

Hamilton Monthly Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
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NEWSLETTER JUNE 2006

Reminder!! During July and August, Meeting for Worship starts at 10:00 am

Refreshments: please sign up for the summer

June 25 Don W July 2 Mona A July 9, 16, 23, all open; July 31 Christina, Aug 6 open, 13 potluck, 20 Ruth and Reuven, 27 open

Please sign up in the foyer if you would like to provide refreshments after M4W. If you need further information about what is involved please contact Christina or Nicky.

Upcoming Dates

Aug 12-19 Canadian Yearly Meeting at Canadian Mennonite U in Winnipeg
Aug 11-12 Pre-CYM workshop with George Lakey

Addresses

Robbie Shepard's new email is robert(underscore) shepard (at) sympatico (dot) ca

**Report on Hamilton Monthly Meeting Retreat Saturday, April 22nd, 2006
“Meeting the Challenge of our Testimony of Simplicity”**

Between 15 and 20 Friends gathered at the Meeting House for a day of retreat from the rest of the world and reflection on our theme: Meeting the Challenge of our Testimony of Simplicity. The day began with breakfast, brought together in somewhat impromptu fashion but delicious, varied, and unhurried. Friends relished the opportunity to chat over coffee without the sense that they must soon hurry away and get on with their day elsewhere. That spirit of an unpressured day spent with dear friends persisted through the retreat and turned out to be, for many, its greatest benefit.

After breakfast, the whole group gathered to consider the shape of the day and to look at the queries prepared as focal points for small group discussion:

1. What kind of leadings are we following? Are we being led by spirit or by a principle? Are we being “led” by planning or by problem-solving or by calculations? Are we outrunning our Guide?

2. Are we mistaking “pushings” for “leadings”? When we are doing too much, is it a case of too much “yes” or too little “no”? Or is there a difference? How do we achieve a balance between

responsibility and guilt or regret, that is, where is the point at which we can stop taking on more responsibility without feeling guilty about it? How do we address the disconnect between simplicity and all the demands we (and others) make on ourselves?

3. How can we focus our energies on actions that actually are effective? How can we choose areas to act where our skills will be most needed and there is the best chance of making a difference?

4. What is the right work of our Meeting? What needs to be done? How can we do that?

The group added a fifth and agreed to combine the first two, so that there were still four questions to consider. The added query was “How do we share our lives as Friends outside our Meeting?”.

Through the day, we considered the queries in two different configurations of small groups, reconvened as the full group (minus a few who had leave early) to conduct a Claremont Dialogue on our personal experiences of simplicity, and ended with the full group discussing where our various explorations had led us. Morning coffee, lunch, a free time for walks, naps, informal discussion, etc., supper, and dessert at the very end of the day provided ample time just to be together and enjoy each other. The least successful portion of the programme was the group discussion after supper. A number of Friends had left before that time, and to some Friends the discussion felt incomplete. We reached no conclusions and produced no definitive answers to the queries, but most Friends agreed that many interesting points were raised and views were shared. We have much to think about and hope that the conversations at the retreat will be continued and expanded, to the benefit of Hamilton Meeting.

Ministry and Counsel wishes to remind Friends that we have reserved space for a weekend-long residential retreat at the end of March, 2007, at Mount Mary Immaculate Retreat Centre in Ancaster. We hope Friends will begin to consider what theme we might explore at that time, whether we wish to invite someone from outside our Meeting to facilitate, and anything else that would assist M&C in planning this event.

Representative Meeting held in Toronto May 5-7, 2006

A number of difficult issues around resources of the Yearly Meeting, namely finances and nominations, were brought to the meeting on Friday night. We heard the reports, and then considered possible solutions, but left all decisions to the following day. Much Light was shed and decision making seemed easier.

The Finance Committee informed us that donations in 2005 were much less than expected, and Yearly Meeting is not in a position to run deficits. Thus, the budget for 2007 was difficult to draft. The committee put together four suggested budgets and were then asked to prepare a fifth budget when we could not accept any of them. Finance Committee tries to have a draft budget ready for Yearly Meeting sessions, so the Representative Meeting will meet during Yearly Meeting for budget considerations.

Yearly Meeting Nominations Committee has had some difficulty filling all positions. The various Clerks, especially, seem to be hard roles to fill. The Clerk of Representative Meeting has stepped down because of the workload. One possibility is that staff support be made available for clerks.

CYM 2007 Sessions will be at Kings-Edgehill School in Windsor, Nova Scotia. The Programme Committee would really like to find new gathering spaces, as it is getting more difficult to meet the conflicting needs of attenders. Southern Ontario is a desired spot. One idea that was tossed out is building a conference centre at Camp NeeKauNis. If CYM comes to Southern Ontario, we should expect to be asked to assist with local arrangements.

At CYM, our meeting's delegate is asked to bring information about births, adoptions, and deaths occurring since the last Yearly Meeting with them. The recording clerk will then read and record this information. It is up to us and our delegate to get this information to YM, and to ensure that privacy laws are respected.

On the Yearly Meeting website, a new password-protected area with minutes and committee members will be created. Delegates at Rep Meeting *asked* if we might meet in Hamilton again soon.

I will be unable to attend Representative Meeting in August 2006 (YM session) nor 17-19 November 2006 in Ottawa. I ask that this meeting appoint an alternate to attend those meetings in my absence.

Canadian Yearly Meeting

That wonderful, once-a-year opportunity to meet Quakers from across the country takes place this year in the middle of Canada - Winnipeg. At the Canadian Mennonite University Friends are housed close together, near the meeting spaces and the dining and food co-ops, surrounded by woods and fields, able to worship, play, talk, sing, explore ideas, and do business together in a relaxing and rejuvenating environment. Never gone before? There's always a first time! Go to quaker.ca and followed the featured link to CYM, or look at the centre insert in the most recent Canadian Friend. There are funds available to assist if it seems expensive, though camping and the food co-op help make it affordable. Hamilton Meeting needs a delegate! Some Friends are going, but they have other jobs to do and may not be able to attend the delegates' meeting, which is the only real duty delegates have. Please consider taking part in this super Quaker week and letting a member of HMM Ministry and Counsel (Bev, Helen B, Rex, and Carol Leigh) know if you could act as delegate.

Retreats Next Fall and Spring

Ministry and Counsel has been asked to organize a retreat for next fall on the Life and Health of Our Meeting. We'd welcome help from anyone interested in assisting with the planning - there seem to be quite a few retreats calling on our time and talents! The last weekend of March, 2007, there's to be a residential retreat at Mount Mary Immaculate in Ancaster, for which we'd like ideas of themes, activities, facilitators - anything that would get the thought processes going - and again, offers of help. Contact Bev, Helen B., Rex, or Carol Leigh, or Robbie McG when she's back in a month or so.

Greetings from Frank Miles

Since Don and I were in the Boston area in early June we took a detour and visited Frank Miles in Hanover, New Hampshire. Some of you will remember Frank and Pat Miles who were two of the mainstays of our Meeting for many years. Pat, who died two years ago, welcomed our family the first time we showed up at HMM. Frank retired from Firestone and then took on the definite challenge of becoming the General Secretary (I think I have the title slightly wrong) of Canadian Yearly Meeting for several years. This meant that one of his responsibilities was to oversee plans for the yearly CYM gatherings. Frank lives in a pleasant apartment in Kendal in Hanover, a retirement community with strong Quaker connections. He attends the Meeting in Hanover and eats dinner every evening with Pat's sister, Polly, who is in the assisted living section of Kendal. The day we left, Frank was taking the bus to Montreal and the following day he was taking a plane to British Columbia. He'll spend about ten weeks there in the home in Kaslo that he and Pat built. It's close to Dan, one of the Miles' sons, and Dan's family. Then Frank is looking forward to going to CYM and he's very happy to be a participant and not the person who keeps everything flowing smoothly!

Harriet W

Consultation and Renewal meeting with David McKay April 9, 2006

Attendance: There were 23 participating in Meeting for Worship; there followed a potluck meal and a meeting with the C'nR representative. Initial attendance at this meeting was 13 and it dwindled as the meeting progressed. Of those there 5 had never attended CYM; 5 had served on CYM committees; 1 had attended a YM other than CYM (London Yearly Meeting). No formal reading of the circulated pamphlet -- Hamilton has held a specially called meeting to consider circulated queries.

Query 4. The query that most exercised this meeting was Query 4.

Why I don't go to CYM. Primarily the burden of business. They don't know when to lay things down. Arising from burden of business -- this maps to #3 of 2nd set (queries) -- environmental witness. Uneasiness with amount of time & resources going into national committees. Fewer could do this work -- but we lack the trust.

If what we're doing isn't spirit led -- let's change -- let's get on with it. Question of group versus the individual. Some structure is needed - yet structures impede individual witness/integrity. Do not ask what we are called to DO - ask what we are called to BE. Our structures can be inefficient. Is this restructuring a calling or another committee?

-A queries not asked -- What is CYM? What could it be (come)? -Cost & location factors -- 5 days in M4W4B !!! -- intensity spread over 1 week daunting -- more joy and satisfaction from Camp NeeKauNis -- 1954 - took 7 years to achieve union -We really have 4 CYMs each serving differing functions. Food Co-op. Gathering Experience. --We remember issue of sexual abuse as it arose at CYM. Split male/female. Ant-male. Anger confusion needed to be worked through. Impressed by depth of ending M4W.

What kind of CYM would best serve need of those currently not attending? Less committees;

more trust in what others do.

-2 Principles to bring back to CYM: we seek to meet 2 functions with the gathering -- 1) social functions; 2) business functions. Do these functions fit with one another? Or are they separate?

-----Miracle Question: what would you miss if CYM disappeared? Empty "inbox" (email) -- Representative Meeting (?) -- valuable experience -- NeeKauNis would still be there we would just find another way of administering it -- no longer able to connect - spend time with folk from Victoria thru to PEI -- miss sense of voices from across Canada in our lives -- Cdn Friend -- CFSC -- work would need to continue -- not much -- a discernment process (chaplaincy) -- a sense my church stands for something

----What to keep at all costs -- kid program at the gathering! CYM (Windsor NS) -- exerted strong attraction on youth -- kids were stretched -- when discussion on splitting the YM came up one child pled -- whatever you do find a way of keeping the children's gathering going

---We need some structure (like Katimivik) -- that gives a sense of place - creates community through shared work. We need a (better) process for discerning gifts There's this us/them feeling -- people with a lot of background -- needed/helpful - yet creates a kind of in-group/out-group division - some people kidnap meeting (with their agendas)

--If we split let the split be "organic" -- based on needs based on a sense of leading Theme: we need to TRUST more
David McKay

The Dark Night of the Soul, by Gerald May, HarperSanFrancisco, c2003
Submitted by Don

This is one of my series of book reviews on the interface between Christianity and Buddhism.

I became interested in St John of the Cross many years ago when a meditation teacher said that the stages of spiritual development St John described were parallel on the experiential level to the stages of insight in Buddhist insight meditation, commonly known as vipassana. May tells the story of St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross, who was her student, both in 16th C Spain. God's love is the central theme for them. Our deepest motivation is to fulfil the love affair with God, because we are born in unity with God. They talk about finding God and union with God, but they also believe everyone is already united with God and just doesn't realize it. God is indescribable, and our only approach to God is through darkness of the intellect, what an earlier mystic called the 'Cloud of Unknowing'. However, union with God is not acquired or received, it is realized, so it is a journey of consciousness. The dark night of the soul functions to help us realize this deepening of love and unity. The only certain characteristic is its obscurity. It may be pleasant or painful. It always involves loss. We sabotage any movement towards true freedom. We don't want to give up attachments, even attachments to images of God that give us meaning. To come to love we must be taken where we would not go on our own.

They talk about 'meditation' as an active process of focusing attention, and of reflective prayer. 'Contemplation' by contrast is not something we do, but a process of surrender to the unknown, in faith and trust. Its main characteristic is love. Teresa talks about an 'interior garden', planted and weeded by God, and watered by us with our prayers. They describe stages of development, and obstacles. The experience of God's love is described in passionate terms by both, but especially Teresa.

The point is made that meditation, whether Christian (eg Centering Prayer or Christian Meditation) or Buddhist is like John and Teresa's 'meditation', and their 'contemplation' is a step beyond. However, reading the description of contemplation, I could see no difference from certain kinds of Buddhist meditation, in which technique is abandoned as the mind and heart become quiet, compassion arises effortlessly, and self begins to recognize moments of dissolution or quiet. This dissolution is initially only momentary, but it may extend. Teresa says that union with God never lasts half an hour, and it took her 20 years to get used to it! She can't really talk about it, and says 'sometimes it helps to speak nonsense'!

Certainly the theological language is different, but I see little difference between the experience they describe, and the silence of mind and openness of heart which Buddhist meditation points towards.

Minutes of Hamilton Monthly Meeting Meeting for Worship for Business June 1, 2006

Present: Mona C, Clerk; Carol Leigh, acting recording clerk; Dick, Betty, Helen B, Rex, Beverly, John, Ryan, Dawn, Caroline, Glenna, Jesse.

1. Meeting began with worship during which Mona read an excerpt by Parker Palmer from *Plain Living: a Quaker Path to Simplicity* by Catherine Whitmore.
2. Minutes of May 7, 2006 Meeting for Worship for Business were accepted as read. It was noted that Robbie Shepard has not in fact received the minuted thanks (5.1). Carol Leigh will send him the minute. Carol Leigh was approved as Recording Clerk for this meeting, in the absence of Ian.
3. Approval of agenda: item 4.3 was removed and the following were added:
 - Naming Committee to be named in case of the need arising over the summer to name a new member to Nominating Committee.
 - Reports: Ministry and Counsel (M&C) report on the HMM retreat April 22, 2006
 - Representative Committee Report: Dawn
4. Continuing Business:
 - 4.1 Clearness for Marriage: John read the report of the Committee of Clearness for Marriage for Dawn and Ryan. The report from the Clearness Committee was received and is attached to the physical copy of the minutes in HMM files. We will joyfully support Dawn and Ryan's marriage in whatever way we can, and will celebrate its existence in 2007 at the Meetinghouse. John, Dick, and Carol Leigh will continue to meet with Ryan and Dawn so that they may enjoy the aspect of the

Clearness process which serves as marriage preparation. The Committee will lay itself down at the appropriate time and will not report again to M4W4B.

- 4.2 Wissa fund disbursement: Dick reported in Louise's absence that the advisable course is to get the funds to the Wissa family after they have relocated, in several smaller installments, for reasons of security. We will return to this matter at the September business meeting.
- 4.3 Naming Committee: A Naming Committee of Helen B and Jesse is appointed to find a replacement for Roberta M on Nominating Committee, and in case in the course of John's Clearness process, he chooses to lay down his work on Nominating Committee, to find a replacement for John.
- 4.4 Laying down of the Archives Committee: We ask the present Archives Committee to complete, before being laid down, the tasks still needing to be done: that is, to provide for the Canadian Yearly Meeting archival files at Pickering College, past minutes and other records of HMM on acid-free archival quality paper. We are many years in arrears in sending our records, and possibly there are gaps in our own files.
- 4.5 Reporting dates for HMM Committees: Mona will attempt to have this ready in the fall.
- 4.6 Half-Yearly Meeting: Carol Leigh, Glenna, Mona C, Jesse, and Wilf and Shirley with their children Amelia and Sylvie will all attend. Wilf and Shirley will assist Caroleigh and Glenna with the children's programme, HMM's responsibility. Mona is our delegate.
- 4.7 Delegates to CYM: Mona C will not be attending this year; she has for years been our delegate, but will not be for 2006. Ministry and Counsel is asked to name a delegate if a suitable Friend can be found.

5. New Business

- 5.1 Helen B gave us the sad news that Gordon Keith died on 30 May 2006, "slipping away gently as the gentle person he was." A Memorial Meeting will be held in Orillia; the date has not yet been set.
- 5.2 Application for membership: A letter requesting membership in Hamilton Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends was received from [an applicant] and read by the clerk. A Clearness Committee for Membership is appointed comprised of Dick, Mona C, and Diana S (subject to consent). Her letter will be attached to our files.
- 5.3 Payment of the Website Manager: Dawn has been Website Manager for HMM for some time. The job was instituted as a paid position originally. The treasurer will provide a cheque to Dawn when she submits her documentation.

- 5.4 We note that in July and August, Meeting for Worship takes place at 10:00 a.m. instead of 11:00. John will put up our sign to that effect in June.
- 5.5 Delegate to Representative Meeting at CYM 2006 and in November: HMM's representative, Dawn, will be unable to attend these 2 meetings and an alternate needs to be found. Beverly, who will be attending these meetings, will be HMM delegate for these 2 meetings.
- 5.6 Representative Meeting would like to meet in Hamilton in May 2007: this Meeting is about 40 Friends, and has in the past very much enjoyed HMM's hospitality. Friends are asked to consider whether we can take this on. This item will be addressed again in September 2006.

6. Reports

- 6.1 Hamilton Monthly Meeting retreat, April 22, 2006. The report from Ministry and Counsel was read by Bev, and is attached. We thank Ministry and Counsel for the retreat and the report. We ask M & C to consider planning a Meeting retreat in autumn to talk about the life and health of the Meeting. We will discuss this at the September M4W4B.

- 6.2 Representative Meeting: report from our delegate, Dawn Lepard, is attached.

7. Correspondence. We have received a request from Friends United Meeting for support for Turkana Friends Mission. Individual Friends are encouraged to consider the information received.

8. Next Meeting for Worship for Business will take place on Sunday, September 10, 2006, after Meeting for Worship.

9. Meeting closed with silent worship.