

Hamilton Quaker Newsletter

June 2025



Be aware of the spirit of God at work in the ordinary activities and experiences of your daily life. Spiritual learning continues throughout life, and often in unexpected ways. There is inspiration to be found all around us, in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our work and friendships, in our sorrows as well as in our joys. Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come? Do you approach new ideas with discernment?

Advices and Queries #7

Upcoming Events and Announcements

PSAC will be hosting a letter-writing workshop on Sunday, June 8 at the Meeting House, after regular meeting for worship. The topic for this session will be the recently passed Bill 5 - amongst other things this Bill repeals the Ontario Endangered Species Act, and creates "special economic zones" where there can be exemption from all provincial and municipal laws.

There will be an Enquirers Discussion Group on Sunday, June 15 at 12:30 p.m. at the Meeting House. The topic will be our recently signed pledge to be an apartheid-free community and what actions we might take to actualize our commitment. All are welcome!

PSAC will meet online at 7:45 p.m. on Monday, June 23. Please use the regular Meeting for Worship Zoom link. This will be the last PSAC meeting before we break for the summer.

On Sunday, June 22 there will be a Welcome Celebration after meeting for those who have transferred membership. This will be a potluck. Please bring a savoury item if you are able.

The next meeting of the Reading Group will be on Sunday, June 22 from 7 to 8 p.m. in our Zoom space. The group will be choosing a new book. 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, September 7 at 12:30 p.m. You can also join us online on our regular Meeting Zoom link.

Hamilton Food Share is a vital organization in Hamilton, Ontario, that serves as the distribution hub for the Emergency Food Network. Founded in 1992, it provides over 4.6 million pounds of food annually to food banks and meal programs, helping to feed more than 17,600 local people each month. You can support Hamilton Food Share through donations to the blue box provided in the foyer as you enter Hamilton Monthly Meeting. PSAC will ensure your donation is delivered to those in need. **PLEASE ENSURE PACKAGES ARE SEALED, FOOD HAS NOT EXPIRED, AND CANS WERE NOT FROZEN.**

Retreat at Cedar Haven: Deepening the Spirit

by Beverly Shepard

It was a lovely day! Well, actually the weather was pretty chilly and definitely cloudy, but the people were warm, gentle, and loving, and they made it a lovely day. Conversations, crafts, worship, snacks, and lunch mainly took place indoors, which was fine, if not quite the way we had pictured it. In the morning, the children and several adults made origami paper cranes and heard the story of Sadako, while most adults gathered in worship and considered our theme, “Deepening the Spirit”.

But people did get outside. The sizeable and lively group of children took an enthusiastic walk (run?) through the woods, watching for the red trail markers and noting such things as a cedar tree growing out of a big rock and the difference between a tree that falls over because it’s in a swamp and one that is downed by the emerald ash borer. Some adults took that walk in a quieter, more meditative way; some walked the labyrinth. Kids also enjoyed playing various of the musical instruments that abound at Cedar Haven, and adults enjoyed some quiet conversations.



Most of the adults and two of the children spoke in Claremont Dialogue form of our responses to the day's activities and discoveries. There appeared to be unity on the idea that spending time in nature does deepen the spirit. As Friends left Cedar Haven, not all at once but gradually, over about an hour, they expressed much gratitude for the opportunity to spend that time, but the hosts, Bev and Robbie Shepard, were just as grateful to be able to share with others the beautiful woods and grass and flowers with which we are blessed daily.



Refugee Rights

by Jane MacKay Wright

On April 24, I attended a zoom meeting about Refugee Rights in Canada. The event was hosted by Toronto Monthly Meeting's Quaker Committee for Refugees. This is a self-financing committee with an office in Friends House, Toronto, a full-time staff person, and many volunteers. The committee was founded in the early 1980s by Nancy Pocock, a Toronto Friend who was active in assisting refugees and new immigrants. Sometimes new arrivals would come to Toronto knowing no-one, having been told to seek out 'Mama Nancy'. Staff person Eusebio Garcia, an immigrant himself, is carrying on this work of orientation, translation, helping with paperwork, making referrals, and assisting with resettlement. He spends regular days at the detention centre for refugees near the Toronto airport. The discussion at Friends House and on-line marked Refugee Rights Day, April 4, the anniversary of the Supreme Court decision that confirmed refugee rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The first to speak was Joyeuse Senga, a Rwandan Quaker and public health researcher currently working at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto. Her parents were Rwandan refugees in the DR Congo. Joyeuse has an extensive background in health equity projects in sub-Saharan Africa. Her present research concerns equitable access to diabetes care, vaccines, blood donation practices, and health promotion initiatives for immigrants and refugees in this country.

Joyeuse spoke first about the social determinants of health and difficulties in refugee health care. Under the interim federal health program refugees are provided with a health card, but many doctors do not want the administrative hassles of dealing with them. Some have diseases which are unfamiliar to Canadian health providers. Many refugees ignore their health while worrying instead about their refugee status and housing. Others do not know about available vaccines and mental health supports. Health care is a human right but refugees usually cannot advocate for themselves. She emphasized the need for social supports and solidarity.

The next speaker, Juan Espinel works at the immigration holding centre near Pearson airport with Eusebio. He is the Senior Coordinator of the Canadian Red Cross's First Contact program which provides an orientation package for refugees in the first hours they are in this country. They need safe and reliable information, interpreters, and tools to guide them through the demanding Refugee Claim Process. They need information about legal aid, what documents are needed, social assistance, the shelter system, and more. Juan described it as an all-day emergency job. Refugees are often seen as a burden but everyone benefits from the diverse society we have created together.

The last speaker, Kristin Marshall is a lawyer at the Canada-US Border Rights Clinic of the Compass Refugee Centre in Kitchener. This is a virtual clinic, part of an informal network which supports those needing protection "on both sides of the border". It also provides legal information for NGOs and others advocating for refugees. Kristin Marshall has had extensive experience at the Refugee Law Office and has done training for lawyers and others while at Legal Aid Ontario and Community Legal Education Ontario.

A large part of Kristin's work involves refugee claim assessments, which often include contacting relatives living in Canada. There is only one chance to make a refugee claim so it needs to be done right. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Refugees lists only 5 acceptable conditions for being fearful of persecution. Kristin cautions refugee claimants about conditions which may result in a 'direct back' to the United States. The Safe Third Country Agreement requires a refugee to make a claim in the first country they come to. Many no longer consider the US to be a safe country for refugees but we are still bound by this agreement. Kristin described the many steps in Canada's complicated refugee process



which also includes the possibility of a pre-removal risk assessment for those considered to be ineligible. Having an ‘anchor family member’ in Canada can be particularly helpful for a successful refugee claim.

Support for refugees coming to Canada is demanding and important work. I appreciated learning more about what refugees face coming to Canada and about those advocating on a daily basis for these newcomers.

Nancy Pocock was an accomplished jewellery designer and her silver brooches are offered for sale to help support the work of the Quaker Committee for Refugees.



Quakers in the Garden

photos by Susan Wortman

We are blessed to have lovely grounds surrounding our Meeting House, but they do require upkeep! Here are some of our hardworking volunteers...



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.