

Hamilton Quaker Newsletter

April 2025



We practice true listening when we are willing to be changed by what we hear.

Gleanings (2000)

Upcoming Events and Announcements

We will be holding a post-meeting farewell gathering on Sunday, April 13 for Chelsea Rainford and Janice and Rory D'Eon, who are moving to Nova Scotia.

PSAC will meet online at 7:45 p.m. on Monday, April 21. Please use the regular Meeting for Worship Zoom link.

The next meeting of the Reading group will be on Sunday, April 27, from 7 to 8 p.m. in our Zoom space. The group will be studying *Deep Hospitality* by Rhiannon Grant -- Pendle Hill Pamphlet – reading up to Practical Suggestions on page 16. 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, May 4 at 12:30 p.m. You can also join us online on our regular Meeting Zoom link.



At its last meeting, PSAC members agreed to renew the “Vote for the Environment” campaign and encourage people to bring any signs they won’t be using to the Meeting House. They ask people to take a sign for the campaign now underway and either display it on their own property or give it to someone whose home has good exposure to pedestrians and traffic to be displayed.



It's Spring and it is time to help out to give our Meetinghouse and grounds some more love after the hard winter. Janis Muller's Memorial Meeting is coming up on Saturday, May 17th at 2:00 p.m. and the family would like the option to be on the patio if it is a nice day.

We will mainly be in the garden picking up debris, weeding and raking. The windows will also need washing. We will find jobs for everyone and every age and ability. A simple lunch will be provided, perhaps Pizza, salad and dietary needs, but feel free to bring snacks or anything to add and jokes. There will be games, music and fun. If you have gardening equipment please bring. Working together is one of the joys of life and helps build good community!

Postponed! The Hamilton Monthly Meeting Retreat scheduled at Camp NeeKauNis has been postponed due to a brutally hard winter at camp that has necessitated repairs that may not be completed by our original date. The

existing retreat team is also looking for additional members to assist in the planning and organization of the eventual retreat. If you would be interested in becoming involved, please let Wilf Ruland or Alice Preston know.

Save the Date! While our plans for NeeKauNis have been disrupted, we are still planning a one-day retreat on Saturday, May 31 either at Cedar Haven (the home of Bev and Robbie Shepard) or at our Meeting House. If anyone is interested in helping Sheldon and Betty with the planning for this, please let them know.

First Day School has been collecting new slippers for children, women, and men, and new stuffed toys for children, to be given to the shelter on the First Nations Reserve. This is part of our ongoing studies on the theme of Peace, as we connect to the Meeting's commitment to reconciliation with First Nations, seeking peace in our own country between indigenous peoples and settler populations. Hamilton Friends have been generous, and the Young Friends have made lovely tags, featuring drawings and friendly messages.



The Trip South

by Jane MacKay Wright

It was an odd time to be travelling into the United States. March 5, 2025 was one day after the President of the United States put tariffs on Canadian goods entering their country. Canada was set to retaliate with tariffs on goods from the United States entering Canada. What was it going to be like at the border? What was it going to be like in possibly enemy territory?

Siân Bowen-Cole and I were motoring south in my Prius to attend the General Board Meeting of Friends United Meeting (FUM) to be held in Richmond, Indiana. I am the newly-appointed Canadian Yearly Meeting representative to FUM, and considered it important to attend this first meeting in person. There has not been a Canadian representative to FUM for many years as Canadian Friends are ambivalent about the relationship with socially conservative FUM. In addition to ‘church planting’, FUM has missions in Kenya and Palestine, educational programs in various Caribbean countries, and projects in North America. It is an impressive lineup but Canadian Friends have been uncomfortable with FUM’s evangelical bias and hiring policy. Many in CYM have advocated that we leave FUM but others have argued in favour of our continued participation on the basis of historical ties and open communication.

I learned of Friends United Meeting when I served as a volunteer for the activist Christian (now Community) Peacemaker Teams. FUM was one of their founders. My view is that as Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) is still part of FUM, we should be at the table. It was my turn to step up. I was also interested in seeing what the US heartland would be like in the early days of the second Trump regime. I was delighted and relieved that Siân was also curious and agreed to go with me. She saved the day by doing most of the driving.

Our route took us to Sarnia and the Blue Water Bridge over serene Lake Huron. The weather was gorgeous, sunny and clear. Transport trucks heading south jammed the border crossing, leaving only one lane open for cars. As we waited for over an hour, Siân and I began one of the many great conversations of our week together. When we finally reached the US border official he seemed

easily satisfied with our explanation of a church meeting and family visit. The explanatory letter that I had asked FUM General Secretary Kelly Kellum to provide was, happily, not needed. The official had never heard of Quakers.

The weather changed. It was dark and rainy when we arrived, nearly out of gas, in aptly-named Coldwater, Michigan. In the bitter wind, I made attempts to pay at a pump which refused to take a Canadian credit card. Inside the station, I had to guess how much gas would fill the tank and the friendly attendant processed the purchase. Our nearby 2-star motel was as expected -- shabby, clean, conveniently located, and thankfully quiet. Its cavernous, early 70's stairway lobby and deserted games room seemed built for busier times. This was fine with us.

We set out in search of a restaurant with vegetarian food and found Los Tequilas. A young Latino server was the restaurant's most up-beat presence among the handful of diners. It was a slow night. He neither understood nor spoke English however, so a colleague came out from the back to take our orders. They turned out to be enormous plates of Mexican fare. Too much. We needed to learn about American portion sizes. The next day in Indiana we ordered a single lunch salad to be shared, more than enough for each of us. This was at a local restaurant in a small farming town where the parking lot sign proclaimed Jesus is King. At nearby tables a Bible college student enthusiastically described his programme to a friend, and the noisy family of a new baby, mother, father and jubilant grandparents, finished lunch.

Richmond, Indiana turned out to be a quiet mid-sized former railway hub with more than one Quaker meeting, Richmond Friends School, and the well-known Earlham College. The area voted 65% for Trump in 2024. The FUM Governing Board met in the Welcoming Center at 101 Quaker



Hill Road. The site also includes an original 2-story federalist farmhouse and a newer brick residence. About 25 Board members were sitting at tables set in a large square, accompanied by a full large-screen display of online participants. A handful of staff gathered around another table at the back of the room.

Introductions began the Thursday evening session and we were met with genuine appreciation for coming ‘all the way’ from Canada. One Board member apologized profusely for his government’s actions against Canada. Kelly Kellum’s opening topic concerned fundraising, money as a spiritual issue, and the need to nurture generosity within FUM congregations. A familiar topic.

Friday was a long day of reports from more than eighteen FUM ministries. We heard from the head of Ramallah Friends School, which has lost USAID funding for a major construction project already underway. The principal of Belize Friends School reported online as did the principal of Friends Theological College in Kenya. We learned of East African Friends’ missions including church planting in South Sudan, Uganda, Malawi and Zambia as well as ‘girl child’ and ‘shepherd boy’ education programs in Kenya.

North American ministries included *Stoking The Fire*, a retreat planned for June 6-8, 2025, as well as concerns for Quaker immigrants from Africa. FUM staff reports reiterated concerns for financial sustainability. That evening we heard the report of a recent group visit to Friends churches in Cuba. A lively dance lesson from a Cuban woman now living in Richmond got us up off our feet. We learned later that she, her husband and two young daughters face deportation. There are many debilitating state-imposed limitations on refugees in the United States. In Indiana, for example, refugees are prohibited from having a driver’s license.

After the final Board session on Saturday morning, we grabbed a prepared box lunch and headed south toward Virginia where I had arranged to meet my ex-husband. The provided box lunches were a continuation of the challenging menu offerings on our trip. The dinner provided by FUM appeared to be catered by Kentucky Fried Chicken and included both Coke and Diet Coke. Yes there was a bowl of fruit in the corner but fast-food was the order of the day. As for the

lunches, Siân managed to grab a box labelled vegetables, but it turned out to be sliced cucumbers and pickles intended as sides for the meat and tuna sandwiches. For most of our journey we relied on the Subway chain for its vegetarian offerings, requiring exploration of small towns to find a strip mall where the chain might be located. The staple 'biscuits and gravy' pictured on highway billboards throughout the south remains a mystery. Fast food establishments, as well as motels, in this part of the world appear to be staffed by a generation of pale, thin, glumly efficient teenaged girls.

I took a turn behind the wheel on the way south through Dayton, Ohio, less than an hour from Richmond. Dayton was experiencing highway reconstruction with fast-moving traffic, arrows pointing this way and that, and exit signs placed where visiting motorists would be sure to miss them. When I missed the planned exit, we headed off in what seemed to be the wrong direction. We had no option for hours but to trust my vintage GPS. It took us through big-sky Ohio farmland and along West Virginia's rivers, mountains, valley towns, where coal seams are still actively being mined. It is deeply beautiful country but sadly has the most fatal opioid overdoses in the country.

As planned we arrived in Lewisburg, WV and another 2-star chain motel. Dinner that night at the Stardust Cafe was a surprise and a real treat -- a fabulous menu with local specialities and good vegetarian options. It was Saturday night and the historic store-front restaurant was alive with a convivial crowd. It was the best meal we had had since leaving home. The young chef and servers seemed genuinely pleased with our compliments.

We reached Charlottesville the next morning in time for the local unprogrammed meeting for worship. The meetinghouse is a renovated clapboard house located in a central residential area. Daffodils were blooming across the street. When we arrived a group in the meeting room was having a Zoom consultation with American Friends Service Committee. Charlottesville Friends have agreed to provide sanctuary for threatened refugees and other newcomers. In the large modern kitchen and dining area at the back of the building, children were preparing Hawaiian treats for the after-meeting

potluck. Worship, with about 45 participants, began at 11 am. There had also been an 8:30 am meeting. We were delighted to stay for potluck, and again received apologies for the actions of the US government toward Canada.



There was time in the afternoon for a refreshing walk at Monticello which is situated on the edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains, minutes from Charlottesville. As we paused outside the gates of patriot Thomas Jefferson's estate, a visiting retiree enthusiastically told us about the history of Monticello

ending with the worry that the government would cut off his pension. We couldn't get a word in edgewise so he never found out we were Canadian and particularly sympathetic to his concerns.



Charlottesville is a lovely, southern town of about 45,000 featuring the impressive campus of the University of Virginia with its classic brick buildings, huge

white columns and wide green spaces. The 3-star English Inn promised afternoon tea at the fireplace in the large lobby. How disappointing to see just a self-serve kettle of boiled water and paper cups with a selection of tea bags along

with the cake and chocolate cookies. It was a comfortable stay however. In our experience, 2-star motel rooms always had something broken; a misaligned shower door, dim lighting, or wonky drapes.

We met my ex and his wife at a Thai restaurant in the centre of Charlottesville, which appeared prosperous and subdued on a Sunday evening. Lots of vegetarian items were on offer. My ex and his wife, who have both had cancer and other ills, expressed how lucky they felt that her workplace had medical benefits so they had only about \$8,000 of medical debt. I noted that we had not seen persons of colour anywhere in the city, with the exception of an African student at the Friends Meetinghouse. It was explained to us that there were certain black sections of the city, nowhere we had been. Segregation still seems taken for granted in the middle-class south.

The next day the drive north took us through forests, over another mountain range this time with runaway truck ramps, and through down-at-the-heel villages that reminded me of northern Ontario. Our last stay was in relative luxury at a 3-star motel in DuBois, Pennsylvania. DuBois began as a lumber town but is now a regional hub for shopping and health care. Our motel was situated beside the empty expanse of a gigantic mall's parking lot. Although the county voted 75% for Trump in 2024 we saw only one Trump/Vance sign on our route. The taciturn, elderly gentleman who served us gas in a nearby village could have been a typical voter. He had no comment when he learned that we were heading to Canada. Above the cash register a poster advertised an 'Amish alcohol-reduction' program.

We reached the upscale tourist town of Ellicottville in time for a civilized lunch. The steadfast GPS then led us up through New York state to the border crossing at Buffalo. The Peace Bridge turned out to be a great choice although not what I had planned. It took us only minutes, as well as a hefty toll, to cross. We laughed as we both took a fulsome sigh now that we were back in Canada.

What had we learned? Could Canadian Quakers support the colonial, missionary projects of Friends United Meeting? What was the continuing contribution of these programs? Does FUM's personnel policy still restrict

service by those who identify as LGBTQ+? Would CYM be able to provide any of the financial support that FUM needs? How could I truthfully serve as a connection between Canadians and these conservative American Quakers?

The day after we crossed into Michigan, President Trump delayed parts of the trade war with Canada for a month. During our journey it seemed to be business as usual in the United States, albeit with dark undertones. It did not feel like enemy territory.



Photo 1: Part of Friends United Meeting in Richmond, Indiana

Photo 2: Charlottesville Meeting, Virginia

Photo 3: Thomas Jefferson's favourite view

Photo 4: Spring hellebore

Photos by Siân Bowen-Cole

Pasture

by Beverly Shepard

This is the pasture
that tells me forcefully of the seasons.
In summer the rich and sturdy green
supports several horses, a few cows, and
of course the itinerant seagulls.
In the fall the horses sport blankets
against a freshening wind
and the grasses turn a warning amber:
cold is on the way.
There's a winter shutdown.
Snow is thick, wind unchecked,
the pasture's potential hidden.
But that snow and ice in spring become
a vast apparent pond:
twice I've seen a heron
wading shocked and saddened
in the fishless water.
It does not stay long.
Gulls, of course,
are always there.
But today I saw –
delight! –
two swans
standing
beautiful and baffled:
No Swimming.

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.