

# Hamilton Quaker Newsletter

## May 2023



***Bring into God's light those emotions, attitudes and prejudices in yourself that lie at the root of destructive conflict, acknowledging your need for forgiveness and grace. In what way are you involved in the work of reconciliation between individuals, groups, and nations?***

*Advices and Queries #32*

# Upcoming Events and Announcements

Yonge Street Half-Yearly Meeting will be taking place on Saturday, May 13, in person and online.

The next Quaker Education Session will be on Sunday, May 21, beginning at noon. Participants are welcome to bring a lunch.

The next meeting of the Reading group will be on Sunday, May 28 from 3 to 4 p.m. in our Zoom space. We will be discussing “The Journal of George Fox”, from page 93 to the end, from *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 Peace and Social Action Committee will be meeting on Monday, May 29 at 7 p.m. on Zoom. This will be the last meeting before the summer break. To be added to the list and receive the Zoom link, please contact Paul Dekar (pdekar@cogeco.ca).

The next Meeting for Worship for Business will be held on our regular Zoom link on Sunday, June 4 at 1:30 p.m.

Beverly Shepard suggests that Friends might wish to read <http://thegreenzineonline.com/our-children-are-the-stewards-of-tomorrow/> which was suggested by Peterborough Friend Margaret Slavin for use by our First Day School parents during a recent FDS series on Earthcare. Margaret notes that “although it is not a Quaker item, it struck me as a particularly good philosophical background to this work with children and the Earth.”

News from Dawn Lepard (who is a member of Hamilton Monthly Meeting despite having moved to Rochester, New York to work as an electrician after having graduated from McMaster): My union gave me an award to recognize my activities as a labour activist. Basically, 15 years of being a thorn in someone’s side. I know I have annoyed plenty of people in that time, and a good many foremen have earned my distrust. However, I was one of four people from our



union who showed up to walk a picket line with nurses who are negotiating a first contract with one of our hospitals. Two of the other people were my apprentices, and the fourth person was the union president.

(Story here <https://www.wxxinews.org/local-news/2023-04-25/rochester-general-hospital-nurse-union-rally>)

A query from Beverly Shepard: Does anyone in Hamilton Meeting want a healthy, LARGE Norfolk Island Pine? It has been loved by both Carol Leigh and Beverly for many years, but it no longer fits in our homes. Presently, it is in a large pot, about a foot (.3 metres) tall, and the pot sits in a stand that raises the pot about 16 inches (.4 metres). The pine is about 4 feet, 4 inches tall (1.35 metres), so the whole arrangement stands a bit short of 7 feet tall (around 2 metres). If you were interested in the plant you would not have to take the stand, but you would be welcome to it. Please let Bev or Carol Leigh know if you would like this lovely plant. It can be seen in person at Bev's house, Cedar Haven.



# Remembering Graeme MacQueen

by Paul Dekar

Graeme MacQueen died peacefully and gracefully surrounded by family at his home in Dundas, Ontario on April 25, 2023. After graduating with a Ph.D. from Harvard University, Graeme joined the Department of Religious Studies at McMaster University. He taught Asian religion and, in the early 1980s, joined in founding the Centre for Peace Studies (CPS).

This effort grew in part from the work, locally, of the Peace Research Institute co-founded by Alan and Hannah Newcombe, who were nearing retirement, and from engagement in the peace movement. In 1981, in a joint CPS effort with the university's ad-hoc committee for Canada-Latin American Friendship, Graeme helped organize bringing to campus 1980 Nobel Peace Prize recipient Adolfo Pérez Esquivel. During the 1984-1985 academic year, Graeme, along with myself and Joanna Santa Barbara, then a member of McMaster's Department of Psychiatry, taught, for the first time, an Introduction to the Study of Peace, which continues to attract large enrollments.

Graeme was no arm-chair academic. The June 11, 1982 *Hamilton Spectator* has a photo of Graeme and other local activists before they departed for New York City for what proved to be one of the largest peace demonstrations ever. The article quoted Graeme as describing the rally as a "morale booster. Just being with 500,000 thousand people who think the way you do is bound to be an uplifting experience.... People are going to look at their television and wonder why 500,000 are there."

For the next forty years, Graeme was involved in peace-building activities in different war zones, notably Afghanistan, India and Sri Lanka. After retirement, he dedicated his research, writing and public advocacy to a critique of the foundations of the so-called War on Terror. In *The 2001 Anthrax Deception: The Case for a Domestic Conspiracy*, Graeme wrote, "What is unthinkable for many ... is that elements in the executive branch of the U. S. government collaborated in the killing of innocent citizens ... and in this way furthered their own aims, which included curtailing the freedoms of the U. S.

population and carrying out the supreme international crime of aggression against other nations” (p. 194).

Graeme was a world citizen, acknowledged by the Hamilton Mundialization Committee which in 1994 honoured him for his contribution to universal peace, justice and world citizenship. Graeme insisted that a deep spirituality inspired his work. In addition to books on peace, he wrote a novel, *Journey to the City of Six Gates*, and short stories. Until incapacitated by illness, he remained active in a Peace Think Tank, the Gandhi Peace Festival, Democracy Probe and other local groups to which he contributed incisive papers and through which he sought to protect democracy, address extreme inequality and advance the common good. Devoted to his wife Sharon, daughter Jessica and wider family, Graeme had friends around the world. Having lost an eminent scholar, compassionate activist and great friend, we grieve his passing.

*(This piece was originally written for Peace Magazine, and is reprinted here by permission of the author.)*





# **A Thought from Beverly Shepard: Quakers and Jesus**

We've been talking in various contexts – casual after-worship conversations, the monthly educational discussions, some online exchanges – about Quakers' views of Jesus. They vary greatly, so that it's impossible to say what Quakers as a group believe about Jesus. For me, Jesus the teacher is the point. The supernatural stuff is NOT the point. It doesn't matter whether I believe in the virgin birth or the miracles attributed to Jesus or the resurrection or any of those stories. Jesus taught important things. He gave us two commandments which he called "the greatest" commandments, and the second was to love your neighbour as yourself. This teaching is emphasized in several of our well-recognized Quaker testimonies: peace, equality, community. So simple to say; so complex and demanding to live by. But Quakers try. These ideals are central to our identity, and Quakers the world around try to love our neighbours as ourselves, living together in peaceful community, treating everyone equally.

As I sat in meeting for worship one First Day in March, I was thinking about all this, and I wondered: What if everyone did this? What if all faiths stopped emphasizing the rituals and ceremonies and simply tried to love each other? Churches are dwindling and violence is growing, but couldn't this change? What if Quakers were more evangelical? What if we tried to convey our testimonies to people outside our own communities? What if others didn't have to stumble upon us, but could hear about Quakers easily, any day? What if there were lots more Quakers?

## **A Thought from Dick Preston**

Early morning thoughts of an old guy named Dick Preston, recalling *Late Night Thoughts While Listening to Mahler's Ninth Symphony* -- a little book of short essays, mature reflections by an elderly physician named Lewis Thomas. I read it maybe twenty-some years ago, and an image hangs on in memory. Dr.

Thomas realizes that 'In The Beginning' it couldn't have been a big bang, because there was no atmosphere to carry the sound of Creation. It would have to have been A Great Light.

This has been a memorable echo of a Biblical image. It got me awake and out of bed at 4:00 a.m., more or less, pondering an image of the beautiful blue globe seen and photographed by an astronaut. It's us – our earth – floating in space. Our vulnerable earth – so beautiful that the image is reproduced over and over and some critic warned that making it so common will let us hold it at a distance, and not realize just how much it is really an image of home.

Now we have images from the James Webb telescope of just a tiny bit of our universe, going back billions of years towards the beginning. Towards Creation. The image is of an absolutely overwhelming number of stars and gasses and I know not what else. Not THE Great Light, but some of it, maybe. Or is it only a bit of the residue? And it is beautiful to behold. Just awesomely beautiful.

Creation has a word. God.

With Hildegard of Bingen, we are like feathers on the breath of God – each of us and all of us. It is indeed a *Mysterium Tremendum*. And it is indeed beautiful, and infinite, and home. An unexpected gift. It inspired a quiet realization: my statement of faith.

Heart / spirit / force of will / anima / myriad religions / ...Are these all one? The opposite of being "lost"?

I fancy that the ground of my being is the universe, though I imagine what I can, or could, perceive on the earth (its "dressing") in my mind.

As an insignificant speck in an indifferent universe, my task is to fashion some significance, however modest it may prove to be. That seems to have been possible.

An ultimate mystery, beyond human perception, or conception = God / universe. Is this animate? Or animate only in earth-like spots in space?

# Gratitude

*by Beverly Shepard*

Dear Lord,  
Thank you for the catbird,  
Who sings with such joy and invention  
Outside my door,  
And, of course, for the wood thrush,  
Whose liquid notes perfume the evening,  
And the winter wren –  
Such giant music from so small a singer! –  
And, oh, yes, the robin  
And the veery,  
The white-throated sparrow,  
And –  
But lest you think  
It is only for their songs I love them,  
Thank you for the blue jay,  
The goldfinch,  
The cardinal.  
And, Lord, it isn't just the colours either.  
Thank you for the friendly chickadee,  
The bold, amazing hummingbird,  
The clever crow,  
The vulture who passes just above my head  
With majestic grace and intimidating shadow...  
Well, thank you for the birds.  
Certainly I've done nothing to deserve them,  
Yet here they are.  
Oh, and the fireflies!  
Thank you for the fireflies;  
But not just those who sparkle in the night:  
Thank you for butterflies,



Tiger beetles,  
Ladybugs,  
Dragonflies,  
And other little creatures –  
Millipedes and spiders  
And earthworms.  
Earth – yes, the things of the earth:  
The hawthorn tree!  
The black cherry!  
Bursting into white bloom like a spring wedding,  
The green and fragrant cedar,  
Sprays of silver birch,  
Whispering aspen –  
Thank you for the trees;  
And for the smaller plants, too,  
Spreading gaiety through wood and field:  
Polygala and baneberry,  
Pussytoes and mayflower...  
Thank you, Lord.

And that's just the spring.



# 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.*