

Hamilton Quaker Newsletter

January 2024



In what ways can I stand in solidarity with the current concerns and rights of Indigenous Peoples? What protocols and / or permissions may I need to seek in this process?

Reconciliation Queries #4

Upcoming Events and Announcements

On Sunday, January 14, there will be a Ministry and Counsel Brown Bag lunch and discussion immediately after Meeting for Worship, to hear input for the State of Society report. All are welcome to attend and contribute.

The next Quaker Education Session will be on Sunday, January 21, beginning at noon. The topic will be Nominating Committee, its role in the life of the Meeting, and searching for ideas. Participants are welcome to bring a lunch.

PSAC will meet online at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, January 22.

The next meeting of the Reading group will be on Sunday, January 28, from 3 to 4 p.m. in our Zoom space. We will be discussing pages 289 to 315, “Testament of Devotion” by Thomas Kelly, in Douglas Steere (ed.) *Quaker Spirituality: Selected Writings*. Please contact Shirla (shirla766@gmail.com) to be added to the participant list.

The next Meeting for Worship for Business will be held in person at the Meeting House on Sunday, February 4 at 12:30 p.m. You can also join us online on our regular Meeting Zoom link.

There will be a private memorial meeting to reflect on the lives of longtime Friends Ruth and Reuven Kitai on Saturday, February 10, beginning at 2 p.m. at the Meeting House.

Friends are invited to participate in a potluck lunch on Sunday, February 11 after the rise of Meeting for Worship. Further details will be available in the February newsletter.

A note to potential newsletter submitters: In order that we may include a variety of submissions and authors each month, the clerks and the editor would ask you to please limit your items to 750 words. Thank you Friends!

Supper Groups Return!

by Harriet Woodside

After our family discovered Hamilton Monthly Meeting, some 40 years ago, over time, we joined several different supper groups. At first, they were a good way to meet people and later they were a good way to meet people and get to know F/friends better. There is nothing like a shared meal to spark leisurely conversation and to inspire connections!

Take the information below as fluid and subject to the preferences of your supper group.

USUALLY:

- There are between 5 and 9 people. Partners are welcome.
- Groups meet once a month.
- The location is someone's home and the location rotates.
- The meal is a supper or lunch on a weekend afternoon.
- The menu is a planned potluck with each family or individual bringing an appetizer, salad, dessert or something else. Each meal the contributions rotate.
- The host provides the main course (this way it is hot and hasn't dripped).

WE WILL ASK FOR YOUR PREFERENCES:

- Food allergies?
- Being in a group with children?
- Serving alcohol or not?
- Prefer to join but not host (for example, you have a small space)?
- Need transportation?

There will be a sign-up sheet in the Meeting House from January 14 through February 4. After this, groups will be put together based partly on compatibility

(for example, location). The first name on each supper group list will be asked to arrange the first meal.

After about a year, if the supper groups are popular, it's likely we will ask you if you want to resign, continue in your group, or move to a newly formed group. This is an opportunity for others to join.

Please consider this opportunity for great food and camaraderie.

Questions? Contact Harriet Woodside at woodsideh@gmail.com or 905 627 7930.



A Message for New Attenders

by Beverly Shepard

We longtime attenders and members of Hamilton Meeting are delighted that we have a number of new attenders among us in recent months! If you are one of them and are reading this, please be assured that you're valued and welcome. I'm going to write the rest of this piece directly to you, though old-timers are invited to read it as well, to see what I'm saying on our joint behalf.

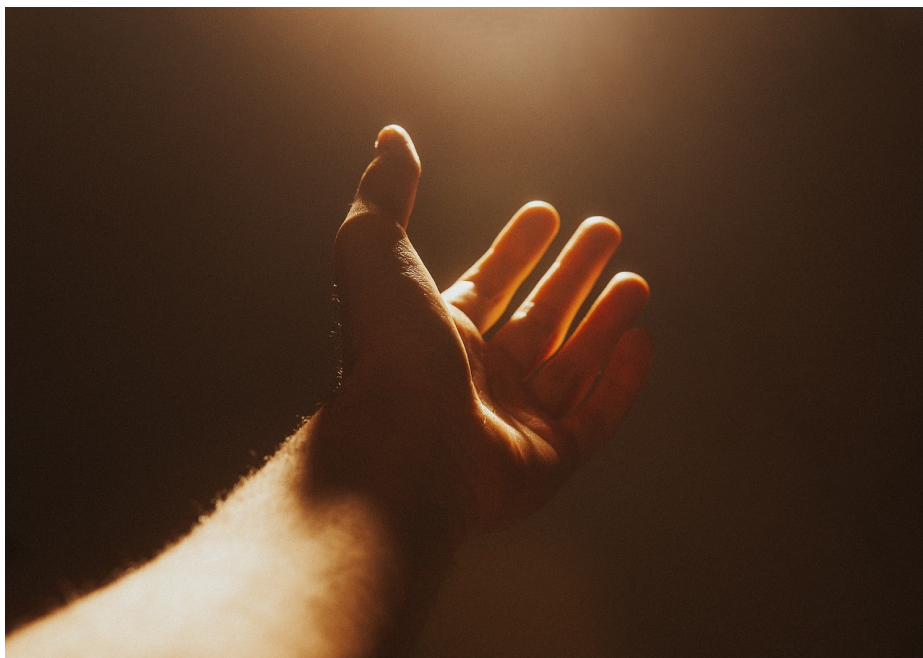
In a faith community as small as ours, newcomers are bound to be noticed. I think we're pretty good at offering smiles and hellos to you on the first time or two that you're with us. I hope that, if you've looked for a way to find out more about Quakers, someone has answered your questions, or pointed out the brochures on the wall of the foyer, or shown you around our little library. I trust that, if you're staying for a while after worship for coffee-and-cookie time, someone has been ready to chat with you and has made you feel part of the group. (Of course, if you're not comfortable chatting with people you don't know, or don't like coffee and tea, or are simply pressed for time, we won't have our feelings hurt if you leave right after worship.)

It's after a few months that it gets trickier. What's tricky about silent worship, you're wondering? Well, it's not about the worship – it's about the organization. Because we **are** an organization as well as a religious body. We don't have a pastor or a board of deacons or anyone else who runs the show, but we have many Friends who give freely their time to do all the things that make it possible for us to worship together in a beautiful space and to do our part in the greater community and the world.

The Clerk is the most noticeable of these; this is the person who keeps track of all that's going on in the Meeting and ensures that it does so "in right order", as we say. But there are many others: those responsible for maintaining the library and the archives, those ensuring that there's a First Day School for the Young Friends among us, a treasurer who oversees our donations and our spending, a recording clerk who crafts the careful record of our meetings for worship for business, those who have a concern for the healthy spiritual life of

the Meeting, Friends who see that the Meeting House is kept clean and properly-supplied, and others who tend to the grounds, someone who produces the newsletter and someone who produces the directory, and of course the Friends who find the Friends to perform all these necessary tasks. What is tricky is where newcomers fit in.

We “seasoned Friends” are never quite sure when and how to involve new attenders – **unless** they let us know. All kinds of people come to Quaker worship. Some are keen to get involved right away in whatever is going on. Some want to take it slowly and only



participate when they have a deeper understanding of Quakers and our Meeting. And some are just looking for a spiritual home, a place to be silent, to feel the Spirit, to share with others the sense of the Divine, but to be no more involved than that, and we need to hold a place for such worshippers.

We feel we have to be careful when involving newcomers. Sometimes we act too quickly to get someone to participate and they’re turned off and go away. Sometimes we hold off too long and they feel unwanted and extraneous. It’s a delicate balance. On January 21st, after worship, we’ll have the next informal discussion on Quaker ways, and this one is about nominations: a great one for newcomers to attend. Please come (with a brown-bag lunch if you like) to listen, learn, and possibly contribute. This can put us on a shared path to understanding your needs and wishes.

Puff of Ashes

by Sheldon Clark

***The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ... the earth
... and the works that are therein shall be burned up.***

II Peter 3:10 (KJV)

A whisper teases conjecture.

Does the tolling bell tell?

The taunting continues.

The bell tolls.

Alone I am not bereft.

Does the final consummation arrive?

“No. No. No. No!”

The bell tolls.

What? What? What?

Does extinction preclude compassion?

“Signifying nothing.”

The bell tolls.

Alone I am not afflicted by fear.

Does the Ark alter the Flood?

“The Fire next time.”

The bell tolls.

Alone I am asking,

Does innocence revert “through the Looking Glass?”

“Second childhood and mere oblivion.”

The bell tolls.

Alone I am with antique Shadows.

What remains?

“For dust you are and to dust you will return.”

The bell tolls.

Alone I am not deprived of sensibility.

Do body and soul just evaporate?

“I am the Alpha and the Omega.”
The bell tolls.
Alone in the manicured rose garden
puffs of ashes waft to earth.
A single cloud drifts seaward.
The bell tolls.



The Safest Place in the World

by Dick Preston

At a CFSC Meeting for Worship, I heard a man speak of the wonderful smell of balsam sap, and it triggered a memory, vividly.

It was during Easter vacation in 1967. Sarah and I were in a winter *michwap* "in the bush" near Shiningtree Lake at Josephine Diamond's beckoning. We were comfortable, with friends, eating well from the successes of two hunting families, warmed by a sheet metal stove in the center of the tent. (estimated cost of the materials for the *michwap* house, less than \$100. No worries about preserving or even losing our possessions.)

The outside world felt quite a distance away. We were reasonably secure, but more,

"I felt like I was in the safest place in the world."

...a deeply internal experience...

This is remarkable, since we humans don't have that feeling often.

She and Bertie and Annie and Jimmy are all long gone now. Greta, who was too small to go out by herself, is currently chief at Waskaganish. Life does go on.

This memory is my touchstone. It envisions a timeless home in the bush. For uncounted generations, people have lived well, dealt with contingencies as they occur, kept their composure and readiness for humour, accepted adversity and found ways to deal with it.

My mythic vision of total security is based on a brief visit during what had proved to be a tough winter. So my vision is not true, yet I believe it to be true in a mythic sense.

In fact, there had been four families there.

One young wife had a psychotic breakdown (John M. Cooper wrote of "flight hysteria" and that seems accurate). She believed that she found grey

hairs in her meal, put there by Jimmy Whiskeychan (Annie's husband) to hurt her, and when she would not be dissuaded, she ran into the bush, four feet of snow, with no known direction or goal, except maybe to escape from some harm. The men put on snowshoes and followed her path, found her and brought her back. Then Josephine stayed with her while the men trekked to the highway -- only a distant sound of a truck, faintly. They managed to get help, and she was helicoptered to hospital. Her husband, Lawrence, took her home to Waskaganish. I did not hear of her having any further distress in the next years.

Another family left for home when Lawrence left.

Then Annie gave birth, but the infant was bleeding around the rim of the navel. Josephine tried to stop the bleeding, but the infant died.

That's when Josephine wrote us, "Where are you?"

Through Ed Rogers, we got a short-notice job from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. In exchange for a report on their program of importing Waskaganish trappers into an under-trapped area, we were given a fly-in from Gogama. Dave Gawley, a very nice MNR guy, noticed I had no boots, and had loaned me his galoshes.

After a few days, we all trekked to the gravesite of the infant, knowing we might never see it again. I got to ride on the toboggan, pulled by 3 smallish dogs. The lead dog kept looking back at me, until I realized one of my mitts was under the toboggan, causing drag. I was asked to take a photo of Jimmie, Annie, and the *mistikokan* grave marker.

So my vision was based on one week during the calm, a few weeks following the crisis and the tragedy.

Yet it felt -- still feels -- so strongly of well-being. Probably this was encouraged by my feeling that I had now "arrived" as an ethnographer, living as the Crees traditionally did. I was finally legitimate, not just an ignorant interloper.

I wasn't just basking. I snowshoed with Jimmy to check a beaver trap. His son Bentley was maybe 8, and I couldn't even keep up with him. He had a lead

on me, of course, most of the winter. Jimmy had killed a beaver, and when we were heading back, a snow bridge over an open creek gave way just as I got across. If I had fallen with it, getting out and back up on four feet of snow might have been a problem. By the time we got home, I was very, very tired. Bertie told me I was doing well, but I believe he was just trying to make me feel better.

Of course, there was more. We set a fishnet under the ice, using 3 holes and a pole whose length determined the length between holes. Making the holes with an ice chisel was a fair task. And Bertie showed how to heat a broken trap spring and hammer it into a crooked knife.

Basically, their hospitality was a schooling in how life in the bush was done.

An MNR guy came in by Skidoo, to check on us. The Skidoo was new to us. He offered us a try. Jimmy took him up on it, and told Annie to get on behind him. She declined. Wisely. When he got down on the lake, he lost his balance and fell off, but held on to the throttle while it dragged him for about 50 yards. Too exciting for the rest of us.

As the weather warmed, snowshoeing meant breaking through the crust at every step and lifting that foot straight up, then forward. Exhausting. And a challenge, including such simple and basic things as getting to the fallen log that was the toilet, without stepping off the beaten path.

MNR then came in with a turbo Beaver, able to take six of us and a lot of baggage, with skis under a layer of slush, quickly gaining speed and lifting off, lifting us up while it was still possible. Except Bertie and Jimmy, who loaded their toboggans with the rest of their home and pulled them to Gogama. Quite a slog for them.

So, that's what the smell of balsam can do. That's my story. But also my vision.

About this Newsletter / Submission Guidelines

This Newsletter is a monthly publication of news and announcements relevant to Hamilton Quakers.

It is also a venue for members and attenders to share creative works or articles they have written on subjects that may be of interest to our Quaker community. As a general guideline we are looking for submissions that are inspirational and related to Quaker concerns, as well as announcements and news. Members and Attenders are encouraged to submit works for the newsletter.

Requests for newsletter items are announced after Meeting for Worship and/or via email during the week before Meeting for Worship for Business. They are due by the Friday before Business Meeting. Submission of materials implies permission to publish. Copyright for original material resides with the author.

If the person submitting the article is unknown to the editor or if there are questions as to whether the article will be appropriate for the Quaker newsletter, the editor will consult with the clerk(s) who will together discern what will be included. Written permission to publish must be obtained from the copyright holder if a submission is not the original work of the submitter, unless the works are in the public domain, or are covered under the creative commons license.

Hamilton Meeting reserves the right to edit submissions for length or content in consultation with the authors. Please limit submissions to a maximum of 750 words. When opinion pieces are included a line will be added indicating "Submissions reflect the opinions of their authors, and not necessarily of Hamilton Monthly Meeting".

Submissions should be directed to the current editor, Síân Reid, daywitch@gmail.com.

We acknowledge the land upon which Hamilton Friends Meeting House is located as the shared traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg, protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt covenant. This historic peace agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy, the Ojibwe, and allied nations represents a commitment to share and protect the land, water, plants, and animals, with respect. It is the privilege of Hamilton Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) to share in the tradition of stewardship of this land, which has been the environment of human beings in this territory for thousands of years. We honour the original Peoples of this land and express a commitment to and gratitude for the opportunity to work together toward restorative justice and reconciliation.