

# Hamilton Quaker Newsletter

## April 2023



***We are called to live “in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars.” Do you faithfully maintain our testimony that war and the preparation for war are inconsistent with the spirit of Christ? Search out whatever in your own way of life may contain the seeds of war. Stand firm in our testimony, even when others commit or prepare to commit acts of violence, yet always remember that they too are children of God.***

*Advices and Queries #31*

# Upcoming Events and Announcements

On Thursday, April 13, the Bay Area Climate Change Council will be holding a Zoom Webinar from 7 to 8 p.m. on the topic of current climate change priorities for the cities of Hamilton and Burlington. All are welcome. More information can be found at [bayareaclimate.ca](http://bayareaclimate.ca).

The next Quaker Education Session will be on Sunday, April 16, beginning at noon. Participants are welcome to bring a lunch.

Also on Sunday, April 16, there will be a called meeting, at the rise of Meeting for Worship, to approve the State of Society report.

The next meeting of the Reading group will be on Sunday, April 23 from 3 to 4 p.m. in our Zoom space. We will be discussing “The Journal of George Fox”, up to page 93, in *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](mailto:shirla766@gmail.com)) to be added to the participant list.

The Peace and Social Action Committee will be meeting on Monday, April 24 at 7 p.m. on Zoom. To be added to the list and receive the Zoom link, please contact Dick Preston ([prestonr@mcmaster.ca](mailto:prestonr@mcmaster.ca)) or Paul Dekar ([pdekar@cogeco.ca](mailto:pdekar@cogeco.ca)).

The next Meeting for Worship for Business will be held on our regular Zoom link on Sunday, May 7 at 1:30 p.m.

Registration for summer programs at Camp NeeKauNis is now open! You can register online at <https://www.neekaunis.org/news/2022/camp-neekaunis-2022-programs> NeeKauNis is also looking for Junior and Senior Lifeguards and Boatspeople. Free room and board and competitive wages are offered. For more details, contact Milena Parr at [neekaunis.recruiting@gmail.com](mailto:neekaunis.recruiting@gmail.com). A Vulnerable Sector police check is mandatory.

Canadian Friends Service Committee is seeking applications for the position of Government Relations Representative. This is a full-time position located in Ottawa, Ontario. The Government Relations Representative is responsible for representing Friends' interests in Ottawa, particularly around peace and social justice work. The deadline for applications is April 11, 2023. More information about this position and how to apply can be found online at:

<https://quakerservice.ca/news/were-hiring-a-government-relations-representative/>

## **Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life**

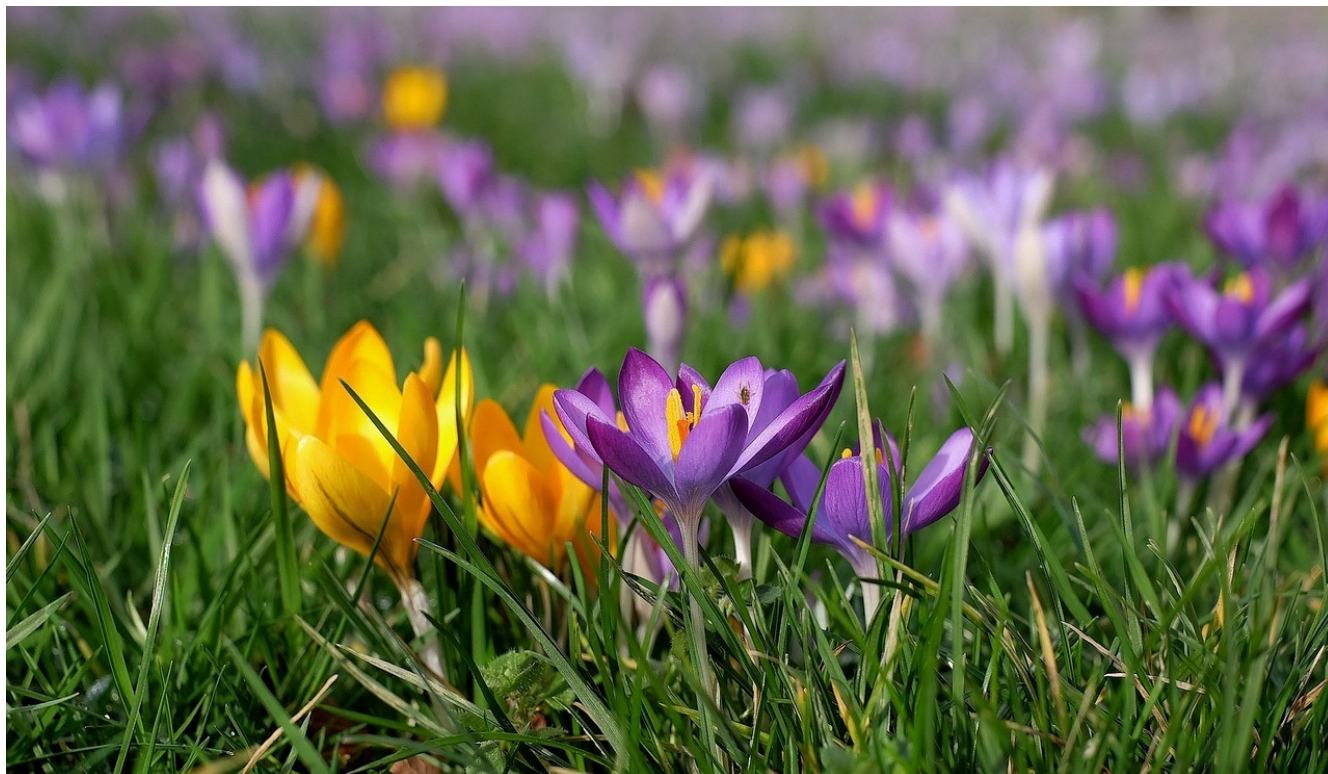
Next term, the Paths of Peace group will be looking at one of the most basic books written about NVC: Marshall Rosenberg's *NVC: A language of life*, just to revisit our understanding of nonviolent communication, and the ways in which this can contribute to our Quaker testimony in the world. We will also be using the companion workbook, Lucy Leu's "Nonviolent Communication Companion Workbook." Both books are available from: <https://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/product/nonviolent-communication-companion-workbook/> or other retailers (e-versions are also available).

The basic assumption of NVC is that every human action is motivated by a need, and that we all share the same needs, although our strategies for meeting these needs may differ. This can support us in moving away from violence and moving toward compassion.

The format will be straightforward: the book has fourteen chapters, so each week we will look at one chapter. People will be expected to have read the chapter in advance if possible, and come prepared to talk with others about how the chapter impacts them: what is new and exciting, what is problematic, how does this relate to our Quakerism, etc. We will then do a practical exercise connected with the chapter. For example, for chapter 1 we might share our experiences of giving from the heart.



The term will be starting on Friday 21st April, and we meet on Zoom from noon to 1:30 until the end of July. If you would be interested in joining the group, or if you have any questions, then please contact Kate Mackrell, [katemackrell@mac.com](mailto:katemackrell@mac.com)



## **A Thought from Bev Shepard**

I suspect all of us know the experience of finding it difficult to centre during meeting for worship. Our thoughts are too lively; distractions are too numerous; we can't settle into that expectant waiting on the Spirit that characterizes Quaker worship. When this happens to me, I often think of this advice, printed in Britain Yearly Meeting's *Christian Faith and Practice* (predecessor to the current *Quaker Faith and Practice*). It is from St. Francis de Sales.

When your heart is wandering and distracted, bring it back quickly to its point, restore it tenderly to its Master's side, and if you did nothing else the whole of your hour but bring back your heart patiently and put it near our Lord again, and every time you put it back it turned away again, your hour would be well employed.

# Thanks to Hamilton Quakers

Hi Wilf,

Thank you so much for coming to our place and being with us during our Citizenship Oath Ceremony. It was a unique opportunity for us to celebrate two great occasions at the same time. The oath of our citizenship coincided with our Newroz Day. Newroz is a Kurdish Holy Day. It is the first spring day, meaning beauty, fertility, love, peace, freedom and more.

We are proud to have become Canadian citizens on the same day. In our culture, it means 'good things beget good things'!

On this very occasion we would like to thank Hamilton Quakers and Friends for the unlimited multi-purpose assistance we have been receiving from them since the day your Society decided to sponsor us.

You made the impossible POSSIBLE. Thank you very much, indeed.

Warmest greetings from us all.

Your friends,

Subhi and Mamdoha



# Ash

by Beverly Shepard

Such hard wood!  
Make your fence posts of it,  
farmers were told,  
they'll stay up forever.  
Tall, too, and straight,  
like sentries, except for  
their radiant autumn colour,  
as if lit from within.  
Now the deep-shaded forest is open,  
scattered maples, aspens, beeches  
look down from lofty heights  
upon the dead, fallen ashes:  
wrenched-off branches,  
slaughtered youth,  
and huge defeated elders.  
They fall, they die.  
They break my heart.

I know a forest is a society  
with give and take, harvest and nurture, live and die.  
But this is not society --  
this is war,  
the enemy a tiny creature --  
green, innocent, hungry, alien,  
unseen, undefeated.  
I weep.

*(As spring slowly becomes reality, I know there will be trees in our woods that will not bring forth leaves this spring. They will never have leaves again. I have loved ash trees from when I could first distinguish them, and this knowledge hurts.)*

# Why I Make Time to Attend Wider Quaker Gatherings

*by Chris Hitchcock*

This past week, I have been collating the details of ground transportation options for those who want to attend Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM-in-session) this summer, and do not want to fly. As I consider the time and the costs of attending, I wonder what it is about the opportunity to gather with other Quakers that makes it worthwhile for me.

I attended Western Half-Yearly Meeting (WHYM) for the first time in May, 1994. This was the month that I arrived in Vancouver to take a new job and combine households with my partner. We had been in a long-distance relationship while I studied in England, and we both moved to Vancouver (he from Toronto, me from England) to continue our lives together. It was a major life transition and a time of great upheaval. I was in the Sorrento, B.C. area for work, and arranged to be dropped off on Saturday night. I got a ride back to Vancouver with two members of my meeting: Rob Hughes and Barbara Bazett. That was the first of many meetings. I was a member of Vancouver MM from 1994 to 2012, and during that time I think I only missed one spring meeting of Western Half-Yearly Meeting.

WHYM is unique in Canada, and perhaps more widely. It is the half-yearly meeting for Quakers from the western edge of Ontario to the Pacific Ocean. When Tom Findley was alive, he would flag down a bus from his remote home in the Ontario bush and travel to join us. WHYM may well end at Manitoba now.

Quakers in western Canada benefited from a group of American Friends who chose to leave the United States in the 1950s for political and faith reasons and to settle in Canada. This group of families settled in a remote community called Argenta in British Columbia. For a while, there was a Quaker school called Argenta Friends School, and there is a generation of Friends who grew up together and knew one another well. The tight bonds and shared history of these Friends has been part of the foundation of WHYM. It is a warm, loving and supportive community. I miss those Friends now that I am here in Ontario.

WHYM was an important event for teenagers and young adults. There were a lot of Quaker youth who rarely if ever attended their local Quaker meetings, but who would go to great lengths to travel to spring WHYM, held over the May long weekend at the Anglican Sorrento Centre in Sorrento, B.C. There was a critical mass of families which provided the community that many isolated Quaker families had trouble getting in their local meetings.

Attending a community gathering over decades has allowed me to witness life unfolding. Several young people whom I knew as children are now married and raising children of their own. Many of the active and energetic Quakers have aged and become more frail, and many are no longer with us. Witnessing the circle of life in an intergenerational community is also something I have learned from and value.

When I became a parent, I faithfully took my daughter to be among Friends every spring. Her first WHYM I put her on a blanket in front of me during Meeting for Worship for Business. Having a loving community to witness her growth and to support my parenting is something I cherish.

Quaker gatherings offer the chance to spend an extended time with Friends and to listen and be heard in a way that I find difficult to find in the secular world. They allow us to share in Quaker Business process in a much larger group of Friends. Many of us find that to be a profound experience. There is the opportunity for learning from the speakers, and from Special Interest Groups. Quaker gatherings typically involve Worship Sharing Groups (or Worship Fellowship Groups) – a small group of people who meet in the spirit of Quaker worship over the course of the event. These small groups have introduced me to many Friends over the years, and both the listening and the sharing have been a blessing.

Now that I live in Ontario, my annual Quaker gathering is Canadian Yearly Meeting, and I meet many of my WHYM Friends there. I feel passionately that these wider Quaker gatherings are a blessing and an opportunity to grow our understanding and experience of being a Friend. That passion led me to



volunteer as the Clerk of Program Committee, supporting online CYM-in-session events during the pandemic, in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

This year I am looking forward to attending our first in-person (and hybrid) CYM-in-session in Winnipeg, MB, from July 8-13, 2023 (<http://quaker.ca/yearlymeetinginsession>). You can find some information about how to get there without flying here (<https://quaker.ca/yearlymeetinginsession/home/registration/travel-options/>). I hope you will consider attending CYM-in-session this summer, either in person, or remotely via Zoom.



# Gathering Together

*by Sheldon Clark*

Traditionally, Friends over the past 350 years have rooted their style of unprogrammed meetings for worship in scripture and their sense of hospitality in practical necessity. Meetings were occasions set aside intentionally so that the nascent Religious Society of Friends could gather to worship and socialize. Food and faith paired together are healthy for the body and soul. Regular family reading of scripture during the week was habitual preparation for each day's periods of reflection and conducting business affairs.

Following are eight of over one hundred biblical verses that have inspired Friends in their religious and secular lives. The verses are taken from the ***King James Version (KJV)***. Other translations are encouraged to be read, as well. The phrase “sharpen the countenance” means that friends in a discussion can “improve and refine each other’s thoughts, expressions, and behaviors.” The word “provoke” means “to encourage” each other. The outcome of expectant worship in the living silence is to deepen one’s faith and to be honest, sincere, and civil in political, economic, and social discourse.

## **Psalm 133:1**

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for [friends] to dwell together in unity!

## **Proverbs 27:17**

Iron sharpens iron; so, a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

## **Matthew 18:20**

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

## **John 4:24**

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

### **1 Corinthians 14:33**

For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.

### **Hebrews 10:24**

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.

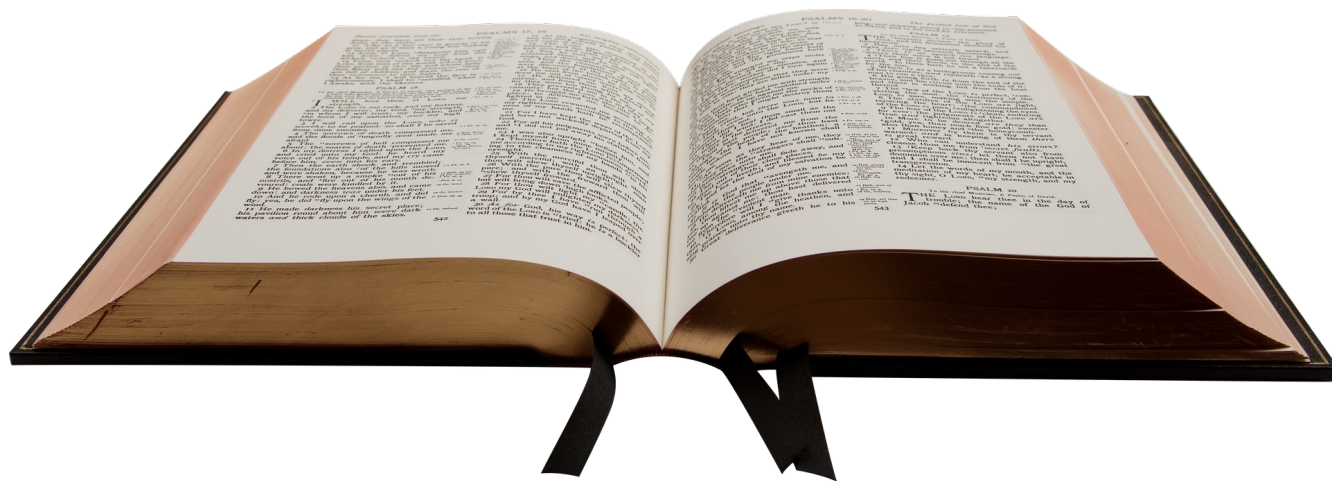
### **Hebrews 10:25**

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, but exhorting one another.

### **1 John 1:7**

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.

Members and attenders, alike, in Hamilton Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, are enriched by their presence and participation as active listeners in worship and as significant helpers in its social activities.



# Water Voices I

*by Sheldon Clark*

Emergence from darkness and water  
continues the amniotic fluid as protector,  
provider, and preparer for light and life  
until parting separates and bonding reconnects.

Newborn children thrive as caressing,  
nurturing, elimination, exertion,  
sleep, instinct, and love form patterns,  
as sure as a foal follows its dam.

Mother and child sculpt  
their symbiotic relationship while  
she nourishes and the young one suckles  
inhabiting the grandeur of being and becoming.

Milk production reciprocates  
the need and desire to sustain health,  
to grow, to transform light and life through  
generosity of spirit and pacific gratitude.

The counselor, eighteen years old, was taught to revere life,  
trained in Red Cross first aid and life-saving,  
took charge of the six-year-old campers for  
a much-anticipated shorts-only creek hike.

The July afternoon was humid. Mr. Sun produced  
Upward-bound steam beams from drying yellow straw.  
The creek walk capped the journey from a shaded  
escarpment to descent through field to stream.



Shirts and sneakers discarded willy-nilly.  
Rules imparted, “The safety-first whistle means, silence, line up.  
Ready. Steady. GO!” Run. Jump. Splash. Submerge. Arise. Breathe.  
Screams made the minnows dash downstream for safety.

Then it happened. “Help.” Whistle. “Rangers!”  
The counselor waded, reached, lifted, carried, and  
slapped the child’s back. Tear breaths signalled mercifully  
as though a newborn had caught its first breath. They stood  
silently in awe as life’s breath changed darkness into light.





# **Book Review: *On Speaking out of the Silence: vocal ministry in the unprogrammed Meeting for Worship* by Douglas V. Steere**

*by Don Woodside*

Douglas Steere is also the editor of the book, *Quaker Spirituality*, which our HMM book group just started reading in Feb 2023. This work is a Pendle Hill pamphlet #182, first published in 1972, and is a concise summary of his understanding of what and how Quakers worship and, within that, how they give vocal ministry, replete with stories from times recent and long past. There is also a review of the evolution of meeting for worship, and some of its theological underpinnings.

For Steere the Holy Spirit is not a construct but a reality he has tested and found available and trustworthy, and his view of meeting for worship is informed by this trust. He says that a yearning communication from the 'unfathomable Godhead', via the Holy Spirit is going on all the time. Meeting for worship is a way to encounter it.

Some people just want silence. But meetings which turn fully silent wither away.

He cites a passage from Graham's *Faith of a Quaker* which describes how a flash of insight turns into vocal ministry for him, in just moments. Sometimes from the 'Inner Man beyond the will', sometimes from two or three prior thoughts which fuse and 'the fire is kindled' all in five minutes. Steere comments that it is important this ministry respect what may have been said before, and the needs of others in the Meeting. He talks of 'cluster ministry', a phrase new to me. Thirty years ago in Hamilton Pat Miles talked about ministry being not one person's offering but the whole sequence through that meeting for worship. Cluster ministry is what she was describing. Then as Steere says, we are 'moving in the life, breaking the cerebral barrier and being released' by the One who gathers the meeting inwardly.

There are good examples of how Steere sidesteps controversy about naming the divine, but never falters from his own experience that there is a divine spirit drawing us both inwardly and outwardly. He calls this at times the Presence, the Guide, the One.

Talking about the hesitation to speak in meeting, he quotes John Fothergill in 1697, who was certain that what he had to say was spirit-inspired, but he hesitated out of fear and ‘reasoned it away’. When he finally did speak, he left the meeting in ‘a holy peace of mind’. For me, this is one of the treasures of giving ministry, the sense of simultaneous emptiness and fullness which follows speaking. Steere extolls even “broken and imperfect words which may wonderfully draw those present into communion with God and one another”.

He also says there are times when the message is for me to speak or act; and other times when the message is given but not the call to share it. Then we need to wait for that call.

How do we prepare heart and mind for meeting for worship? In past times, many Quakers read the Bible regularly. Some were well versed in poetry and literature. Intellectual interests gave rise in the 19<sup>th</sup> C to a number of Quaker colleges and universities in the United States. But Steere is not in favour of intellectual discourses disguised as ministry. He raises the issue of whether ministry needs to be well organized and articulate, but definitely leans towards it being spontaneous and deeply felt.

He describes various strategies used to settle our self-centred thinking, be it meditation, prayer, or gratitude. But the most important preparation is ‘the authentic tendering which takes place in the heart of the gathered meeting.’ He cites Jan Ruysbroeck, Flemish mystic, who said that “the love of Jesus is both avid and generous. All that he had and all that he was he gave; all that we are and all that we have, he takes.” Just by sitting in meeting for worship, we are opening ourselves to guidance from the divine. Then we must listen for the same divine call that it is timely to share it, from what we have heard from others giving ministry, or what we sense intuitively.

# 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](mailto: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.*