

The Gospels make use of vivid analogies for memorable instruction. God’s rule is like a mustard seed, or a bit of yeast, but the lesson is not about growing mustard or baking bread. Rather

by selling pictures she drew and candies (for an inflated price!). One man kept coming back to buy more and that’s how I met my special partner. We decided that we needed more space out in the country and found what appeared to be the perfect fifty-acre property. It had been on the market for 3 years with no one in it but was way more than we could afford. But the three of us went out there and my daughter said, “We should ask God for help to get this. It’s just right!” So we knelt there behind the house and she prayed, “Please God, this is the right house for us...” We made the offer, and that house was just right for us at that time of our lives.

- We had bought our first house, an old and somewhat run-down brick Victorian one. It had a dirt floor in the cellar that we decided to make into usable space. We hired a backhoe to dig along the outside slab limestone walls two feet below the bottom of the walls, with plans to waterproof them, and later to dig out the inside deeper and put in a cement floor. Our intentions went quite awry, as that evening, following rain all day, the house collapsed. It ended up having to be demolished. After finding out that our insurance wouldn’t cover this, we were rescued by our church community, family, neighbours, and friends who started a trust fund and raised enough to build a new raised ranch house on the site. We are eternally grateful for a community that cared and have tried in the years since to pass it on. When your intentions go right off the rails, you need the support of others.
- A few years ago, one of my older brothers – from whom I’ve been alienated for quite a few years, even though we were close as children – was dying of cancer. He was a devout but judgmental fundamentalist, convinced I’d lost my way in becoming a Quaker. We went to see him, and I told him I loved him. His last words to me as we were leaving were, “You could have done better.” I bit my lip and decided not to argue with him. But it has really bothered me ever since he died, shortly after that conversation. I’m determined not to become bitter and try to remember him as a younger, kinder person. I still talk to him quite often and tell him that I love him.

Some common themes we can discern:

- being intentional and thoughtful about your lifestyle and important decisions
- being open to leadings
- being willing to take risks
- being part of a caring community 🌿

Thoughts on Modern Quakerism

by Mark Jokinen

Editor’s Note: This article came in with the following comments from Mark: “I was a long-term attendee at two Canadian Monthly Meetings (Ottawa, then Peterborough), and have recently finished an essay of my thoughts on modern Quakerism in Canada. Mary and Greg Conchelos of Peterborough Meeting have read the essay and suggested I submit it to the CF. Margaret Slavin has also read it and commented on it to me.”¹

Modern Quakerism in Canada, has evolved from its Christian roots and become its own religion. Most members of the Meetings I am familiar with,² if asked what their religion or personal faith was, would answer simply ‘Quaker.’ They know that their faith has roots in seventeenth century English Christianity, but also that their faith has evolved from it.

Evidence for this is in the titles of *Faith & Practice*. I own three editions of it: from 1960, with the word Christian in the title;³ from 1995, where the word is in the book’s subtitle;⁴ and from 2011, where the word Christian is absent from the title entirely.⁵

There are other examples of one religion evolving from another (e.g. Mormonism from Christianity and Christianity from Judaism), but Quakers further claim that a person can be both Christian and Quaker at the same time, or Jew and Quaker, Buddhist and Quaker, even atheist and Quaker. But I suggest that someone who double-identifies, while attending and worshipping regularly as a Quaker, will over time find their other faith weakening. We are influenced by the beliefs and assumptions of those we choose to worship regularly with.

I detect a subtle sense of superiority in the Quaker attitude to other religions. As I heard one Quaker say in conversation,

it is about the potential for growth and increasing benefit that seeds and yeasts have.

Our custom of using “light” to refer to the inward spirit is a kind of habitual metaphor but one in which it is easy to forget the term is not meant to be taken literally. Taking it literally is the reason “listening to the light” seems absurd. A metaphor breaks down when it is taken too literally. In fact I would argue that every analogy fails when it is examined closely. In classroom situations, I found it helpful to require students to challenge any analogy we used. If we had used a freight train as a simple analogy for a large starch molecule, the question would be “Yes, but how is a starch molecule different from a freight train?” It would be appropriate here to challenge the reader, “How is light not like the in-dwelling spirit of god?”

Identifying the limits of a metaphor has the effect of making it more powerful in its intended context, while at the same time limiting the risks of error and idolatry. Friends sometimes modify the Quaker light metaphor by referring to the light of Christ, or the light of truth and similar qualifications. These strongly indicate that we should not confuse the inward light with physical light. And that is a good thing because what we call physical light is only a very small fraction of the electro-magnetic spectrum. It is hard to think that the power of the universe would limit itself to the visual spectrum when communicating with humans.

An allegory is a story based on an extended metaphor. The same usefulness and hazards found in other analogies are found in allegories. Biblical parables are allegories. Study of the accuracy of a parable’s built-in comparison is greatly enhanced by equal study of its failure. Take the parable of the Prodigal Son, for example. Luke reports the story without spelling out any analogies. Jesus does not explain; the tale is simply told and allowed to hang there as the Gospel moves on to other matters. The father is thought to mean god, but who are the two sons? For those who value equality as a virtue, the “good” son clearly has a legitimate complaint that is never addressed. Is the teaching in this parable more about the responsibility of parents toward differences in their children rather than about confession and absolution?

My point is that reading the analogies in the story through a different lens greatly enriches the lessons to be found in it. Luke was wise not to explain.

It is a blessing that the openings of the spirit are not easy for us to access or to describe. It is a gift that we have to use our own language, however haltingly and nonsensically, to name our experiences. The result is truth wrapped in mystery, which is exactly as it should be when the creature dares to approach the creator. 🌿

¹ See the last issue for many of Margaret Slavin’s comments, in her article “About Drifting Away from our Roots” (Winter 2021, [Issue 117.1](#)).

² I attended Ottawa Monthly Meeting from 1981-1987 and Peterborough Allowed/Peterborough Monthly Meeting from 1988-2007, participating actively in the life of the Meetings, though I chose not to apply for Membership. In 2006, I became a Christian.

³ *Christian Faith and Practice in the Experience of the Society of Friends* (London Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1960).

⁴ *Quaker Faith and Practice: The Book of Christian Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain* (1995).

⁵ *Faith and Practice: Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends* (2011).

“Quakerism is closer to the truth of things than other faiths are.” Experience of the Inner Light is the essence of Quakerism. The experience is common to other faiths as well, yet Quakers see those faiths as also encumbered by other belief baggage. For example, Christians have the sacraments, the Bible, belief in the resurrection of Jesus, and so on. To put it plainly and directly (Quakers are usually reluctant to be this blunt), most Quakers consider those additional beliefs to be unnecessary, irrelevant, or untrue. Quakerism on its own is considered sufficient. This is how Quakerism weakens the other faith of those who double-identify.

Besides losing its roots in Christianity, modern Quakerism is also losing its own 17th century Quaker history and context. I see that happening in *Faith & Practice*. More recent Quakers predominate in the selection. Fox and the others were founders, and their writings are often profound and eloquent, but Quakers do not otherwise privilege theirs over the writings of others more recent. And because our language changes over time, earlier writings will need more explanation of their historical context. It is easier to choose writings of people more contemporary. There has been a reduction in the proportion and amount of earlier writings in the more recent *Faith & Practice*, which would lead to a loss of historical memory over time in the membership.

Over time (decades, generations), people remember less about their past. There is too much of it. And it is quite possible to be a committed Quaker and have no interest in early Quaker history, to not see it as relevant to today's issues (This is also possible with a Christian knowing Christian history). But if the Inner Light experience (any religion's core experience) is not rooted in, understood through, interpreted by historical memory, it will be like a sailing ship without rudder or keel, compass or chart, the worshipper being led astray by contemporary social, cultural, and political fashion. I see that as happened in modern Quakerism.

The one source of spiritual authority in Quakerism is the personal experience of the Inner Light. This reliance on a single source is both powerful and a weakness. It is powerful as personal testimony, but weakness in a group. Quakers attempt to discern the divine will, where the members of the group are led into unity by and in the Spirit. In other words, a Quaker Meeting is a gentle theocracy. Their trust is in the truthfulness and clarity of the Inner Light. But what if this guiding Inner Light itself goes astray? How would they know?

If someone in a Meeting goes astray in thinking, worship or behaviour, the other members gently lead him or her back to the Light through dialogue or by example. If an entire

Monthly Meeting goes astray, the larger Regional or Yearly (national) Meeting would engage them in the same process. But if the error is a long slow general drift among all members, where is the corrective mechanism? Quakerism is what the current members deem it to be.

Very few members today are birthright Quakers. Most have come to their faith as adult seekers from some other spiritual tradition, or from a secular upbringing. This has been true for generations. It means that, because newcomers predominate, their attitudes, ideals and experiences will become the norm, even as they learn Quaker ways. The result is a homogenization and simplification of belief, making Quakerism more generic. It has become what is common among members and their backgrounds, minus what is distinctive in each.

But Quakers also mirror the views and behaviour of the wider secular society. Quakers are mostly middle class, mostly white, highly educated, and tend to the left of the political spectrum. There is no overt discrimination in accepting compatible seekers into Membership, yet a kind of self-selection still occurs, of like choosing to associate with like.

If contemporary Quakers have drifted away from the Inner Light, how would they know? They still have spiritual experiences that seem similar, and they are sincere, truthful people. Quakers are good people, but it is possible for good people to be misled, to be honestly misled, and to be honestly misleading. An individual Quaker who questioned the truthfulness of the Quaker insight itself would find it very difficult to challenge the Meeting directly on this. Instead, I expect he or she is more likely to drift away or drop out, continuing the seeker search that brought them to Quakerism in the first place.

For Christians, spiritual authority is more complex. We have three sources of it: (1) personal experience or conviction by the Holy Spirit or Christ (much like the Inner Light experience); (2) the Bible; and (3) the traditions and experience of the Christian Church over two thousand years. (Many Protestants hold only to the first two sources). I see the three sources of authority as intertwined, like strands of a rope. They reinforce but also question each other, in a kind of conversation down the centuries. This challenging and difficult process strengthens and renews the Christian faith.

I find Quakers see these multiple sources of authority as an either/or choice – either personal experience of the Light, or authority of the Bible, or of the Church. Christians see them as both/and, not either/or. A Christian's experience of the Holy Spirit is as powerful and meaningful as a Quaker's Inner Light is to them. A Christian is like a traveller who knows

three languages. Such a traveller is likely to be more successful and flexible than a traveller knowing only a single language.

There are different kinds of truth: for example, historical truth and artistic truth. Christianity makes claims in the Bible that are issues of historical truth, claims of events that Christians believe really happened. Examples are the miracles of Jesus and his death and resurrection. There is also much artistic truth in the Bible. Non-Christians often understand and appreciate the Bible's artistic truths, while not accepting its historical claims.

I see the Inner Light experience as akin more to artistic truth than to historical truth. (And the same is true of a Christian's experience of Christ.) It has no roots in the past other than a feeling of identification with the testimony of earlier Quakers. But for Quakers earlier experiences of the Inner Light are not privileged, just as early Quaker writings are not. Quakers today assume that the Inner Light experiences of the early Quakers is the same as those of Quakers today. They may not be.

After all, two people may try to convey in words the artistic quality of a painting they both see, but what if the two do not realize they are looking at different paintings? An art critic examining a masterpiece can study and consider the writings of past critics, but he can also be confident he is appreciating the same work of art as they did. Any difference in interpretation must be due to the critic's different way of seeing things. But what if the artwork itself has changed over time, with the critic not knowing that?

If the context for understanding experience is contemporary only, rather than historical plus contemporary, understanding becomes like artistic truth – more creation than discovery, creation by the person rather than revelation from the Divine. In my opinion, it becomes a distortion of the true Inner Light. But if that distortion is believed to be the sole guide to truth, how would worshippers know? They wouldn't; they would be blind to the possibility of that error in themselves.

Is the Quaker experience of the Inner Light today the same experience as that of the early Quakers? Quakers today would say yes, of course it is. I have doubts, and some suggestive observations:

1) Early Quakers went into other churches and disrupted their services, witnessing to the Truth and the Inner Light. They were usually ejected and often assaulted. Quakers today do none of that, either in Christian churches, or in

non-Christian places of worship. They sometimes engage in disruptive peaceful protest and civil disobedience, but at secular organizations and institutions.

2) Quakers today tend not to actively proselytize, to seek converts. They let seekers come to them. Early Quakers did proselytize.

3) Quakers today are a group of like-minded individuals who come together to worship, then afterwards each go their own way. They are not a community that lives and works together, as many early Quakers did and as many traditional Mennonites and Amish still do. Today each Quaker or family lives on their own, as do most Christians, and most secular people. Each Quaker has many non-Quaker friends and relatives, as do most Christians and secular people. This is unlike sects such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, who socialize only with each other.

4) Quakers today readily 'marry out.' This is the term for a Quaker marrying a non-Quaker. Marrying out used to be cause for expulsion from membership. Membership today is an individual choice, not a family choice.

5) Quakers today tend to be left of centre in their politics. One who is right of centre and vocal about it will feel unwelcome in Meeting.

6) On abortion, most Quakers are pro-choice. The fetus not being a person, the peace testimony doesn't apply. The Quaker position on abortion mirrors that of the wider Canadian society.

7) Quakers today are very much a minority faith, about 1300 in all of Canada. In England in 1660, there were about 40,000 Quakers, in a total population about one quarter of Canada now.⁶ By proportion of population, that is more than a hundred times as many Quakers then as now.

Do these observations suggest anything? Modern Quakers are a small, select group, admirable in their social activism and pacifism, yet with a spirituality most visitors conclude is not for them: too austere, too colourless, too constraining. The result is a kind of spiritual basement, a reduction to what is common to all members, minus what is individual in each of them. And since the Inner Light experience is their one criterion of truth, it cannot be questioned from within the faith. To doubt the Inner Light itself would be to doubt being a Quaker. The experience they now hold to mirrors the wind and waves of social and political fashion in secular Canadian society. It is drifting them far from their roots. 🌊

⁶ p. 5 of *Organization & Procedure* (Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 2002).

Queeries

by Simon Daley

Peterborough Monthly Meeting and Canadian Young Friends Yearly Meeting

I had a really wonderful time discussing experiences of and hopes for queerness¹ among Friends with fellow queer and trans Friends during CYM in session's LGBT evening. We minuted the following sense of the meeting: "We, the queer and trans Friends gathered at the CYM 2021 LGBT evening, are in unity with the proposal that next year's CYM have a space for queer and trans Friends, and also space for Friends (queer, trans, nonbinary, or otherwise) to explore whether their own relationship structures (including heterosexuality, monogamy, or other) are working for them."

In order to thresh, you must know enough to recognize what is wheat and what is chaff. That knowledge is situation-specific, and while it may be gained through any combination of education, experience, or discernment, these all take time. It is difficult to know where one is in that journey towards t/Truth, because we can only see the path we've travelled, not the path we have yet to cover. There are many paths, and not all of them lead to t/Truth, so fellow journeyers may offer us insight on where they've travelled, but no-one can tell us the destination.

How do we acknowledge that some of us are better travelled in particular areas, while not forgetting that short journeys in novel directions may still carry insights or that some people have a good sense of direction? That on any issue we grapple with, God can speak through whomever They choose, but people who speak from direct experience or deep knowledge are perhaps in a better position to understand and interpret divine insights?

I see three aspects of this – how do we ensure that Friends with unusual life paths have access to the ministry they need to guide them on that path, how do we as a community make sure we are receptive to the ministry these Friends share about what they've learned on paths we may never take, and how do we reach unity on questions where there are deeply uneven levels of knowledge and impact?

Spaces

I am Autistic, trans, and a Friend. While it's not a unique combination, and while my experiences often overlap with

people who aren't all three, the first two in particular often make me feel like a fish out of water, surrounded by people who cannot put their finger on why I seem to be gasping and flopping about. All three have pretty profound impacts on what my life looks like and how I experience the world, and call into question a lot of the narratives we rely on for anticipating how the various stages of our lives will play out.

Even in the absence of experiences of rejection and discrimination, differences in life trajectory make guidance from intergenerational queer community incredibly valuable. I dream of a day when Friends feel they can approach their Meetings for help with discerning questions related to (or coloured by) their gender and sexuality, and be met with the knowledge and openness to new Light needed. In the meantime, I hope we can acknowledge that not everyone is equally able to provide care and clearness to everyone on every issue and strive to gather Friends with similar experiences who can mostly understand. For me, that is the purpose of gatherings of subsets of Friends – to give those of us flopping about a chance to encounter God in the water, however briefly.

Cracks

A well-known line in Leonard Cohen's song "Anthem" states "there is a crack in everything; that's how the light gets in." Queer ways of doing gender and relationships are cracks in traditions which many hold sacrosanct, which we can either lament, or peer through for glimpses of Light.

For me, the tragedy of failing to fully incorporate queer Friends into our community in a way that neither centres nor erases their queerness lies not only in the hurt this causes for queer Friends, but the loss of ministry when we are unable or unwilling to hear God speaking through them. Gender non-conformance can be a strong witness to gender equality. It can invite us to focus on the inward person and to question the limitations which are placed on women and men by assigning roles to them according to sex and gender. That ministry may speak to you even if the gender and sexuality you have always been presumed to have feel comfortable for you.

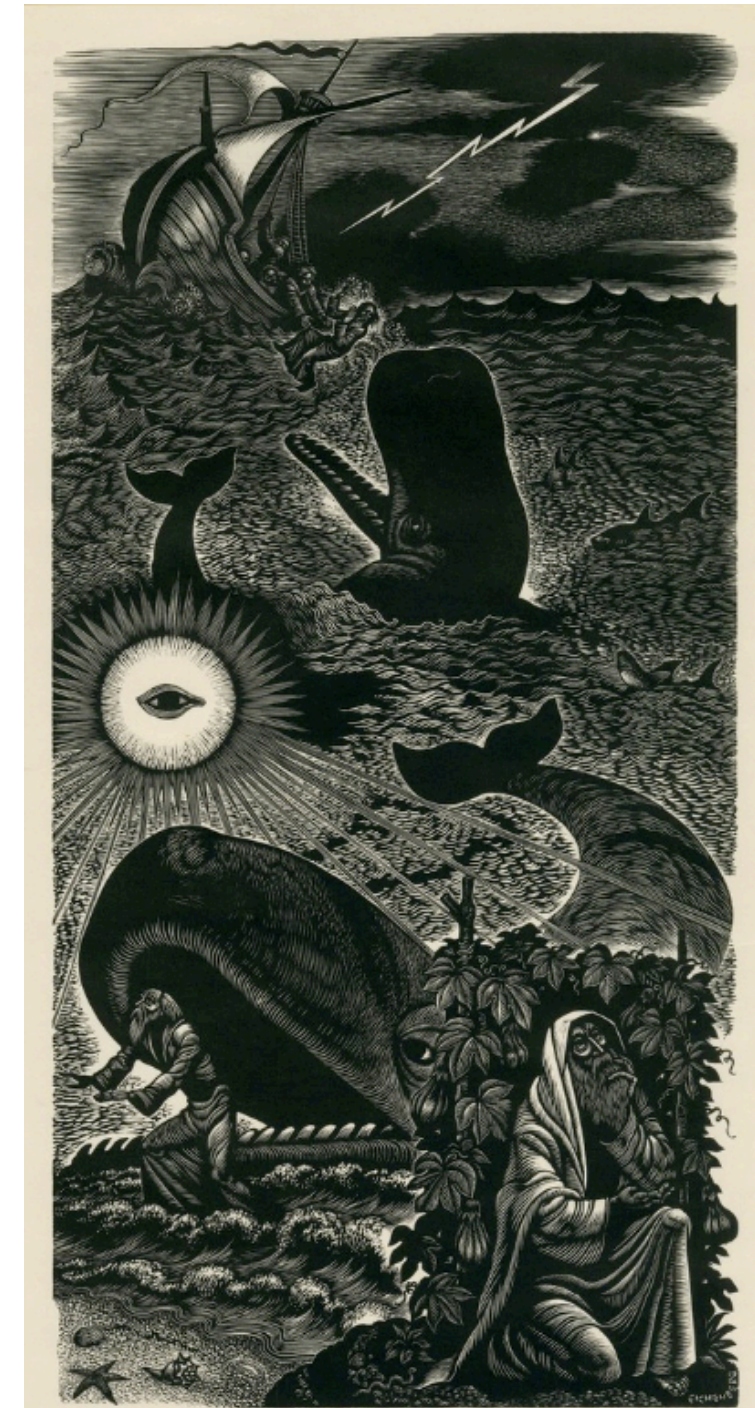
¹ I'm using "queer" pretty expansively here. I intend for it to refer to anyone who is doing gender or sexuality in "forbidden" ways and refusing to apologize for it. I think drawing boundaries around these differences between "normal" and "marginalized" is less important than recognizing that the differences exist.

Using the correct pronouns for non-binary and trans Friends is not just an act of kindness which allows them to feel welcome in our communities, but an acknowledgement of the t/Truth they have shared with us. I hope you'll do it because it's kind and you want to be part of a diverse Quaker community, but I also hope you consider it an invitation to see fellow Friends, yourself, and perhaps even God, a little more clearly.

Trust

Tests and practices for discerning God's will have a lot of parallels in testing one's gender and desire to transition. Discussing it with other people, taking small steps and reassessing, waiting and careful consideration, comparing notes with others who have heeded a similar call, all serve to test whether it is a matter of self-will or something else. So does the support we provide – listening, asking questions, speaking from our own experience, and not offering definitive answers.

I have learned through years of discernment and experience that I am most able to focus on being obedient to God when I am seen by myself and others as a man. For me, ignoring that I am a man felt a lot like Jonah's attempts to ignore God's calling out of fear of being



Jonah in the whale, engraving by Fritz Eichenberg. Eichenberg was from a Jewish family and made anti-Nazi cartoons in Berlin, then immigrated to New York in the 1930s, where he became a Quaker and frequently contributed illustrations to Dorothy Day's *Catholic Worker* newspaper.

those who do have direct experience. Though our ministry comes from God, it is we who discern its origin and give voice to it in our very human ways. 🌊

labelled a false prophet – though my storm had less to do with water and more to do with feeling disunited from myself and the pain that hating myself created for those who love me. "Pick me up and throw me into the sea, that it may quiet down for you; since I know it is because of me that this violent storm has come upon you."

My outward distress and the lengths it drove me to before transitioning made it easier for those around me to accept what I told them. But it's generally a truth that has to be taken on faith, and painful attempts at denial shouldn't be expected as proof.

Friends maintain that expressions of faith must be related to personal experience. We encounter God in our hearts, in our Meetings, and out in the world. The skin we wear, the lives we live, the people we know – all shape the ways we encounter and understand God's ministry. I do not believe that a group of Friends without direct experience of something can achieve meaningful new insights into God's will in that area (no matter their gifts in receiving ministry) without listening to and trusting

Dear Friends,

We write to you with important concerns about gender and respect in meetings. The most basic and actionable of these concerns is about the use of people's stated pronouns. They extend deeper, though, into concern about maintaining meetings where the divine is heard through everyone. In this letter, we will describe the concerns in more detail, situate them with respect to Quaker testimony and practice, and suggest some ways to move forward.

Gender is a complex aspect of life in our society. It can be painful, and it can be joyful. Certainly most people have felt at odds, at times, with the gender expectations society has for them. Some feel these expectations are deeply wrong for them. Many have also experienced exclusion and violence as a part of their gender, especially women and gender non-conforming people. There are many ways to deal with this complexity. Some find the experience so disruptive to their life that they change their gender expression, pronouns, or appearance. Some may change and still identify with a binary gender – as a man or a woman – but others identify in a different way. This change and identification is in the effort to live with more integrity, and to have a more joyful, truthful, spiritually-challenging, and rich life.

Our interactions with each other have the opportunity to affirm the expression of self that is our gender(s). One way that we do this every day is by using people's desired pronouns. A person's pronouns are both small and significant. When someone changes his or her or their pronouns, it is as a part of a larger process of discernment and action. When someone changes his or her or their pronouns, it is as because they desire to live a life more fully themselves. When someone asks that you refer to them by specific pronouns, it is an invitation they extend so that you may know them more fully.

Being misgendered by being referred to with the wrong pronouns can be very hurtful. Not only is it a denial of a direct request, but it is a denial of the discernment behind the decision. Again, since this discernment deals with spirit, integrity, truth, and pain, it is neither made nor rejected lightly. Yet many Friends in our midst consistently misgender others. This act, which can seem small, becomes heavy when repeated over time. Misgendering in meetings concerns us.

As there are many theologies, there are many theories about how gender is made, who it is made by, and the power we have as individuals to change it. And, just like theologies, some of these theories are hurtful and deny truth. An understanding of gender as purely binary (either male or female) is one which denies truth about the world and about nonbinary individuals. The diversity

of beliefs in our Meetings is a wonderful thing, and we don't want to reduce it. However, when beliefs exclude a community that has faced discrimination historically and in the present day, those beliefs are not diverse – they are hurtful. Exclusionary and hurtful views of gender in meetings concerns us.

Both of these concerns relate to something much deeper: the ability of all members and attenders of any meeting to feel connected, held, and supported in spiritual vulnerability. Trans experiences are often deeply spiritual and can hold beautiful truths. Trans individuals are as filled with light as anyone. To feel denied in one's identity can reduce comfort in spiritual sharing. We do not want the actions of any meeting to reduce any individual's potential to be a part of spiritual community. Nor do we want to limit the presence and action of the divine by limiting who is able to share it. A meeting is made up of individuals in sacred relationship bringing the divine with them, or accessing the divine through each of them, all together. This is an essential part of the community, justice, and equality testimonies. We call on Friends to witness these testimonies.

How we handle hurt is also relevant here. When someone says something hurtful in Meeting, how can we witness truth, integrity, and justice? Responding directly to and even interrupting something hurtful is ministry. That act is truthful: it denies the untruth of something like an enforceable gender binary. It has integrity: it responds to the call of God to act. It aims towards justice: it responds to hurt directly in front of us.

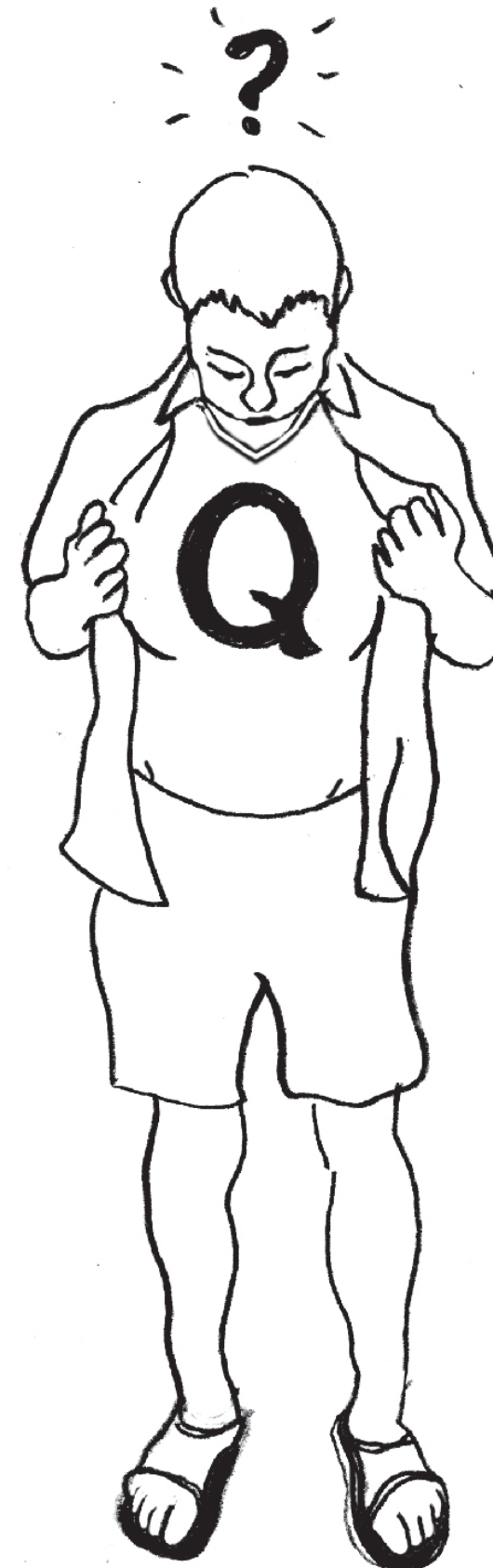
Treating people in the simple ways they ask to be treated, as through pronoun usage, is also a way to witness the integrity testimony.

The path forward is multiple. We expect a few things to be observable along the way no matter the path. Misgendering in meetings will become rare and never repetitive. More ministry relating to gender, from the beauty of trans spirituality to the difficulties of misogyny, may be shared. When someone shares something hurtful in meeting, pointing it out as hurtful will be a normal thing to do.

We are grateful to trans Friends who share gender revelation. We are grateful to the many supportive Friends. We are grateful to the many Friends who have expressed the intention to learn more from trans Friends. We ask that this letter and the concerns it raises be considered and addressed as appropriate in your own meetings. Thank you for listening to our ministry.

In Friendship,
Emma McKay (they/them) & Ada Bierling (they/them)
Toronto Monthly Meeting 🐦

Are you a Quaker without knowing it?



Experience rather than prescribed belief?

Non-violence?

Direct, unmediated experience of the Sacred?

Non-hierarchy?

The transforming power of silence?

Community?

Integrity?

Social action grounded in spiritual practice?

Simplicity?

For more information:
quaker.ca

Created by Steve Fick

Anguish and Hope in the Cradle of Faith

by Paul R. Dekar, *Hamilton Monthly Meeting and CFSC's Israel-Palestine Working Group*

In early June 1967, a six-day war led to occupation by Israel of territories that were to have formed a Palestinian state. Aware of Jewish relatives in Israel, I called an uncle at the outbreak of the war, asking, “Will we survive?” I certainly could not have anticipated the long-term consequences of Israel’s victory.

Fifty-four years later, I write at a time of renewed military engagement. On May 13, 2021, *The Hamilton Spectator* reported, “Dozens killed in Mideast Conflict that Recalls Brutality of 2014 Gaza War.” Watching the Oscar-nominated short film *The Present*, which dramatically portrays daily life under occupation, I am overwhelmed by the anguish of Palestinians and many Jews, as well as by hope for peace with justice.

One long-standing way Canadian Friends Service Committee has tried to alleviate this anguish is by advocacy for children in the occupied Palestine, as a founding members of the No Way to Treat a Child campaign in Canada.

The roots of this campaign go back to 1990, when the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This landmark in the struggle to protect children was signed by Canada in 1990 and Israel in 1991. That same year Canadian James A. Graff wrote *Palestinian Children and Israeli State Violence*, which documented Israel’s failure to live up to these standards. A Palestinian uprising known as the intifada strengthened generally nonviolent resistance against the occupation. In partial compliance with Canada’s becoming

a signatory of the UN Convention for the Rights of Children, the Canadian government funded various projects – including one I was involved with through a McMaster-based Health Reach, which assisted medical relief for children in three war zones: Israel-Palestine, Iraq, and El Salvador.

In early 2013, members of Defense for Children International-Palestine (DCIP) were invited to come to Chicago for a workshop on child detention in the Israeli military system. Local participants were then inspired to work with DCIP and the American Friends Service Committee to launch the campaign No Way to Treat a Child (NWTTC, nwtac.dci-palestine.org/our_story).

This seed has flowered into an international movement that challenges and seeks to end Israel’s military occupation by exposing the widespread and systematic ill-treatment of Palestinian children.



Buttons with shalom in Hebrew and salaam in Arabic. (Photo: Paul R. Dekar)

In April 2018, DCIP participated in an advocacy delegation to Ottawa to meet with members of Parliament and other policy makers to discuss the NWTTC campaign. Between April 24 and 27, Brad Parker, international advocacy officer and attorney at DCIP, was joined for meetings on Parliament Hill by representatives from the United Church of Canada, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, and Michael

Lynk, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967. This has produced acts like letter-writing, signing petitions, and lobbying.

Right Relationships with Indigenous Peoples

by Molly Forsythe, *Ottawa Monthly Meeting*

Another non-government organization, Human Rights Watch, also advocates on behalf of Palestinian children. In 2021, it published a [report](#) documenting that, while Palestinians and Jewish Jerusalemites are subject to the same criminal law, discrimination underlies policing in Jerusalem. They found that 77% of children arrested in 2018 were Palestinian, although Palestinians constitute less than 40% of the city’s population.

A report by an Israeli organization, B’Tselem, documents that police violence “is part of Israel’s policy... to ensure Jewish supremacy in the city.” Israeli authorities arrested more than 850 Palestinians, mostly children, many of whom were beaten, from the neighborhood of Issawiya in East Jerusalem between April 2019 and April 2020. The report characterizes these arrests as part of “an ongoing campaign of abuse and collective punishment against its residents.” Police regularly “initiate ‘friction’... block the narrow streets, fire stun grenades, tear gas and sponge rounds and arrest and beat residents.”

The Israeli newspaper Haaretz, which has reported on near-daily raids, patrols, checkpoints, and ambushes in Issawiya, and described the policy as one of “collective punishment,” and found that only a “tiny fraction” of those arrested have been charged with stone-throwing or other offences.

How can Canadians respond? A coalition including members of several groups has formed Canada, Stand Up For Children’s Rights. We invite participants to press the Canadian government to appoint and instruct a Special Envoy to promote, monitor, and report on the human rights of Palestinian children. To participate, see www.cjpme.org/childrensrights and consider signing the petition there.

I close with words from an Israeli song of peace, Shir LaShalom. A blood-stained copy of the lyrics was found in the pocket of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin after his assassination.

Don't say the day will come,
Bring the day about!
For it is not a dream.
And in all the city squares,
Cheer for peace! 🌻

Pendle Hill offered Friends a fabulous Six-Part Webinar Series between August and October. These webinars were co-sponsored by the Canadian Friends Service Committee, Decolonizing Quakers, and Friends Peace Teams/Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples. They all can be viewed on the [Pendle Hill youtube channel](#).

1. “[Sovereignty and Tribal Government Relations in the United States and Canada](#)” with David & Jerilyn DeCoteau
2. “[Implementing the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)” with Jennifer Preston & Sheryl Lightfoot
3. “[Cultural Appreciation versus Appropriation/Misappropriation](#)” with Dan & Mary Smoke, Freida Jacques, Rev J.R. Norwood, and Trinity Norwood
4. “[Solidarity, Guidance for Engagement](#)” with Kenneth Deer & Chief Dennis Coker
5. “[Healing from Intergenerational Trauma](#)” with Elicia Goodsoldier & Cante’ Waste Win
6. “[Truth and Healing](#)” with Marie Wilson, Penthea Burns, Esther Anne, and Denise Altvater

In Ottawa Monthly Meeting our Waters of Reconciliation group led by Judith Brown and Caroline Balderston Parry held post-webinar 30-40 minute worship-sharing groups of 10-12 people, and we responded to each of these videos, asked questions, shared our reflections, and strengthened the bonds within our community through deep sharing. We invite Friends across Canada to do the same.

I viewed all of these videos and participated in worship sharing, and offer these reflections:

These webinars were a great way to start an exploration into what it means to be in a right relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

I give thanks for being able to hear from so many Indigenous Elders. So many nights opened with beautiful ceremonial words of thanks, such as the Thanksgiving address offered by Dan & Mary Lou Smoke and the words of gratitude from Kenneth Deer.

For almost every event there was a presenter from Canada and the United States. As someone with feet in both countries, it was really helpful to get a clearer understanding of the differences and similarities between government relations with Indigenous peoples in the two countries. The relations in both countries create such injustices that it is good to understand the differences – and in some ways the pitfalls – that need to be challenged in Canada as we move past the Indian Act toward Indigenous sovereignty.

The night which addressed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) gave me great respect for the work it took to create this declaration. UNDRIP continues to inform how I think about current events and influences my emails to politicians regarding everything from clean water on reserves and treaty relations to provincial and national legislation. I find it helpful to look at issues through a UNDRIP lens.

Other events gave me tools for working towards right relations in my life.

Reverend J. R. Norwood and his daughter Trinity Norwood shared their perspective on cultural appreciation and appropriation, which I found very helpful as an artist. Some important points they made were:

1. It is helpful for us all to acknowledge how we are dependant on the natural world and to have respect.
2. It is appropriation to perform a Thanksgiving ceremony, but good to share thanks for the air, the earth, the trees... in English.
3. Every culture appropriates from one another. So you need to discern what is supportive and what is offensive.
4. Accepting and promoting Native values is wonderful.
5. Appropriating Native ceremonies is offensive.
6. Recounting that this story was used by x tribe for x reason is ok, but don't mix and match stories, or untrue stories. Be specific and speak to truth you actually know.
7. Do land acknowledgments. Recognizing where you are is very important. Whenever you can, you should reach out to the keepers of the land for approval.
8. Land blessings should be done by Indigenous people. Sweat Lodge Ceremonies and other Ceremonies should be done by Indigenous Peoples.

Chief Dennis J. Coker (Lenape) shared these protocols:

1. Recognize that many First Nations communities and individuals lack resources.

2. Be respectful.
3. Before you reach out, do your homework. Learn your history and their history, learn how to use titles. Ask how a person wants to be referred to. Learn all you can from their website. Learn their worldviews. Listen.
4. Talk to tribal leaders/elders and ask them what example should be followed – when and where to give gifts of tobacco, etc.
5. Demonstrate honouring. Respect kinship and ancestors. Know the families' role in Indian Country.
6. Ask “how may we participate in decolonization?” For example, help them tell their stories, display their art. Do not take over.
7. Understand who you are speaking to. For example, the Delawares are those that left to keep traditions, while the Lenape are those who stayed to keep the land. They are just now coming back together and learning from each other. Recognize that we (the Lenape) do not know all the answers. Do not expect us to be all-knowing. Do not have answers for us. Live with the not knowing.
8. Share tools and resources that can help tribal governments.

The work of Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission was inspirational. I think there are lessons though Reach and their work to heal and restore Indigenous people and cultures internally within First Nation communities, which we heard about in these workshops. 🌱



“Winter Wren” hand-sculpted, painted, and glazed mid-fire porcelain by Molly Forsythe.

archives

coorner



Welcoming a New Archivist

Left: The new Canadian Yearly Meeting Archivist, Michelle Tolley.

The Canadian Yearly Meeting Archives Committee would like to welcome our new archivist Michelle Tolley! Michelle comes with experience of having worked as a library technician at Pickering College, which hosts the CYM Library and Archives. It was while she was working for Pickering College, that she was offered the opportunity to do some processing for the Canadian Yearly Meeting Archives. This experience made her excited about working in archives and she pursued a masters’ degree to become an archivist. One particular aspect of archives that excites Michelle, is that the “archives provide an unbiased history in the original form as the document can be viewed before writers have added their interpretation.”

Michelle was introduced to Quakers while working at Pickering College. She appreciated that Pickering College was run according to Quaker values and would attend Meeting for Worship at Pickering College. Michelle found the Quaker approach to worship a refreshing experience, appreciating how Friends worshiped in silence and spoke informally out of this silence. Through worship and working in the archives, Michelle also learned how Quakers focused on social justice issues.

Working in the Canadian Yearly Meeting Archives, Michelle came to appreciate that social justice and environmental issues are not a new value for Quakers in the 21st century, as she has come recognize these values as an integral part of Quaker values in 1700 and 1800s.

Michelle discovered that the Quakers have been working with Indigenous people and on truth and reconciliation prior to any other faith community. She could also identify that Quakers are very accepting of people from different cultures and the LGBTQ community.

As Michelle explores the Canadian Yearly Meeting Archives, she is excited to see the treasures that are to be found in the vault and the Dorland Library. She recognizes the challenges that many Friends and researchers have in accessing the Canadian Yearly Meeting Archives. Having the archives in Newmarket, Ontario, at Pickering College makes it a challenge for some to access the archives in person. She wants to work to make the archives more accessible by developing a searchable on-line index. Then when you make an appointment to visit the Canadian Yearly Meeting Archives in person, your information can be easily retrieved and ready for you. Michelle advises that as information becomes available on-line, the Canadian Yearly Meeting Archives website will be updated – so stay tuned to the website! (quaker.ca/archives)

Finally, our Special Interest Group at Yearly Meeting in session will be titled “Preventing Memory Loss: the work of the Canadian Quaker Library and Archives” and will offer a video tour of the facilities at Pickering College. The goal is to improve our sense of identity and understanding of who we are as Canadian Quakers, and we’ll bring you up to date on our work. 🌱



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