

HAMILTON MONTHLY MEETING
of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
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NEWSLETTER MARCH 2008

Refreshments for Meeting for Worship

March 9 Jean 16 Sybil 23 Bev 23 Ray

Upcoming Dates

Mar 27 Potluck; End of Life (see below)

April 12: tentative date for spring retreat (see below)

June 6 – 8: Half-Yearly Meeting at NeeKaunis (Quaker camp on Georgian Bay)

Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation 2008 Tax Time Campaign

We encourage all friends to support the Conscience Canada campaign for legislation to make military tax resistance legal and accessible to all. To make it easy, Conscience Canada has developed a Peace Tax Return (see attached), which offers you three choices.

The simplest choice is a simple statement of your support for the Conscientious Objector legislation. That is the purpose of Part A of the Peace Tax Return. Just sign it and send it to the tax office, with your paper return. If you file electronically, find out from your local tax office where you should send something to be added to your file. If we had a thousand people send this in, it would enormously increase the visibility of the bill.

The second choice, Part B of the tax return, is for those who want to redirect all of the military part of their federal tax to the Peace Tax Trust fund run by Conscience Canada. There are detailed instructions on the Peace Tax Return.

The third choice is to make the declaration and using part B, to make only a symbolic deposit in the Peace Tax Fund, say, \$25. That gives more credibility to the declaration, but is unlikely to concern the Canada Revenue Agency to want to collect it; and if you have already had all your taxes deducted, it is just a stronger statement of support.

The Peace Tax Return is included in electronic form as a pdf file attached to the email form of this newsletter. [webspinner's note: I was unable to attach it to the online newsletter, so please email me at quakers@hwcncanada.org for the pdf of the Peace Tax Return.] It is in paper form for those who receive it by mail. It is also available at www.consciencecanada.ca (along with lots of other good stuff, including a link to the new Conscience Canada dvd on Youtube.)

Lastly, if you want to help Conscience Canada, join! It costs only \$10/yr.

From Don, for the Ad Hoc Committee on War Tax Concerns of Canadian Yearly Meeting.

State of Society Report 2007

Hamilton Monthly Meeting
Religious Society of Friends

"...if we walk in the light...we have fellowship with one another..."

1 John 1:7

As Friends, we try to live by the understanding that our "Spiritual Life" is not a separate compartment interlocked with other facets of our lives, but rather it is our spiritual life in which we live, and which contains and upholds all the other aspects of our lives. It is our goal to keep this understanding as the basis of all our actions, and the undergirding of not only what we do, but how and why we do it.

Meeting for Worship is central in refreshing and maintaining our spiritual health. We seek to have our activities grow out of and feed into this spiritual condition. We try to uphold one another. Our communal worship is of central importance to maturing our understanding of the Spirit, as the Light opens to one and another of us, and is strengthened, amplified and intensified by our being together in the expectant waiting of worship. The energy derived from Meeting is essential to our carrying out our lives. Worship on First Days has included a weekly reading by members of Ministry and Counsel from the "Advices and Queries". Friends feel that the regularity of this practice has enriched our Meetings for Worship by offering a focus out of which contemplation and ministry have sprung and branched.

We are continuing to make efforts to celebrate our past, present, and future, and all ages together as we work to build the Beloved Community. Our Archives committee has engaged the whole Meeting in looking to our roots. One way in which our present is celebrated is

in retreats, autumn and spring. This spring's residential retreat at Mount Mary (on April Fools' weekend) brought the participants closer as they explored the "Foolishness of God" (I Corinthians 1:25) in playful and joyous activities. We rejoice also in our present in many other ways: children join us on first and third Sundays of the month when First Day School is offered formally, but are also welcomed at any other time. We have seen an increase in First Day School families' involvement, as children are more regular in their experience of Meeting for Worship, and First Day School parents are involved in more areas of the life of the Meeting. Our children also keep us mindful of our future, as did the wedding celebrated in June, which was the Spiritual joining of a couple whose civil union occurred in autumn of 2006. We support and share with one another in times of pain and illness, joys such as marriage and the birth of children, sorrows such as loss of loved ones, doubt and worry, financial strain, changes of life situation or career, and many other circumstances in which the loving resources of a large extended family or close committed community are invaluable to our ability to carry on. In the past year members (and attenders) of Hamilton Meeting have pulled together to aid and strengthen each other in all these situations and more, while maintaining a faithful gathering for worship and business.

Business meetings have varied in attendance from just a few Friends to a sizeable proportion of active members and attenders. As the numbers of able Friends available to take on tasks and roles has decreased in recent years, we have experimented with decreasing the number of positions for which formal nominations are required and increasing the number of those which can be filled by Friends with special interests or leadings, or Friends whom others discern may be helpful in particular spheres. Our experiment (now finished) in having a Clerk-for-the-Month to support the Monthly Meeting Clerk by presiding at Monthly Meetings for Worship for Business has revealed gifts that might possibly otherwise have been overlooked; for this we are grateful. Most recently (December) we have changed the scheduling of our business meetings, a change whose results are yet to be seen. In December we also changed our time for Meeting for Worship on Sunday mornings, making a compromise between our former 10:00 a.m. start in July and August and our 11:00 start the rest of the year, to a 10:30 start year round.

Our community life as well as our spiritual well-being is nourished with retreats, potluck suppers and lunches, discussions, and special activities of many kinds, though we have not proceeded in 2007 with adult education efforts. Many of us are involved in Quaker work

beyond our Meeting – either in activities in the wider society and the world, or within Friends. Specifically, a number of Friends serve Canadian Yearly Meeting in various capacities; Friends and Attenders continue long and intimate involvement with Camp NeeKauNis and its ministry to Friends; a Member of Hamilton Monthly Meeting who is a staff person on Canadian Friends Service Committee was instrumental in the United Nations' adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; a Hamilton Friend is deeply involved in the activities of Conscience Canada; Hamilton Monthly Meeting's Peace and Social Action Committee has played a pivotal role in the Federal Department of Peace initiative; one Friend serves on the Interfaith Advisory Committee of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and several work with the Hamilton Interfaith Group; and one Attender is working to unite a Hamilton Peace Coalition. Many of these activities bring our face before those outside the Religious Society of Friends. We labour to find a satisfactory way to provide emergency relief to those in our city who are in acute need. Led by a few especially passionate Friends, we continue consciously to seek, both as individuals and as a Meeting, to lessen our ecological footprint.

The actions we take as a society, the activities we partake in as a Meeting, our individual actions and activities as Friends, and our hospitality within Meeting and for other Quaker groups, all take their life and strength from the Spirit. We know by experience that when we forget this, or waver from it, or allow busyness to come between ourselves and our Spiritual foundation, then we are "as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." We continue to seek ways to share with others of all ages our caring for each other and the world, our passion for peace and justice, our supportive community, and our Light. Hamilton Monthly Meeting is resolved to be alert to any faltering from this commitment. This was our hope in the past year, and is the hope for our future.

End of Life

There's a potluck planned for Friday the 27th of March. In our discussion afterwards we'll talk about two things:

One, end-of-life plans. No one ever knows when the end of life is coming. Just about anyone, any age, could be hit by the proverbial bus. Is there anything we would like our loved ones to know about our own wishes? Can we help our own parents or other family members or friends to phrase and convey their wishes? Could Hamilton Meeting be a place to hold such plans for Friends so that it would always be known how to access them?

Two, our beliefs. Is there really an end to life, or is it simply a

transformation to another kind of life? Is there a heaven? A hell? Reincarnation? Eternity? What DO we believe? These could be very interesting discussions, and they have meaning and import for adults of any age.
Beverly

Spring Retreat

At Meeting for Business, Caroleigh, clerk of Ministry and Counsel, confirmed a one day retreat is in the planning stages. The theme is "Slowing Down to the Speed of Life". The date is tentatively set for Apr 12th. If you have ideas, please contact her.

Couples Enrichment

Hamilton Friends might be interested in a Couples Enrichment Retreat at Rochester Friends Meetinghouse. The topic is "Me, My Partner and the Divine: Our Spiritual Path and Our Relationship as a Couple" and will be led by Mary Kay Glazer and Mark Moss of Rochester Meeting. The dates are Friday April 18 and Saturday April 19th; cost is \$40 and includes lunch. Watch for the flyer at the Meetinghouse, as I'll send one next week.
Dawn

"One Man's Mission to Promote Peace ... One School at a Time."

Book review by Dick

War is not the answer. But what can truly help the remote Islamic villagers of Afghanistan and Pakistan (and other poor and remote peoples)? What kind of people are they, and why are they shooting at us? For answers, someone has to go there and find out. Someone did. And that someone has provided us with a truly inspiring book.

Greg Mortenson is a big, good-looking American ex-service man. He trained as a nurse, worked in emergency, and lived out of his car to save money to support his near-fanatical passion of mountain climbing. In a failed attempt to scale K-2, the Himalayan peak second to Everest, he reached his physical extremity, and became lost from his guide on the way down. He wandered into a remote Pakistan village, and was saved by their hospitality. I use the word "saved" with some deliberation.

Greg stayed in the home of the headman for several days, recovering from exhaustion and exposure. As he began to look about him, he asked the Headman if he could see their school. With visible dismay, the headman took him, and here were the children, without a school building, without a teacher, a few with slates to write on, and the rest

writing in the dirt. It was cold. The boys and girls were working at their literacy, on their own. Greg was deeply moved, and made a life-changing decision. He solemnly promised the headman that he would go home, raise money, and return to build a school.

He tried. Letters (250 of them) to affluent people that he thought might donate were not successful. Then a fellow climber who heard his story told him of a man to ask. With the money, he learned how to do business in Pakistan the hard way, and eventually, yes, the school was built. By the time the book was published, 55 schools, mainly for girls, had been built. He was actively supported by many Islamic leaders, by an Afghan warlord, and especially by the villagers who provided the land and labour.

Why was education so important? To allow the children to grow into a world where the poor and illiterate had few options – one of them being to join the Taliban and get a good salary as a soldier. Unlike the hundreds of Saudi-funded and staffed Wahhabi madrasas, where fundamentals of conservative Wahhabist Islam is taught (and an estimated 15-20% are militantly anti-western) Greg's secular education aimed to teach children literacy, numeracy, languages, and to imagine the world beyond their immediate experience.

Fifty-five community schools, for a better future for children, and for less than the cost of a Cruise missile.

Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace ... One School at a Time. Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. Penguin Books. 2006. Pp. 1-349.

<http://www.gregmortenson.com/>

Hamilton Monthly Meeting
Meeting for Worship for Business
Sunday Mar 2, 2008

Present: Rex, Helen B, Christina, Sybil, Ian (recording clerk), Andy, Dick, Beverly (clerk), Carol Leigh, Don, Harriet

Regrets: Mona C, Glenna

- 1 The Meeting opened in silent worship.
- 2 Minutes of Feb 3, 08: these were read and approved.
- 3 Agenda: approved.

4 Continuing Business

- 4.1 Reading of State of Society Report Caroleigh read the latest draft prepared by M&C with input from the meeting. Approved with thanks.
- 4.2 Yonge Street Half Yearly Meeting June 6 – 8. YSHYM Coordinating Committee. HMM has responsibility for the adult program at the June 6th to 8th gathering. A possible theme: Peace: Responsibility, Conscience and Action, (including Conscience Canada, The Responsibility to Protect study, Department of Peace Initiative and the Nonviolent Peaceforce will be presented to the Committee. Don, Sybil and Dick agree to work on this.
- 4.3 Spring Retreat. "Slowing Down to the Speed of Life", confirmed for Apr 12th, at the Shepard home (Cedar Haven), Flamborough near Freelon, 1070 10th Concession West.

5 Business Arising

- 5.1 Request from neighbour re fence. Leo Daigle sent us a letter re his request for driveway access addressing our concerns about property rights, continuity, liability, etc. We are agreed in principle to cooperate with our neighbour but will need to confirm legal implications re right of way and insurance liability, and get legal advice. If there is legal expense, we would require Leo take this responsibility. Bev agreed to take this forward.

6 Reports: none

7 New business:

- 7.1 Transfer of Membership, Beth B. We are in unity with the transfer membership from Toronto Meeting to Hamilton Meeting. Bev will write Toronto Meeting to confirm this action. Carol Leigh will write Beth to welcome her.
- 7.2 Meetinghouse Cleaning Contract. Don is our liaison with Marty Karl Enterprises which provides this service for us. They are asking \$100 a month, and we note that there has been no increase since Marty Karl began providing the cleaning services several years ago. We are in agreement with a one year contract, twice a month cleaning at this price. Bev will sign the contract on behalf of the Meeting.

8 Correspondence: none

9 Next Meeting: Sun Apr 6th, following M4W, approximately 12:30pm.

10 The Meeting closed in silent worship.