

Hamilton Quaker Newsletter

February 2024



How do I relate to concepts of 'home' and 'belonging' in the context of settler colonialism?

Reconciliation Queries #5

Upcoming Events and Announcements

Stone Soup Storytellers present Building Peace Bridges, an evening of storytelling in support of peace, at the Meeting House on Friday, February 9, beginning at 7:30 p.m. All are welcome! Free will donations will be used to support local food banks.

There will be a memorial meeting for Hamilton Friends to reflect on the lives of longtime Friends Ruth and Reuven Kitai on Saturday, February 10, beginning at 1 p.m. at the Meeting House. Please note that the starting time has changed since last month's newsletter. This meeting is in person only; no hybrid option will be available. There are still some gaps in the refreshment list; if you are planning to attend and are able to assist, please let Siân Bowen-Cole, Betty Preston, or Carol Leigh Wehking know.

Friends are invited to participate in a potluck lunch on Sunday, February 11 after the rise of Meeting for Worship. Please bring something to share, with a label to indicate if it is vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, dairy or nut-free. Contributions do not have to fall into these categories, but it is helpful to us if we know whether they do!

The next Quaker Education Session will be on Sunday, February 18, beginning at noon. Participants are welcome to bring a lunch.

PSAC will meet online at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, February 19. Please use the regular Meeting for Worship Zoom link. PSAC will be meeting on the third Monday of the month from now on.

The next meeting of the Reading group will be on Sunday, February 25, from 3 to 4 p.m. in our Zoom space. The group will be continuing with the discussion on Rufus Jones under the section called "The Faith and Practice of the Quakers (pp. 275-286). Please also read the next section on Thomas Kelly to page 305 called "Testament of Devotion". 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, March 3 at 12:30 p.m. You can also join us online on our regular Meeting Zoom link.

Canadian Friends Service Committee would like Friends to know that their website has a simple tool to make it easy to contact elected officials about the ongoing situation in Gaza, and Canada's failures to address it appropriately. Friends can just input their name and address and it will update to send to their MP, among other recipients. Friends can then customize the email and send it right from the CFSC website. Even if Friends have written before, this is a new letter and so they ask you to please consider taking a few moments to write again as led. Friends can find a link to the tool on CFSC's homepage or by going directly to [QuakerService.ca/ArmsEmbargo](https://www.QuakerService.ca/ArmsEmbargo)

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!



The Achievement

by Beverly Shepard

They say
there are no two snowflakes
quite alike.
But I gaze at
all the snowflakes
in this one snowfall
on this single field,
and think of all the snowfalls
on all the fields
in a single winter,
and all the winters
in the centuries,
the millennia,
past and yet to come –
and I doubt it.

Anyway,
how could they know?

For me
it is of no consequence.
Whether the Creator
succeeds in producing
a pure and utter infinity
of variation
or has accomplished
perfect duplication
does not diminish my astonishment.



Common Cause

by Sheldon Clark

Outwitted

*He drew a circle that shut me out--
Heretic, a rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in!*

“Outwitted,” by Edwin Markham (1852-1940), illustrates the concept of “common cause.” We want to be accepted. Markham’s life paralleled a war-weary world. It is a sad commentary that some people’s urge to wage war seems overwhelming, with 100,000 to 300,000 wars fought over the last 5,000 years around the world.¹ The common cause was territorial expansionism.

Common cause means joining with others, despite differences, to achieve agreed-upon purposes. The paradox of war and peace is on display in the current wars in Ukraine, the Middle East, and North Africa. The omnipresent threat is the potential escalation into nuclear catastrophe. Totalitarian regimes, equally volatile, continue to suppress citizens’ rights to self-determination.

Mass migrations on international borders reveal human beings sacrificing their lives for the future lives of their children and their children’s children. Many of these people are the poor, under-educated, malnourished victims of geopolitical greed. They are immigrants seeking new circles of compassion in common cause with other seekers. Each wants a better future despite mountain treks, river crossings, seasonal weather, hostility, and the unknown. “Of the past 3,400 years, humans have been entirely at peace for 268 of them or just 8 percent of recorded history.”²

1 Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “list of wars”. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 10 July 2015, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/list-of-wars-2031197>. Accessed 27 January 2024.

2 <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/06/books/chapters/what-every-person-should-know-about-war.html>. Accessed 27 January 2024.

Georg-Wilhelm-Friedrich Hegel's (1770-1831) statement is worth repeating, "What experience and history teach is this — that people and governments never have learned anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it."³

The Caesars of this world only represent one side of an unequal equation. The other side is represented by non-violent compassionate peace-makers. Hegel also wrote: "Nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion."⁴

The humanitarian observation is that when people enjoy freedom from fear, have enough to meet the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter, live in peace not conflict, have a sense of personal security, and live in the hope of achieving physical, intellectual, emotional, social-political, and spiritual well-being, they thrive. The race is on: "Who is going to win against the existential threat of mass destruction? Nuclear War? or, Climate Change?" No one will be around to celebrate in the winner's circle.

Passion is key to understanding the three years of Jesus' ministry. Once upon a time, a Phenomenal Presence in human history advocated for a new world order based on love, rather than the self-serving ends of pride, jealousy, anger, and other related "sins." Through his passionate love of God, Jesus showed ordinary folks how to unite in common cause to overcome evil with love. A simple message, difficult to achieve.

Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount with eight stimulating challenges, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (See: Matt. 5:3-11). Jesus' ministry is filled with riddles, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:25). Jesus taught, "earthly stories with a heavenly meaning."⁵ Jesus' passion

3 <https://www.britannica.com/quotes/Georg-Wilhelm-Friedrich-Hegel>

4 Ibid

5 Dr. Bascom R. Larkin. <https://www.crystalbeachlocalnews.com/parables-in-scripture-earthly-stories-with-heavenly-meanings/#:~:text=Larkin%20was%20able%20to%20weave,story%20with%20a%20heavenly%20meaning.%E2%60%9D>

for common cause is seen in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. “Behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested him, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus asked what was the greatest Commandment. The lawyer answers, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” The lawyer then asks. “Who is my neighbour?” Jesus replies with the Parable of the Samaritan. “Now which do you think seemed to be a neighbour to him who fell among the robbers?” The lawyer answers, “He who showed mercy on him.” Jesus replies, “Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10:30-37)

Jesus made circles of love. In the Parable of the Woman Caught in Adultery, he wrote with his finger on the ground (John 8:1-11), maybe doodling an imperfect circle. Even in his moment of Passion, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Near death, Jesus drew humankind into his circle of love. Jesus lived and died in the love of God. He engaged in common cause by invoking the Spirit of Divine Love to achieve universal peace. When Jesus told Simon Peter, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17), Jesus bade Peter to enter into a ‘covenant of peace’⁶ by providing spiritual nourishment as a servant-leader.

Ask oneself: How large is my circle? How may I serve others by making my circle more inclusive? Let us pray for open minds, hearts hands, and spirits.

Let us, “go and do likewise.”

⁶ The term “covenant of peace” is from “The Writings of Rufus M. Jones” in *Quaker Spirituality*, edited by Douglas V. Steere, Paulist Press, 1984. p. 282.

Old Dick's Statement of Faith

by Dick Preston

It hit me when I saw the image from the new NASA telescope, just a small part of the universe. The whole is unimaginably big, with an unimaginable number of enormous stars, planets and what have you, and I am somehow living in it. It is a great mystery. How it came into being is also a great mystery. But it did, it's here, and I am here. An insignificant speck? Well, significant to some others and to my span of time, however small that may be in the great scheme of things. An indifferent universe? What can that question mean? Indifference is an attitude, and to ascribe an attitude to the universe is presuming animal emotions to be guiding the great mystery. How could anyone possibly know that? I can choose to accept my life where it is, with who (few) I know and what (little) I know, and be thankful.



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.