

Hamilton Quaker Newsletter

October 2025



In worship we enter with reverence into communion with God and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Come to meeting for worship with heart and mind prepared. Lend yourself and all your outward concerns to God's guidance.

Advices and Queries #9

Upcoming Events and Announcements

On Monday, October 13, there will be a Thanksgiving Day Potluck at the meeting house, beginning at 1:00 p.m. If you are interested in attending, **please sign up** on the sheet on the notice board, indicating what you intend to bring. If you are available to be the person organizing on the day, please indicate this on the sheet, or let the clerk know (sianbowencole@gmail.com).

On Thursday, October 16, Mel Burns, staff person for the Peace Committee of CFSC (Canadian Friends Service Committee) will share some reflections on their thesis work related to Quaker decision-making and unity. Mel will highlight some of their learning, and outline some challenges facing modern Quakers in this workshop sharing session. Details can be found at <https://quaker.ca/news/event-quaker-pocket-thoughts-to-be-in-unity-with-the-other/>

Members and attenders of Hamilton Monthly Meeting have been invited to attend Pelham Half-Yearly Meeting on Saturday, October 25. The topic is "How does Quaker community strengthen us?", and the speaker is Jean-Louis Demers from Montreal MM. He will be speaking about his leading to establish a francophone worship group in Quebec City under the care of Montreal MM. The meeting will be accessible over Zoom (from 10-12), and in person at Pelham Friends Church, 940 Haist Street, Fonthill, Ontario. The organizers would like to get an idea of how many people will be attending. In particular, in order to provide childcare, they would like to know how many families will be bringing children, and what the children's ages are. People who would like more information can contact the organizers, one of whom is Chris Hitchcock (chris@hitchcock.com, in the directory). If you are interested in attending, please bring a salad or dessert item to share.

The next meeting of the Reading Group will be on Sunday, October 26 beginning at 7:30 p.m. in our Zoom space. Please contact Shirla (shirla766@gmail.com) to be added to the participant list.

Hamilton Monthly Meeting member Paul Dekar will be speaking at a workshop on non-violence, entitled On Becoming a Force for Change: Defending

Democracy non-violently collectively, to be held at First Unitarian Church, 170 Dundurn Street South, Hamilton on Saturday, November 1 from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Registration is required. For information on how to register, try emailing gpf.hamilton@gmail.com.

The next Meeting for Worship for Business will be held in person at the Meeting House on Sunday, November 2 at 12:30 p.m. You can also join us online on our regular Meeting Zoom link.

Our cover photo this month was taken by Siân Bowen-Cole, at Camp NeeKauNis. She also took the photos that accompany her article.



“Let your Life Speak” - George Fox

by Siân Bowen-Cole

For a long weekend in September I met with the staff and other volunteers of the Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) for the annual meeting at Camp NeeKauNis on Georgian Bay.

The previous September at NeeKauNis I had joined the peace committee and found myself becoming the clerk at the same time! It had been a while since I had been in a residential Quaker community, and I enjoyed it immensely. Cooking, cleaning up, worshipping and working together certainly filled my soul.

This year was no different. We worshiped on the hill, looking out beyond the trees to the glistening water in the bay, before beginning our committee meetings. The peace committee continued to discern and take action on our budget, Guaranteed Livable Basic Income (GLBI),



Israel/Palestine, Gender/Queer issues, the planned protest at the weapons fair in Ottawa next year and so much more. It's such a great opportunity to be in person, in community and to ask questions and share ideas between different staff and volunteers of other committees (Transformative Justice and Indigenous Rights). Sandra, our staff person in Ottawa, has continued the tradition she began last year of sending welcome back to parliament cards to all MP's from CFSC, with personally created pictures from Quakers across Canada (including CFSC) on the front. Her job description is wide and includes lobbying

government, raising the Quaker profile and working towards GBLI whilst supporting the projects of the various CFSC committees.

In a world where everything I hold dear is challenged on a daily basis, to be doing something, however small it may appear, gives me hope. To be part of an organization taking action and standing up for Peace and Justice magnifies my small Light of Hope. In service my life speaks.

As we sat on the hill one morning in meeting for worship, there was the occasional sound of an acorn crashing onto the metal roof of a cabin. I wondered in that moment about the age old question “if a tree falls in the forest and there



is no one to hear it, does it make a sound?” I had thought about that for years (on and off!) and had finally come to the conclusion that it is very human centric to think we are the only ones who hear, feel, see and have emotions. As the tree falls it creates a breeze as it topples, the crash to the

ground sets off a series of vibrations through the earth, its sound is heard by a myriad of woodland creatures and some have their habitats destroyed.

That one tree in its life as a shade giver and home, and its grand laying in state on the forest floor has a long impact on the woodland and environment around it. How can we ask if it makes a sound? Of course its life has had meaning. Just like the acorn, a capsule of new life bouncing loudly off the roof, its life has also spoken.

Meetings for Eating – Interested?

by Harriet Woodside

Three dining groups got started in 2024. A small number of F/friends have gathered to enjoy a shared meal. These times together are a fine way to meet others and to get to know one another better. There is nothing like a shared meal to spark leisurely conversation and to inspire connections.

The current groups have evolved to meet the preferences of the members. We now have both lunch and supper groups and groups that meet on a weekday or weekend. The members of one group bring their own meal while the usual format is to have a potluck.

The time seems right to invite you to attend a dining group!

USUALLY:

- There are between 5 and 9 people. Partners and children are welcome.
- Groups meet as often as they wish but rarely as often as once a month or during the summer.
- The location is someone's home, outdoors or the Meeting House. The location usually rotates.
- The meal is a supper or lunch on an evening or afternoon.
- The menu is usually a planned potluck with each family or individual bringing an appetizer, main, salad, dessert or something else. Who-brings-what rotates.
- The host usually provides the main course (this way it is hot and hasn't dripped). HOWEVER, one group has found it easier for each member to bring their own meal.

IF YOU SIGN UP, WE WILL ASK FOR YOUR PREFERENCES:

- Food allergies or restrictions? (for example, gluten-free, vegetarian, no seafood)

- Being in a group with children?
- Alcohol or not?
- Prefer to join but not host in your home (for example, you live in a small space)?
- Need transportation?

There will be a sign-up sheet in the Meeting House from September 28 through November 2. After this groups will be put together. The first name on each dining group list will be asked to arrange the first meal.

After about a year, if the dining groups are popular, it's likely we will ask you if you want to resign, continue in your group, or move to a newly formed group. This gives an opening for others to join.

Please consider this opportunity for great food and camaraderie.

Questions? Contact Harriet Woodside at woodsideh@gmail.com or 905 627 7930.



A September supper group convened in the Meeting House garden. Pictured are Jane, Alice, Harriet, Don and Susan. Photo by Janie.

Ministry of Listening

Listening as Ministry

by Sheldon Clark

“The Ministry of Listening” and, “Listening as Ministry” are disciplined undertakings. Imagine being in the Meeting for Worship and settling into quietude with others as they, too, settle into worship. No words are necessary. Imagine sharing with one’s spouse and family the need to immigrate to an entirely new country to create new beginnings. Certainly, words of comfort and reassurance are needed.

It is a fact that there are 168 hours in a week. Friends are asked to come for an hour of worship with hearts and minds prepared. Such distractions as tidying up after breakfast, taking care of ablutions and medicinal needs, getting children ready, driving with First Day morning traffic, and arriving even a little ahead of time are part of the process. Preparation may take several hours. Meeting for Worship is customarily only one hour. A period fellowship after Meeting may be another hour of enjoying good company before heading home. Friends are friends.

Four to five hours is the elapsed time spent preparing, arriving, and leaving Meeting. This leaves a balance of 163 hours, give or take, for eating, sleeping, work, play, and other weekly activities. The message is clear, guard the time spent in Meeting for Worship religiously.

Some people prepare by taking time to read scripture, listen to music, enjoy an early morning walk, or make contact with a distant family member, as ways to find peacefulness and focus before setting out. Others have found that pausing on the threshold of the meetinghouse doorway, and taking a deep breath, is the hurried, however necessary, transition moment. Worship begins when the first person sits down in their usual spot. Worship continues as others join respectfully and enter into the gathering silence. Those delayed for any reason find the quiet worship already in progress inviting and welcoming.

“Ministry as Listening” requires a person to be present, attentive, receptive, not passive, and aware of the physical, spiritual, social, and emotional appearance of others. Nobody knows what happened to others, or what was in their thoughts, before their arrival at Meeting. They gather into the silence to experience the Divine.

Ministry in Meeting for Worship is selfless. It is a spiritual calling ‘to serve rather than be served’ and paradoxically are ministered unto. It is imbued with the qualities of compassion, humility, and transcendent love. Some worshippers intentionally hear in their mind’s ear the names of those present and the names of those absent. This is a helpful way of settling down and being lovingly present.

Listening is being alert, aware, intent, still, and devoid of distractions. Listening induces focus, understanding, and engagement. “The Ministry of Listening” is the willingness to join quietly with others in prayerful expectancy. “The Ministry of Listening” and, “Listening as Ministry” open space for reciprocal sharing. In the spiritual context, Friends are enjoined to be present with others and listen for what the Spirit’s desire or guidance might be.

“Listening as Ministry” is the dynamic encounter in which one person wants to be heard by another in sharing confidential matters. The listener may not say a word. They are, however, actively and sensitively engaged in hearing what is in the other’s heart without judgement. They may begin this encounter by listening together in silent prayer. The speaker shares their concern. “Listening” thus becomes a form of pastoral counselling.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” We are called to share this attentive ministry for mercy’s sake. Trust is a key to help lift the spirit of those who seek pastoral care. We can be of service, and by so doing, our spirit is also lifted toward the Light. Sometime, someday, the roles of Listener and Speaker will be reversed. We empathetically care for each other.

“The Ministry of Listening,” and, “Listening as Ministry” are activities of the Spirit. Their foundation may stem from family custom, personal experiences, profound philosophical observation, and being open to continuing revelation as Friends re-commit to the historical witness of Friends ways and means.

Book Review: *Picturing Alyssa*

by Alison Lohans

by Glenna Janzen

Alyssa is an 11-year-old girl during the time of “The War”. The book begins with Alyssa and her friend, Rachel, making a poster to carry in a Peace March. Both Alyssa’s family and Rachel’s family are Quakers, and the two girls are looking forward to going on the Peace March. The Peace March is one of the few things Alyssa is looking forward to – both home and school are difficult for her: Home because her mother is deeply depressed after having a stillborn child a few months before, and school not only because her teacher talks a lot about being patriotic and has assigned a genealogy project on “what your family has contributed to today’s way of life”, but also because she is being bullied by “the cool kids”.

And then, while looking at family photographs, Alyssa is transported in time back to 1931 and a farm in Iowa where she meets Deborah, an 11-year-old girl who will become her great-grandmother.

I won’t give more of the plot away, but it’s a wonderful read, beautifully written by Alison Lohans, a Friend living in Regina Saskatchewan. It’s a YA novel and also a good read for adults. (Carol Leigh and I enjoyed it immensely.) Don’t miss it!

You can find this book in our library, call number YF LOH.



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, 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.