Hamilton Quaker Newsletter

September 2021

Are your meetings for church affairs held in a spirit of worship and in dependence on the guidance of God? Remember that we do not seek a majority decision nor even consensus. As we wait patiently for divine guidance our experience is that the right way will open and we shall be led into unity.

Advices and Queries #14

Upcoming Events and Announcements

Meeting for Worship will enter silence at 10:30 a.m. The Clerks will try to open the Zoom space by 10:20 to allow people a time to chat and settle in before worship begins. We have resumed in-person worship at the Meeting House. You must complete the Indoor Worship Waiver and agree to its terms and conditions (only once) before you attend. It is available from Wilf Ruland (deerspring1@gmail.com).

The Reading group will resume studying Richard Wagamese's book *One Drum* on Sunday, September 19 from 3 to 4 p.m. in our Zoom space. We will be covering the chapter on Courage from pages 105 to 133. Please contact Shirla (shirla766@gmail.com) to be added to the participant list.

The Cambridge Worship Group (CWG) will be meeting separately in our own homes at 2 pm on Friday, September 24th. At 3 pm we will join together via Zoom for After Word and fellowship. If you would like to participate please let Carol Leigh know (clwehking@gmail.com) so that she can send you the Zoom link.

The Peace and Social Action Committee will resume meeting on Wednesday, September 29, at 7 p.m. Meetings will remain virtual, in our Zoom space, for the time being. Please contact Paul Dekar (pdekar@cogeco.ca) if you would like to be sent the link for this meeting.

October 3 will be our next Meeting for Worship for Business. The meeting will be held at 12:45 p.m. in our Zoom Meeting space, unless the Meeting House Re-opening Committee advises otherwise. Email will be sent inviting members and attenders to this meeting.

October 16 is Yonge Street Half-Yearly Meeting, hosted by Toronto Monthly Meeting. This session will take place online from 10:00 am to 4:30 pm. The workshop focus will be "Peaceful and Clear Communication within Meetings" and the facilitators will be Trevor Chandler (Interior BC Quakers), Christina Tellez (Halifax Monthly Meeting), and Matt Legge, the Peace Program

Coordinator of the Canadian Friends Service Committee. All are welcome, although there will be no children's session for this event.

Friends may be interested in an upcoming play at the Pearl Company: *The Draft Dodger*. Written by Ray Z Rivers, the play is set in 2008 in Toronto and tells the story of a young American solider who takes refuge at the home of a Vietnam draft dodger who settled in Canada. The play opens November 11, 2021.

September

by Beverly Shepard

Like an unexpected flame
from the embers of a fire
seemingly dying
summer
flares
up
in fields of goldenrod.

Hamilton Meeting Upstairs

Most of you will know that there is a small apartment in the upstairs portion of our Meeting House. The newcomer family our Meeting sponsored from Syria several years ago lived there for much of their first year in Canada. Now, Barton Stone Church has sponsored additional members of the same family, and they are also spending time in our upstairs apartment while their sponsors look for more permanent housing. For those who have never seen the upstairs space, Darlene James has sent along some photos!

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The Gathered Meeting

by Sheldon Clark

Individuals make a conscious decision to attend a Quaker Meeting for Worship. Each person gathers with others to engage in contemplative worship knowing that a 'Leading of the Spirit' may or may not be forthcoming, and that a completely silent hour of worship in itself, may be spiritually restorative and inspirational.

The terms Quakers use to describe a particularly "Centered" Meeting for Worship, is "A Gathered Meeting," or, "A Covered Meeting." Such a Meeting includes several components: the decision to attend; preparation; entry; participation by settling into the silence; waiting for, and then sensing inspiration, which is an inspired leading from the Inner Light; vocal ministry; finishing; and, settling back into the gathered silence. Friends are keenly aware that a person so moved can share insight into religious Truth, what George Fox (1624-1691) identified in his ***Journal*** as, "the infinite love of God." How does Contemplative Worship achieve this idealistic aspiration?

Contemplative Worship is an action, a state of being, an expectant attitude in seeking Divine Light. Anyone may initiate contemplative worship either alone or with many. It helps to settle into a prayerful attitude to focus on the Eternal. Participation in a dedicated time of worship may be instructive. Private study may help. Talking with others may be of assistance. The practice of personal meditation may be beneficial. One's desire to listen for the Still Small Voice of God within one's very soul is paramount. Talk, study, thought, joining with others, symbols, and even mantras may be helpful and produce feelings of tranquility and serenity. However, there are no guarantees that devout silence, deliberate gathering, or prayerful meditation, will evoke an epiphany. Contemplative Worship is ***to wait*** upon Divine Providence for an all-pervading sense of inner peace, in which an Encounter with the Spirit of Divine Love is sensed, felt, and realized.

The following poem is one expression of the inner struggle some people experience when they come to a Quaker Meeting and try to clear their minds of uncharitable thoughts and discover the ocean of Light and Love, which flows over the ocean of darkness. The progression in the following poem, ***Contemplative Worship***, is from busyness, to patient waiting, to a renewing of the spirit, to a sense of inner peace.

Be still and know that I am God.[1]

Busy thoughts swirl.
Busy this, that, and the other thing. What's next? Prioritize. Delegate.
Busy meeting children's needs. Busy meeting spouse's needs.
Busy chores: meal preparation, anxiousness, cleaning up.
Busy yard work: planting, weeding, mowing.
Busy errands: banking, shopping, auto servicing.
Busy with today's mental list; anticipate tomorrow.
I want my time, fun time, social time, too.

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.

Choose a centre, quiet the mind, then focus.
Choose animals: sleeping puppies, grazing horses, pollenating bees.
Choose vegetables: snow peas, ears of corn, carrots, turnips.
Choose minerals: gold, silver, lead, alabaster, marble.
Choose visions and dreams: peace, serenity, justice.
Choose memories: family, siblings, education, trips, vacations.
Choose prayers: familiar ones, extemporaneous ones.
Select to be empty: nada, nothing, naught, zilch.

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

Seek comfort in body, mind, and spirit.
Seek that which is good, true, and beautiful.
Seek silence, the sacred, the sacramental, reflect.
Seek the holy. Not me, but the Other. Pray for others.

1 Biblical quotations are from Psalm 46:10; Psalm 37:7; Isaiah 40:31; and, John 14:1 (King James Version)

Seek the nonce. This time is time out from the hurly-burly.
Seek stillness in heavenly calm to be present in this moment.
Seek out a deeply personal image: a ring, an embrace, a dream.
Discover the aura of inner peace.

Let not your heart be troubled.

Bless those who are ill, fearful, worried, anxious, angry.
Bless those who need intervention.
Bless those who are in transition.
Bless those who are controlling.
Bless those who are in doubt.
Bless those who seek.
Bless those who are sick, mourn, hungry, poor.
Encounter your contemplative key that ignites inner serenity.

Please note that the word "ignites" is used advisedly for the "stirring of the spirit" is not a passive event, but a dynamic interior cathartic fire. Such an encounter can be life-changing!

Preparation for Meeting for Worship may include homework, such as inspirational reading, listening to soothing music, touching base with a friend, showing love toward another, allowing enough time to travel without rushing, and otherwise, anticipating a shared experience of active listening that reveals God's love. The convention is that worship begins at the appointed time when the first person sits quietly in the Meeting Room, or designated gathering area. Initial polite greetings, although certainly appropriate, need to end. Friends intentionally gather together to worship.

Two classic definitions of private contemplative prayer are useful to the process of engaging in contemplative worship. One type is called "Kataphatic" prayer, in which the seeker makes use of content, words, images, symbols and ideas to help become still in body, mind and spirit. The other type is called "Apophatic" prayer, which has no content. It is a means in which the seeker empties the mind of words and ideas and simply "waits" in the Divine Presence.

Centering prayer is “Apophatic.” Both methodologies of contemplative prayer aspire to access the Divine Mystery.

Entry into worship involves prayer, awareness of others, personal reflection, and divine inspiration. The intent of a Meeting for Worship is to acknowledge the common desire to seek Truth. Friends, when led to give vocal ministry, need to speak loud enough to be heard, clearly enough to be understood, and brief enough to be considerate in sharing the dedicated gathered worship time. Another poem, ***Contemplative Quiet Interior Voices***, suggests the movement from: *“sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal”* (I Cor. 13:1) to *“whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God”* (I Cor. 10:31).

<u>Randomness</u>

Confusion
Rambling
Unending journey

<u>Disconnected</u>

Disquiet
Uneasiness
Anxiousness

<u>Particularities</u>

Grief and Loss
Sadness
Self-centeredness

<u>Regrets</u>

Anger
Injustice
Malaise

<u>Centering</u>

Settling
Calmness
Divine Relationship

To be led to vocal ministry is often a spontaneous happening. It may result from some tangible source. It may be the result of deep thought. It may be inspired by an incident. It may be the result of a profound concern. It may be the result of lifting the personal to the realm of the universal, and thus speak to an individual or corporate need. The motivation to speak is because the substance has first been held in the Light, is found to be True, and then is offered as vocal ministry.

A Quaker Meeting for Worship is neither a classroom, a literary society, nor a debate club. It is not a bully pulpit in which to express opinions to a captured audience. It is not an opportunity for a stage show performance. However, learning may occur and fresh insights may be enlightening. Poetic expression, or beautiful singing may be uplifting. Personal experience may be providential. Heartfelt prayer may be a welcome addition. The Meeting for Worship is Spirit-led, not crisis-led. "Faith" is converted into "works" in the world as those present, exit, and return to their families and to their places of work, freshly renewed. Simplicity in vocal ministry is sometimes difficult to achieve. The intensity of "simple" clearly articulated ministry, however, is weighty. A gathered Meeting for Worship is achieved when peace, harmony, lucidity, and love have been sensed and indeed felt by all.

Elders share responsibility for encouraging appropriate silent and vocal ministry.

Vocal ministry ends when the spoken words are complete and the person sits and continues meditative worship in the loving embrace of the Meeting. The convention is that each offer of ministry needs time to settle into the collective "Light" before someone else rises to speak and to whom the same courtesy of attentive listening is extended. Contemplative silence and vocal ministry are both valuable in their own right. It is an adventure in faith to seek the will of God by participating in a "gathered" worshipful experience.

The Clerk usually indicates the end of the Meeting for Worship by shaking hands with someone else, and everyone else shares in the closure by shaking hands with their neighbors.

Where Are They Now?

During the pandemic, Peter Cross reached out to current and former members and attenders of Hamilton Monthly Meeting for news of former young friends who have been associated with the Meeting over the years. Some sent him responses, which he has made available, with permission, to this newsletter. We welcome similar submissions from other former First Day School students!

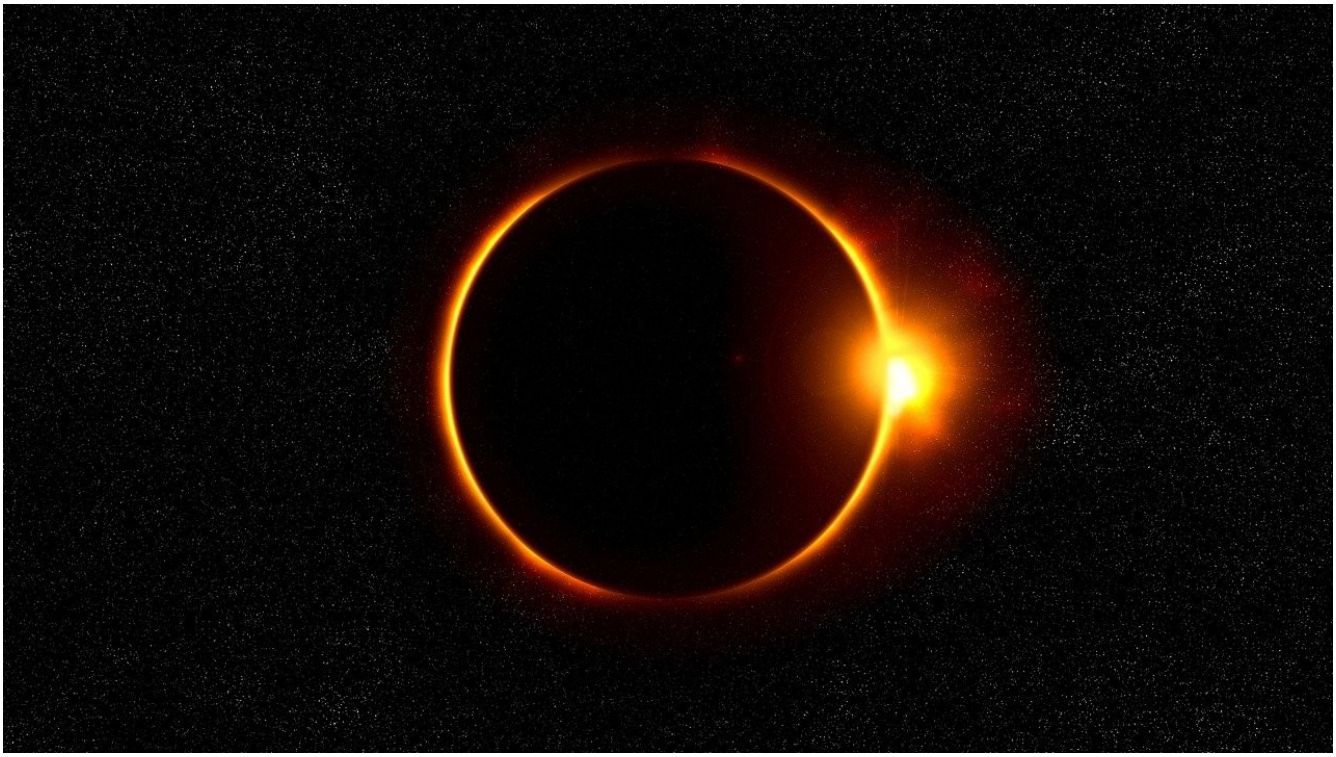
Catherine Johnson moved out of home at 17 with no money, and quit school shortly after. She left Canada permanently at 18, with a one-way ticket to the UK where she stayed mainly with relatives before moving to her own tiny flat in Rome, Italy. She worked as an *au pair* for a year while finishing highschool by correspondence course. At 19, Catherine moved to Berlin, Germany where she met her future husband Gernot Bölian at 21, marrying him at 23. She spent most of her adult life in Berlin, apart from half a year in Ghana, a year in Russia and three years in the UK, getting a BA 1st in Russian and German. After returning to Berlin in 1993, she worked as a freelance translator and TV producer before becoming a freelance simultaneous interpreter which she still does there (and elsewhere) to this day, God willing. In 1999, her son Anton was born. When he was four, his parents split up after twenty years together, but Anton was raised by both parents, whose buildings back on to each other. Anton speaks English to his mother and German to his father and is currently studying physics in Hamburg. Catherine loves learning languages and – ranked by proficiency - speaks German, Russian, Italian, Arabic, French, and is learning Yiddish, Turkish, Latin, and a bit of Greek and Turkish. She has travelled widely, especially in Arabic-speaking countries and in Europe.

Mike Johnson studied Mechanical Engineering at Mohawk College and worked as a lead electrical project manager on an all-electric vehicle project, moving to Toronto where he split his time between providing onset technical services as a technocrane operator and working in his own workshop on remote camera mount equipment for feature films, and on power door actuation. He designed and built custom Nodal Roll camera mounts. Around 2014, he

relocated to Vancouver, in part to live closer to his mother, Jean. There, he has a design prototyping shop for designing specialized remote camera mounts for motion picture work. During the early months of the pandemic, Mike was involved in designing a prototype ventilator for COVID19 treatment in hospitals, commissioned by the Canadian government, which went into series production. He currently lives in Vancouver with his partner.

Caroline Johnson graduated from Ancaster high school and went on to get a BA in International Development Studies in Toronto, with a sojourn in Mali and in Cameroon, acquiring fluency in French. Caroline worked for Canadian Crossroads International in Toronto before moving to Vancouver to set up their office there. During her work coordinating exchange programmes, she met Sigit Murdawa and married him in Indonesia, where she lived for two years, teaching English and learning Indonesian. They moved back to Vancouver once his visa came through, divorcing after five years. She was unable to have children of her own, becoming a devoted aunt to her nephew in Berlin, Anton, with family visits twice yearly despite the distance. Caroline had various jobs among them convincing publishing houses to print on recycled paper, including the one that published Harry Potter in Canada. But with her incisive mind, she quickly grew bored of these undemanding jobs and she really found her calling after taking a Masters of Library and Information Science at the University of British Columbia, as a children's librarian, eventually working full-time as a Youth Services Librarian. She went from a wealthy area to a more deprived one, motivated by the hope of making a difference to families and children, especially from at-risk and marginalised groups. She was passionate about her outreach work, making strong connections to the Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association, the Awahsuk Aboriginal Head Start preschool, the Surrey Food Bank, where she distributed library books that would otherwise have been thrown away, the Umoja Operation Compassion Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping African and other immigrant and refugee families successfully integrate into the community, and many other organizations. At her library, Caroline ran French Storytimes and the Dog-Tales program mostly with her own dog, helping children who struggled with reading

to read to the most non-judgmental of listeners, dogs. Her mother, Jean Johnson, moved to Vancouver and her and Caroline's lives were closely intertwined from then on, birding and gardening together, eating and going on outings and holidays together. Caroline remarried, though her relationship with Mark Lynds was turbulent. She struggled with depression for twenty years and later with alcoholism and prescription drug abuse. After Jean's fatal illness, the death of her adopted father John Milton, and acute mental health suffering, she died by suicide on the day of the total eclipse of the sun, on 21st August 2017.



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. 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, Síân Reid, daywitch@gmail.com.