

Hamilton Quaker Newsletter

March 2023



Are you able to contemplate your death and the death of those closest to you? Accepting the fact of death, we are freed to live more fully. In bereavement give yourself time to grieve. When others mourn, let your love embrace them.

Advices and Queries #30

Upcoming Events and Announcements

The next meeting of the Reading group will be on Sunday, March 12 from 3 to 4 p.m. in our Zoom space. We will be continuing to discuss the introduction to *Quaker Spirituality: Selected Writings*. Note that the edition we are using is the one edited by Douglas V. Steere (334 pages), and NOT the abbreviated version of the same name (which has a forward by Rick Moody, and is edited by Emile Griffin and Douglas V. Steere). Please contact Shirla (shirla766@gmail.com) to be added to the participant list.

The next Quaker Education session will be on Sunday, March 19 at noon. Participants may bring a brown bag lunch if they are so inclined.

Friends who would like to make a donation through Hamilton Monthly Meeting toward relief for the victims of the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria are asked to please make a donation to HMM by Sunday, March 19th. Please send cheques to Hamilton Monthly Meeting c/o Pete Cross, Treasurer, 77 Skylark Dr, Hamilton L9A 5A9, or drop off donations at the Meeting House. Donations will be sent to the Red Cross' 'Earthquake in Türkiye & Syria Appeal'.

On Sunday March 26, we are going to have another modified hybrid meeting, where the two streams – online and in-person – will run in parallel, rather than as one combined meeting. This means that neither stream will be able to hear ministry arising in the other stream. This is a temporary experiment to try to improve the experience of all meeting participants. Feedback will be solicited during the Meeting for Worship for Business that will occur on the following week as to whether or not this is a congenial modification and should be made a regular feature of the worship schedule.

The Peace and Social Action Committee will be meeting on Monday, March 27 at 7 p.m. on Zoom. To be added to the list and receive the Zoom link, please contact Dick Preston (prestonr@mcmaster.ca) or Paul Dekar (pdekar@cogeco.ca).

On Wednesday, March 29 at 7 p.m. Marilyn Manzer, the present clerk of Canadian Yearly Meeting, will be visiting Hamilton Monthly Meeting to discuss

the sustainability of Canadian Yearly Meeting, and to collect reactions, thoughts and ideas from our members and attenders. All are welcome.

The next Meeting for Worship for Business will be held on our regular Zoom link on Sunday, April 2 at 1:30 p.m.



First Day School students

photo by Darlene James

Debwewin Oakville

by Chris Hitchcock

My Quaker journey has included education in indigenous issues. The first Canadian Quaker I met was Elaine Bishop, who was visiting Oxford, England in 1993 and presenting on her work with the Lubicon Cree. My 18 years in Vancouver Monthly Meeting (1994-2012) and my participation in Western Half-Yearly Meeting introduced me to the history and present of settler-indigenous relations. This was a very different view than the one I learned growing up in Hamilton and Dundas, where the evidence of the people who were here before European settlement was mostly found on the names of the streets. In school I learned that Indians had quaint customs and lived somewhere else and a long time ago.

When we returned to Ontario in 2012, we settled in Oakville. There is little sign of the people who lived in this area before European settlement, and little knowledge of the history of settlement here.

Last year, a new organization was formed: Debwewin: The Oakville Truth Project¹, a collaboration between the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation and the Oakville Community Foundation.

“Debwewin” is one of the seven Anishnabek Grandfather Teachings and refers to “truth.” This project raises questions about Oakville’s Truths and invites the community to become part of a truth and reconciliation journey towards mutually respectful relations between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people.²

Last week I attended an event at the Oakville Public Library to mark Treaty Day in Oakville. February 28 is the 203rd anniversary of the signing of Treaty 22, which is one of the treaties that concerns most of the land on which present-day Oakville is located.

¹ <https://debwewinoakville.ca/>

² <https://www.theocf.org/2022/02/28/the-debwewin-projects-website-launched-on-treaty-day-in-oakville/>

At this event, Debwewin Oakville released the report, *Friendship, Peace and Respect For All Future Generations: Oakville-based treaty relations between the Mississaugas and the Crown*, describing the local treaties from both a historical and Indigenous perspective. The report is available in print (as a fundraiser) and online.

There is also a new All-Nations Powwow to be held at the University of Toronto in Mississauga on Saturday, March 25, from 12-5. Powwows are open to all, and all are welcome and encouraged to attend.

I am grateful for the work that is being done to help me be a grateful treaty person, to learn more and to engage in meaningful activities as an ally.



Old Meeting Houses

by Beverly Shepard

From the dark earth they loosened and drew
The unyielding stones, squared their sides and edges,
And laid them one upon another, and another,
Sealed and steadied with mortar mixed to endure
By men who had laid many stones and so best knew
How to make crops and beasts and people secure.
Gentle but firm, the buildings and the people came together,
In silent defiance of the law, their will more holy, and as strong.

Sunlight streamed like honey through the windows
Set in walls thick as a man's forearm is long;
Rain washed over the stones like grace from heavens bestowed;
And the people, gathered in unceasing Light,
Worshipped and listened, knowing in their souls
That this was true and right,
As their hands had known the laying of the stone.

Now we who sit within the cool and ancient walls,
Waiting upon God as did those worshippers,
Feel our beings enwrapped in their spirit
That streams through and washes over us
Like the sun and rain of times both now and past.
The stones are saturated with their prayers;
The wood of doors and benches is imbued
With the strength of their seeking, with their joys and cares;
The laughter of children is caught in the cracks of the floor.

In the silence we are suspended in the sacredness
Of lives lived here – oh, long! oh, long before.

The Meeting House Benches

by Sheldon Clark & Hamilton Friends

When the Hamilton Quaker Meeting House celebrated its opening in 1971, Norwich Friends gave their traditional meeting house benches to Hamilton Friends. In 2017 and 2018, six of the long benches were cut in half to make twelve five-and-a-half foot benches. New armrests were fashioned from well-aged elm from the private supply of Haldimand County farmer and artisan, Kim Turnbull, who did the cabinetwork. The shorter ones are easily handled and fit beautifully into the worship space.

The historical story behind the benches is informative. The Quaker Meeting House in Norwich, Ontario was erected in 1889, by Conservative Orthodox Friends. Its architectural style reflected the chapel design of Quaker meeting houses of the late 19th century. It is known that the benches were made by a descendant of one of the Quaker pioneer families who settled in Norwich, from Dutchess County, New York in 1810. By 1970 Norwich Meeting was laid down. Norwich Friends donated their meeting house to the Norwich Historical Society to establish the Norwich and District Museum.

The spirit of the Quaker Testimony to Simplicity found in other Quaker Meeting Houses is honoured by Hamilton Friends as seen in the architectural design by Quaker Anthony Butler (1931-2020) and in the Norwich meeting house benches.

There will be a plaque created for the Meeting House to commemorate and memorialize the history of our benches.



A Blade of Grass

by Rajmohan Ramanathapillai

A blade of grass
shoots out from a crack in the concrete.

As we know
even stubbornness has its limitation
The concrete slab has given up its will
Determine roots of grass
yearn to reclaim their place on earth

A sense of *belonging* stripped by violence
Desolation in life has evolved into hope.
As they foot on the shore of a new land
only for hope to then transform into despair.
As heartless biased policies
south to stop the boats
and made their hope of survival illegal.

Voices of dissent made cracks.
Seeds of humanity trapped in those cracks
still buried in pain
nurtured by the water of compassion from strangers
gave rise to a spirit of hope.
Like those blades of grass
they will flourish again through those cracks in concrete.

Book Review: *Slap Your Sides* by M.E. Kerr

by Glenna Janzen

This young adult book is a thought-provoking exploration of conscientious objection during WW2 in the United States. The action centres around a Quaker family and involves a variety of points of view regarding conscientious objection, including non-combatants, alternative service workers, and absolutists who would not register for the draft.

The members of the Quaker family (parents and three sons) have different responses to the war. Jubal, the 14-year-old narrator, attends a Friends School and idolises his older brother, Bud, who is a conscientious objector assigned to service first in Colorado and later in a mental hospital. Jubal hopes that he can be as brave as Bud if the time comes for him to register as a conscientious objector. Jubal's father owns a store in town and finds that having a son who is a conscientious objector is detrimental to business, as well as to his socio-political relationships in the town. Repercussions create challenges for the whole family.

Jubal's family is juxtaposed to a Catholic family in town. Their daughter, Daria, becomes Jubal's friend, despite their differing views on the war. Daria's two brothers have enlisted and Daria's father is "Radio Dan" who encourages those on the "home front [to] do all we can to win this war."

I came to this book with little knowledge of Friends during the 1940s in Pennsylvania or of conscientious objection during WW2 in the United States. My Dad was a conscientious objector in Ontario during WW2, and I knew others among my family and family friends; however, perhaps because they were mostly farm boys and were not embedded in a "mixed" community, the repercussions, if any, were diminished.

I found the ending troubling, and I'm not entirely sure why the author chose the direction she did, but I continue to reflect on the various paths chosen by the characters, and I recommend this book.

Book Review: *Quaking* by Kathryn Erskine

by Glenna Janzen

This young adult novel also takes place within a Quaker family in Pennsylvania, but it is a very different family from that in *Slap Your Sides*. Sam and Jessica foster Rory, a developmentally delayed toddler and Matt, a teenager who has lived with “first cousins twice removed, second cousins once removed, and ... a third cousin who is removing herself” and who dumps Matt at Sam and Jessica’s home.

The story takes place during the Iraq war. Matt’s rules for her life mean that she tries to stay unnoticed, but the bullies on the bus and in her classroom, a teacher whom she dubs Mr. Warhead, and her introduction to Friends move Matt’s inner struggles to outer action. The Quakers in this novel are less nuanced and more idealised than those in *Slap Your Sides*; however, it is Matt and her discovery of “love as the first motion” that provides the focus of the book. Recommended.

Glenna is on the HMM Library Committee

We welcome book reviews from all HMM members and attenders.



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. 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, Siân 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.