

HAMILTON MONTHLY MEETING
of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
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NEWSLETTER APRIL 2007

Refreshments for Meeting for Worship

April 21 Don, April 28 Glenna, May 6 Christina.

There are still spots that need to be filled in May and June. Please sign up in the foyer at Meeting! If you need further information please contact Christina or Nicki.

Upcoming Dates

April 26, 6 pm: Peace and Social Action Committee (PSAC), all welcome; see announcement below

April 26 Potluck has been **CANCELLED**.

April 28: Meeting House clean up party

May 4-6: Representative Meeting in Hamilton

May 10: Potluck, Jack Valentyne on sustainable living

May 17: Meeting for Worship for Business

June 1-3: Half Yearly Meeting at NeeKauNis , Quaker camp near Midland

Come, Let's Clean, Paint and Garden!!

Sat Apr 28 9:15 – 4 pm

We will begin and end with a few moments of silence. We will have a potluck lunch, music, singing, games and surprises. Come and bring cleaning supplies, garden equipment, paint brushes and clothes.

Representative Meeting: Help Needed

Food: Friends, we are hosting the Representative Meeting that will be held at our Meeting House on May 4 - 6. On Saturday night we are asking Friends to participate in providing hospitality through a planned pot luck. We will need meat dishes, vegetarian dishes, salads and desserts. A sign up list will be placed on the noticeboard. If you are needing further information please contact Jesse Husk or Christina Edwards

Transportation

Don is coordinating the pickup of visitors from Hamilton Airport and the GO station on Friday afternoon, and delivery of the visitors to either of these on Sunday/Monday. As he will be away that weekend, Harriet has offered to coordinate. However, as she is working Friday, we need volunteers to do pickups – at present a couple of runs to the airport (Hamilton, not Toronto) will be needed on Friday afternoon. Sunday afternoon we may also need some help. Please contact Don at 905 522 8048 if you can drive.

Transportation of the visitors from billets to the meeting house will be handled by the

host.

Half Yearly Meeting

Half Yearly Meeting is being held June 1- 3 at Camp NeekauNis. The theme this year for the children is based on the life of John Woolman. Yonge Street Monthly Meeting will be providing leadership for this segment of the weekend. Simcoe - Muskoka Monthly Meeting are preparing the adult program which will explore diversity from a Quaker standpoint. Our responsibility this year is to provide food. We are needing people who can help in the kitchen with food preparation, cooking, serving and clean up. About 75 people are expected so we need a team of volunteers to make this a pleasurable weekend for our group. Please let Bev Shepard or Christina Edwards know if you are able to help.

Maintenance

Lawn mowing and Sidewalk + walkway snow clearing. We are in need of both services, preferably annually rather than for one season only. Should you know of a dependable service for either or both, would you please ask them to visit the Meeting House, and quote - for either or for both undertakings. The quotes should best be forwarded to me. With thanks, Reuven.

Sunday morning study group

The study group gathers at 9:30 and is using Ursula Franklin's Reader (still a couple of copies available for \$20). We have agreed on a modified Claremont dialogue focused on a suggested paragraph or so. Because of the nature of the book attendance can be regular or sporadic, without concern for disturbing a progressive reading of the book. Although great reading it is not necessary to have read the book at all as Ursula's thoughts transcend and lend themselves to such exploration. We maintain moments of silence between spoken offerings, to help centre us for Meeting for Worship at 11:00. Usually we meet upstairs and encourage any who can to join us.

May 10 potluck on Sustainable Living; Meeting House 6 pm

Jack Valentyne will share with us his thoughts after writing "*Tragedy in Mouse Utopia: the Sorcerer Lurks Within* - an ecological commentary on human utopia". Jack, who lives in the neighbourhood of the Meeting House, was head research scientist at Canada Centre for Inland Waters in Burlington. As Johnny Biosphere he very visibly carried the globe on his back and his message to the public. He will argue that people, like the mice, are spurring each other on to greater and less-sustainable excesses. The mouse population grew exponentially and then died off, but not from overcrowding or disease as might be expected -- a fascinating study.

From Jack: "There is nothing more I could ask for than to discuss this issue with Quakers, for whom I have immense respect. Thanks for the invitation."

Peace and Social Action Committee Meeting

Wed Apr 25, 6pm

A light potluck with soup, bread and cheese, to be joined by folks from our Hamilton Peace Collaborators (HPC) at 7pm. We will have made a brief presentation about the Department of Peace initiative at the semi-annual meeting of Hamilton peace groups on the Apr 16, and hope to have even more present than the 12 we had at our last HPC meeting.

Wonderful news from the Department of Peace meeting in Ottawa last Monday! The world has now given rise to the first national Department of Peace, as of the end of March. Surprisingly, it is Nepal, where a dozen years of civil war has been resolved into a constitutional monarchy and the political power is with a government mostly of the Maoist forces. A peace group proposed the ministry and the Maoists accepted and implemented it, apparently now ready for a lasting peace with a more just and representative form of government.

Haroon Siddiqui Mon Apr 23, 8 pm, Freeway Café, 333 King E Hamilton

Haroon Siddiqui , Toronto Star columnist, Order of Canada, past president of PEN Canada and former director of Canadian Civil Liberties Assoc will talk about “Truth and Consequences – the War on Terror”; how to move from the current polarized situation to one where people can live in harmony and respect.

Sponsored by Chapman Books, Muslim Association of Hamilton and the UNA Hamilton Branch. Submitted by Joanna Chapman

Raj Ramanathapillai, formerly an attender at our Meeting, reflects:

I believe in a world that does not use torture to spread freedom and democracy.

It was 1983 and ethnic conflict raged in my country. The government was at war with its separatist minority. My youth and my ethnic minority identity made me a potential target. I still remember the glassy eyes and the oily face of my interrogator. When the military officers found me to be innocent, they let me go back to my university. But my interrogator was persistent. He pulled me aside and told me in a fatherly manner that when I go back to school, I should inform him of all student activity—otherwise he would come after me. Then he began to describe the type of torture techniques he would use on my body. Hearing his words, it was strange to realize how one’s body can simply react to words of terror. When I went back, I refused to be become an informant or play the role of an invisible tool of military terror. But I feared that my torturer would come after me or that I would simply disappear.

I left my country for graduate studies in Canada in 1989. In 1998 I returned to my country. One day I was stopped by a group of soldiers at a checkpoint. The soldiers were collecting money from visitors to support the war. They looked innocent, enthusiastic, and patriotic. They thought I was one of them; a patriot belongs to the ethnic majority. Should I give money to a war that traumatized my people and me? Should I reveal my ethnic identity and say no? What would happen to me if I revealed

myself? There were many questions in those split seconds. A soldier pleasantly looked at me with his extended hand. A part of my soul died when I stuck a couple of bills in his hand and my car moved on.

Now I am living in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, teaching courses on international human rights, terrorism, and Gandhi at a Liberal Arts school. It is wonderful to teach at Gettysburg where a great nation was born with its powerful ideals of democracy, civil and human rights. I love what I do and my students. However, I am painfully aware that even here my tax money goes to support places like Abu Gharib, and all the other outsourced projects of torture. Should we allow racial profiling and torture of suspects as a rational response to the fear of attack? Should we endorse the collective good over individual rights, national security over civil and human rights, as a nation's response to terror? Should we allow the fear of the enemy to rob our integrity? I have been agonizing over these questions. I believe in a freedom where people don't need to compromise their conscience. I believe in a society that respects people's civil rights. I believe in nations or groups fighting for a noble cause without forcing people to do what they don't believe in. I believe in a world that does not use torture to spread freedom and democracy.

Book Review; by Dawn

Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the war for the soul of America by Fergus M. Bordewich
(New York: Harper Collins, 2005)

I noticed this book in the Buffalo Library soon after it was printed and had time to read one chapter before leaving to catching a bus. It intrigued me at the time but I soon forgot about it. I picked it up again in late February, when my local library had it on display for Black History Month. *Underground to Canaan* is a complex work detailing the first human rights movement in the United States, and only as I read this book am I beginning to understand how racism so completely permeates American history and culture.

Fergus M. Bordewich begins his epic in 1795, with the story of the childhood of Josiah Henson. He alternates biographies of slaves and abolitionists with history and analysis. Returning frequently to his subjects, the reader is challenged to rethink their biases once new insight is gained from Bordewich's commentary.

Quakers, of course, figure prominently in the early abolition movement. Like others of their day, many Quakers were slaveowners, and only some Friends were abolitionist (and even pro-abolitionist Friends owned slaves, since there was no effective way of freeing them). While Quakers were the conscience that lead the movement, the author argues that it was evangelical preachers of other religious movements who spread the message to the masses.

Not all Quakers sheltered runaways. Those who did assist former slaves were often in contravention of state laws. Those who were not clear to break the law still protected

their neighbours who felt led to assist the fugitives. Even if caught, their status as wealthy, white, educated and connected men would have protected them (and certainly did, as Levi Coffin was charged with harbouring slaves). As I read this, I wondered what routine lawbreaking Quakers of conscience are undertaking today, and what I would do if asked to participate.

This work is often emotional without being gory, and plain-spoken, direct, and wonderfully complex. I'm looking forward to picking it up again and again, and learning more each time.

State of Society Report for 2006 Hamilton Monthly Meeting

Meeting of Ministry and Counsel of Hamilton Monthly Meeting has been concerned for many years to try to report on the state of our society in a manner which truly reflects our spiritual health as a Meeting. We attempt to examine our corporate life honestly and with clarity.

Meeting for Worship continues to be the core of our lives as Friends. We value the silence and are enriched, upheld and nurtured by it. Ministry is at times deeply spiritual, and one Friend has said, "I have loved a lot of the ministry this past year. We have had some wonderful corporate testimony, where the thread is picked up and carried in a gentle deep way." However, we ask ourselves whether sometimes we may have slipped away from our centre. We remind ourselves that it is fitting to bring the spiritual concerns that bear on or arise from worldly issues into worship, but not the worldly issues themselves. We meet in worship to strengthen the spirit-centeredness that can guide us in acting outside Meeting on our concerns. Also, we wonder whether we have a tendency to be too individualistic in our ministry, and have let slip our sense of our corporate understanding. We realize that one can speak only from one's individual perspective and experience, which has merit, and we also seek, and hope to speak to and affirm, our common ground and to speak from a place of spiritual experience. Does our ministry include a concern for the well-being of the whole?

Another concern is that ministry is sometimes less accessible to newcomers when Quaker jargon is used. We would benefit from a greater effort to speak from a spiritual (not only personal) base, with words thoughtfully framed, concise, and clearly audible. We are labouring with these concerns as we seek to maintain Meeting for Worship as our spiritual ground which sustains us in our witness to the world both corporately and as individuals. We labour also with the question of whether we seem exclusive to newcomers and attenders. Do we use "Quakerese" and acronyms that make us seem obscure and elite? Do we appear to expect too much involvement from newcomers, frightening them away by asking for more than they are ready to do? Or do we seem unapproachable, so that those who may be ready cannot see how to begin? Do we make clear both the welcome to membership and the responsibilities that membership entails? Does our involvement with one another and with our Meeting's concerns, as

well as our work outside the Meeting, give us an appearance of exclusivity, and make us seem not in need of newcomers? We are seeking to address these questions, but the process requires true examination corporately to be effective.

Another issue we have identified is that both as individuals and as a Meeting, we are over-busy. For Meeting, this means that we have many responsibilities and positions or committees to fill, and for individuals, this means that many of us are over-extended and not able to take on or even continue with Meeting responsibilities. It is true that our numbers are fewer than they were a decade ago, but our outside commitments have not diminished, nor have our Meeting house and grounds become less to look after. Friends at both ends of the age spectrum need special kinds of nurture, as well as those facing particular challenges with health or family issues. We ask ourselves how we can best meet their needs. We are seeking to identify what is the work of our Meeting, what it is that we are able to do well, and what it is that we can reduce or lay down. We recognize that the problem of doing too much is embedded in 21st century life, but also that over-busyness may be a personal choice. It is our responsibility to seek to uphold our testimony of simplicity, and to seek spiritual serenity in a world of over-activity.

One way we have chosen to share some of the burden is to have a Clerk of the Meeting supported by a Clerk for the Month who helps to build the agenda and presides over Meeting for Worship for Business. We are seeking to be more disciplined in bringing items to Meeting for Worship for Business, seasoning that which needs it, and dealing with items in a committee when appropriate.

A number of Hamilton Friends are involved in Canadian Yearly Meeting in various capacities, and we attempt to respond to Yearly Meeting issues and requests. In addition, several of us are involved with Camp NeeKauNis, where opportunities for joyful service abound.

It is our goal that our Meeting's activities grow from our spiritual concerns and exist to nurture our community. To these ends, we continue to maintain our supper groups, our potlucks (which also often offer outreach to the wider community), our pre-Meeting for Worship discussion group, our yearly "Cookies and Carols" at Christmas time, adult retreats in spring and autumn, our First Day School for children, and various celebrations of lives of or events in lives of Friends. As well, our Peace and Social Action Committee is our chief vehicle for furthering our testimonies beyond the Meeting, and we attempt to uphold those Friends who serve the Meeting in this most valuable way.

We are pleased that a number of young children, as well as some Young Friends and Young Adult Friends, are part of our Meeting. However, we regret that the young children often come only to First Day School and do not experience Meeting for Worship or spend time afterwards with older Friends. We are seeking ways to revive the more age-diverse community - in which children were cherished by, and cherished, Friends of all ages - which existed in our Meeting in recent times. We also wish to support our Young Friends and Young Adult Friends, many of whom, while not attending Meeting

regularly, are living faithful Quaker lives elsewhere. An important goal of many in our Meeting is to do better at nurturing loving relationships across the generations.

We know that it is important to appreciate what is working. We look for ways to do our work joyfully. Among the many joys of Meeting are the opportunities to celebrate. In 2006, we celebrated the lives of two Friends who died. We welcomed one new Friend into membership. One member requested marriage under the care of the Meeting, but due to special circumstances was married outside Meeting. However, some of the Clearness for Marriage process was undertaken, and the committee helped to celebrate the marriage when it took place. We look forward to celebrating this union in our Meeting Community. Within our valued community, we care for each other, and attempt to acknowledge each other's joys and achievements, and to ease or share one another's burdens.

Prepared by Ministry and Counsel of Hamilton Monthly Meeting, April, 2007

Hamilton Monthly Meeting
Meeting for Worship for Business
April 5, 2007

Present: Rex, Ray, Christina, Ian (recording clerk), Glenna, Carol Leigh, Don, Harriet, Robbie M (presiding clerk)

Regrets: Dick, Betty

- 1 The Meeting began in silent worship at 7:30 pm.
- 2 **Agenda** review, ordering, and approval
- 3 **Minutes** of Mar 4th were approved, with corrections as follows: the Clerk's position is a three year term; re 6.1 terms of office – rephrase to “that individuals may serve two terms consecutively. Individuals may request a lesser term if so desired”; Louise and Roberta are organizing the Telephone tree.
- 4 **Continuing Business**
 - 4.1 Potluck for May. Instead of a planned topic, we propose to have a story-telling program, featuring several storytellers in the Meeting. Harriet will coordinate with Wilf Ruland to encourage families with children to attend. Date is to be decided by Carol Leigh and Dick.
 - 4.2 Representative Meeting May 4-6. Christina reported that at present there are 10 confirmed attendees so far. The lunch will be organized around soup and sandwiches. The dinner is a potluck at which members of Hamilton Meeting are encouraged to attend.

Dawn Lepard, our representative to Representative Meeting, proposes to facilitate a brownbag to discuss matters that are of interest to Hamilton Meeting. We ask Dawn to hold this during a break on Meetinghouse clean-up day on Sat. Apr 28th. The clerk asked for suggested topics to be brought to Representative Meeting. Don explained the issues around conscientious objector tax redirection, asking for renewed support of a new version of the Conscientious Objector Bill, Bill C-348 (2006). We agree to ask that this

matter be added to the Rep Meeting agenda. Don will provide briefing materials to Dawn L.

Robbie raised the issue of federal government's treatment of First Nations Treaty rights.

4.3 Yonge Street Half Yearly Meeting, June 1-3, 2007. Christina reported that she attended the coordinating meeting on Mar 4th, and reminds us that HMM is responsible for food arrangements. The theme is centred on the life of John Woolman, materials provided by Yonge Street Monthly Meeting. We ask members and attenders to contact Bev with their intention to help with food arrangements and preparation.

5 Business arising

5.1 Maintenance Committee. An ash tray has been sourced for use outside the Meetinghouse. The clean up day is scheduled for Saturday April 28th.

5.2 Speaking Tour: Adrien Niyongamba, of the African Great Lakes Peace Initiative, which involves Hutu and Tutsi tribes in reconciliation initiatives. We agree to invite him to speak at Hamilton on May 3rd, sponsored by HMM. Robbie will contact Jesse for publicity arrangements. [NOTE: **CANCELLED** as the visitor was denied a visa.]

6 Reports

6.1 State of Society Report. Carol Leigh read the final version for approval. She thanked Friends for their various contributions and reflections in its preparation. We approve this document with thanks.

6.2 HMM Nominating Committee. Glenna reported that Janice is put forward for the Telephone Tree Committee. Approved.

6.3 Statistical Report. Robbie made a verbal interim report. We look forward to the full written report from Reuven and Ruth Kitai when available.

7 New Business

7.1 Clerk's Discretionary Fund for Special Projects. Ian reported that the meeting is supporting a family with special financial needs now estimated to be \$1300. \$700 has been committed by Friends, designated for this need. The support committee is asking the meeting to contribute up to \$300 to cover expenses that have been identified. We ask Friends to make special designated contributions towards the remaining \$300 shortfall. We agree to increase the budgeted amount in the 2007 Budget, Clerks Fund to an amount recommended by the Treasurer. We agree to contribute \$300 to the Clerk's Discretionary fund for this purpose from existing Meeting funds.

7.2 Developing Policy for dealing with Emergency Financial Requests C/F to next meeting.

7.3 Quaker involvement at Caledonia. C/F to next meeting.

8 **Correspondence:** none

9 **Date and time** of next meeting: We agree that the date be changed to accommodate Representative Meeting and Mothers Day, to Thurs May 17th.

10 Closing Worship