



Montreal Monthly Meeting Newsletter

Infolettre de l'Assemblée quaker de Montréal



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Life of the Meeting / La vie de l'assemblée

Montreal Monthly Meeting - A New Year and Some Tantalizing Questions

By Wendy Sturton

Montreal Monthly Meeting finished off its year of worship in 2023 with a festive potluck, mindful that we would not see each other in presence at the Greene Centre until mid-January due to our holiday closure. Meetings did continue online with reduced participation during the holiday weeks.

Two of us had Christmas Day lunch with Molly Walsh in her seniors residence and were treated to her usual good company.

Janette Fraser invited all of us to an open house lunch at her place on January 1. It was the occasion for good cheer among those who attended. Thanks to Janette for her hospitality.

Now the New Year has arrived, and we are gearing up to carry out some changes envisioned last year. New co-clerk Geoff Garner will clerk our Meetings for Worship for Business this year. We are bound to be inspired in new directions by Geoff and this lends a spirit of adventure to the opening of the year.

Our francophone meeting across Quebec has grown in wisdom and strength in the last year. Will this growth continue? Will ways be found to nourish Quaker spirituality even though resources in French are lacking? Members of our Meeting in Lévis and the francophone pan-Quebec Zoom meeting held their first Meeting for Worship for Business to consider matters important to their spiritual growth. A report on this event by Jean Louis Demers appears below. Relations between the English and French groups have been warm and inspiring. May this precious relationship flourish in the Light in 2024.

Two Friends, Leigh Smit and Geoffreyen Edwards, have worked hard to create a fully welcoming learning environment for children in a monthly First Day School (Quaker expression for "Sunday School"). See more about their plans below.

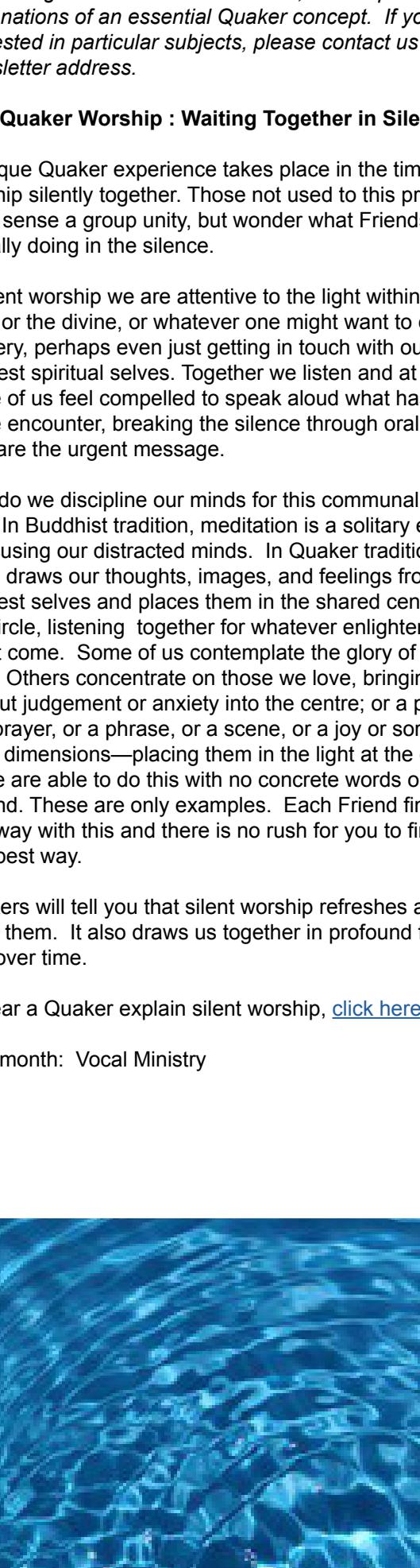
Some tantalizing questions

MMM continues to reflect on its connections to Canadian Yearly Meeting. Will more members become interested in investigating and participating in this essential Canadian umbrella organization?

Nominations Committee continues to look for members who are led to fill positions of responsibility on committees, notably Ministry & Counsel, Nominations Committee, and as well, assistant Clerks for both our co-clerks. Will those with broad spiritual shoulders step forward?

Another challenge facing us is: how will we balance our budget this year? In our 2024 budget, we have felt obliged to double this year's spending over last year. Will we be able to collect double the funds to carry out our worthy projects?

Our Mid-week Meetings have flourished in the last year. Will their positive momentum nourish us all? It was a pleasure at the end of last year to meet some members of this group at the Greene Centre. Is more cross-pollination in store for us?



First Day School Initiative

The First Day School initiative seeks to provide guidance to children attending Meeting for Worship on Quaker values and spirituality.

Indeed, the First Day School initiative has been hard at work and now have programmes planned for the first two months. First Day School will initially be offered once a month on the third Sunday of the month. Leigh Smit is of course in town, but Geoff Garner will be driving to Montreal from Quebec City once a month to take part in the sessions. Eventually it may be possible to do the School twice a month if there are other adults willing to commit on an ongoing basis to animation activities.

Our first class (January 21, 2024) will be focussed on "Silence", and our second (February 18, 2024) on "Mindfulness/Awareness". For the third class we are proposing to examine issues of difference and the differing needs people have, but the programme is not yet finalised.

Each session will include readings, sometimes voiced by the children, discussions, drawing and/or movement exercises, and other activities as the need arises. We are also planning to make available a snack, sometimes integrated into the lesson (or parents can provide their child with a snack if there are allergies or other issues involved).

We have planned for classes in English, but we will make an effort to provide reading materials in both English and French. We encourage parents to bring their children to meeting for worship on these Sundays with the assurance that their children will be attended to - please, if you can, let us know ahead of time who will be coming. If any adults would like to participate also, you are more than welcome to do so. Our texts are simple enough to appeal to young children, but contain complexities that will lend themselves to discussions with older children as well.

Parents, please let us know if there are issues we need to be aware of concerning your child. We also will be publishing an ethics statement about how your children will be treated, if anyone has concerns. And we are open to suggestions from any quarter.

Time to Learn / Formations

Reminder: if you need financial help to attend a workshop, please apply to M & C for aid.

2024 Quaker United Nations Summer School: 1-12 July 2024 in Geneva; Applications are open until Feb 15. The summer school offers a unique opportunity for young people to engage with issues of disarmament, economic justice, human rights, and climate change at the international political level. [Click here](#).

Changing Times, the online conference of the FGC (Friends General Conference), Jan 18-21, is free but donations are invited; numerous workshops including Living into Continued Revelation (Saturday) and the future of Quakerism (Sunday); Here is the [registration form](#).

Dreaming Sanctuary: [An Intergenerational LGBTQ+ Gathering](#) - On Pendle Hill Campus: Feb 23-25. A retreat for renewal, rejuvenation, and relationship building.

Feb 2024: Two events during The Black Quaker Lives Matter Film Festival & Forum at Pendle Hill:

- Monday, Feb 5, "Truth and Justice: The BlackQuaker Project Challenges Quakerism in the 21st Century"; A Pendle Hill First Monday Lecture by Dr. Harold D. Weaver Jr., the BQP Team, and QUINO-Geneva Director Nozizwe Madala-Routledge; [click here to register](#):

- Saturday, Feb 24, The 2024 Bayard Rustin Legacy Forum, Presented by the Swarthmore College Department of Peace and Conflict Studies & the BlackQuaker Project Sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee; Registration: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_elCWRumRe-3zOfhPwKRA##registration

The following notice will apply to you if you live in Montreal, want to improve your less-than-perfect oral French, and are interested in the ever-growing immigrant class which enriches this city. Volunteers at La Bibliothèque Nationale have offered fall and spring conversation workshops to immigrants for over ten years, and these groups are open to learners of French who are not immigrants, as well. The workshops are well-organized and informative. The class composition is fascinating, with adult learners from around the world who take the language obligations of their new lives very seriously. For more information and to register, [click here](#).

The following items have already been posted in an earlier Newsletter but are still valid.

February 2-4, 2024. Friends Decision-Making and Clerking: Participating in Meetings for Business With Joy & Confidence.

Hybrid Event at Powell House, the retreat and conference centre of New York Yearly Meeting. This workshop is for everyone who wants to deepen their understanding of Quaker decision-making. For clerks, it will be an opportunity to learn and sharpen skills. For others, it will be an opportunity to get better grounded in what Quaker decision-making is all about. The workshop is offered in-person at Powell House in Old Chatham, NY (\$280 US), or online (\$175 US). For more information visit the [website](#) and scroll down to the workshop.

Invitation from Winnipeg Monthly Meeting

Winnipeg Monthly Meeting has generously opened an extensive Quaker education program to fellow Quakers outside their Meeting. To register for one, a few or all of these sessions, all you have to do is contact Glenn Morison and ask. No charge. For the full program and to contact Glenn, [click here](#).

A Personal Portrait of Montreal Monthly Meeting in 2023 by Wendy Sturton

In the six years I have attended, our meeting has changed substantially. Taking stock of these changes may give us a sense of where we are headed in the future. Below is an excerpt of a longer reflection on the evolution of our Meeting which you may wish to read by clicking on the link at the end. If you would like to express your own impressions on this topic, please send them to us.

(Excerpt)... In our Meeting as it is presently, Friends are required above all to listen. Some explanations of Quakerism are requested, but for the most part our tradition of deep listening is called on, listening often to those in trouble or confused, sometimes to those passing through and curious, occasionally to dancing spirits of sheer delight.

A woman who has attended periodically, who lives in England but comes to visit her mother in a senior's residence nearby, gives ministry that her mother has died in the previous week. Sorrow shokes her voice but she has great insight and recognizes the timeliness of the death. Afterwards she thanks us for accompanying her through Grief.

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Good To Know

In following editions of the Newsletter, we will publish short explanations of an essential Quaker concept. If you are interested in particular subjects, please contact us at the [Newsletter address](#).

Quaker Worship : Waiting Together in Silence

A unique Quaker experience takes place in the time we often spend silently together. Those not used to this practice often sense a group unity, but wonder what Friends are actually doing in the silence.

In silent worship we are attentive to the light within, or g/ God, or the divine, or whatever one might want to call this mystery, perhaps even just in touch with our own deepest spiritual selves. Together we listen and at times, some of us feel compelled to speak aloud what has arisen in the encounter, breaking the silence through oral ministry to share the urgent message.

How do we discipline our minds for this communal listening? In Buddhist tradition, meditation is a solitary exercise in focusing our distracted minds. In Quaker tradition, our focus draws our thoughts, images, and feelings from our deepest selves and places them in the shared centre of our circle, listening together for whatever the divine might come. Some of us contemplate the glory of the divine, a prayer, or a phrase, or a scene, or a joy or sorrow in all its dimensions—placing them in the light at the centre. Others concentrate on those we love, bringing them into mind. These are only examples. Each Friend finds their own way with this and there is no rush for you to find your own best way.

Quakers will tell you that silent worship refreshes and renews them. It also draws us together in profound friendship over time.

To hear a Quaker explain silent worship, [click here](#).

Next month: Vocal Ministry

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In the Beginning, the Circle

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To Hear, Watch, Read

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Next month: Jean Louis Demers will reflect on the evolution of our francophone meetings.

A young scientist doing research at the University of Montreal arrives with some of his family. I ask him how he became interested in spiritual matters. He replies that it started when he began reading about quantum physics as a teen.

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