

THE GAZETTE

"a news-sheet, a periodical publication giving an account of current events"

West Falmouth Religious Society of Friends

SEPTEMBER 2023



Henry David Thoreau on September

"Happy we who can bask in this warm September sun, which illumines all creatures, as well when they rest as when they toil"

Henry David Thoreau, *Selected Writings on Nature and Liberty*. New York, NY: The Liberal Arts Press, 1952, p.74.

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4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.

1 Corinthians 12: 4-6, NRSV



Officers

Molly Cornell, clerk
Sally Fritz, recording clerk
Clyde Tyndale, treasurer

Regular Events

Peace and Social Order
2nd Sunday at 12:30 p.m.
Erica Adams, clerk

Ministry & Counsel
Cynthia Rankin, clerk
(508-360-7536)

**West Falmouth Meeting for
Worship with Attention to
Business**
Usually 4th Sunday
September 24; October 22

Upcoming Events

New England Yearly Meeting

The 363rd Annual Sessions of New England Yearly Meeting was held via Zoom and in person at Castleton, VT from **August 4–9**, 2023. Read a brief report from Ruth Zwirner on p.7 of this issue.

Sandwich Quarterly Meeting

New Bedford -- Work party after worship followed by lunch, Sunday, **September 10** (every second Sunday).

Quarterly Meeting for Business – Saturday, **October 28** in Allen's Neck.

Quarterly Ministry and Counsel – Saturday, **September 23** in Mattapoisett. Note: Business and M&C meetings start at 10:00. Format to be determined.

West Falmouth

Peace and Social Order

P & SO meeting Monday, **September 11** at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.
Sunday, **September 10** at 12:30 p.m. The Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools: Facing Our History and Ourselves. See next page

for details. Note: No second Sunday presentation in October.

Videos of previous 2nd Sunday presentations can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/@westfalmouthquakers>.

Adult Discussion Group – **Sundays** at 9:00 a.m. Gatherings are in the library corner of the meetinghouse. We'll be using queries from the *Interim Faith and Practice*. All are welcome.



The Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools: Facing Our History and Ourselves

*What does the Quaker history
of running Indigenous boarding schools
and the ongoing impact on Native communities
mean for Friends today?
How can Friends contribute toward healing?*



Zoom Slide Presentation + Discussion: Sunday, September 10, 2023 at 12:30 –2: 30 pm EDT
Discussions in small and large groups follow.

PAULA PALMER
Boulder Meeting,
CO
Friends Peace Teams



GAIL MELIX
Sandwich Meeting,
MA
Herring Pond
Wampanoag Tribe



ANDREW GRANT
Mt Toby Meeting,
MA



In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Quakers managed more than thirty schools for Native American children. Some Quaker schools operated with federal funds and carried out the government's policy of forced assimilation. Quakers separated Indigenous children from their parents and tried to remake them in the Euro-American Quaker image, causing tremendous harm.

The National Native America Boarding School Healing Coalition has told us that the first step in a truth, reconciliation, and healing process is truth-telling.

Put another way — in order for healing to occur, we must bring the full truth about the boarding schools and their ongoing consequences for Native families to light in the United States.

This slide presentation brings to light the role Quakers played in the forced assimilation of Native children. In small groups, Friends will share the feelings and thoughts that arise for us in response to this history. In the full group, we will ask how our meeting might be led to acknowledge the harm that was done to Native peoples and support healing.

We aim to understand this history and its current impacts, as well as how Friends can take responsibility for our part in the historic and ongoing harm done to Native Peoples.

LINK to Register: <https://bit.ly/QuakerIndigenousBoardingSchools>

2nd Sundays Quaker Forum on Zoom
West Falmouth Preparative Meeting, MA

HOST: Peace + Social Order Committee



Pendle Hill– See <https://pendlehill.org/>.

Stephen G. Cary Memorial Lecture 2023 with Bridget Moix, General Secretary, FCNL -- *Forging Beloved Community with Friends: A Journey through the Refiner's Fire*. In person and on Zoom, **September 11** from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. In a world wrought by lies, injustice, and violence, how do we live out our Quaker faith and spiritual truths? How do we live “in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of war”? How do we “walk cheerfully over the Earth” while sacred forests burn and oceans rise around us? How do we “seek that of God in everyone” when we are so deeply divided from one another by fear and pain? Bridget Moix shares lessons, laughter, and Light from her journey with Friends toward becoming the beloved community we seek. Free and open to the public, registration required. In-person registration is limited. Register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/cary/>.

World Quaker Day 2023 – October 1. In honor of World Quaker Day, Pendle Hill executive director Francisco Burgos will guide the community in worship sharing with queries shared by Friends around the world exploring the spirit of *ubuntu*. The word *ubuntu* emphasizes shared humanity, deep connection, and care for creation and one another. It is translated sometimes as “I am because you are” or “we are because you are.” More details including Zoom link at <https://pendlehill.org/events/dancing-with-ubuntu-world-quaker-day-worship-sharing/>. Sunday, **October 1** from 9:15-10:30 a.m.



Living the spirit of ubuntu: Caring for creation and one-another. Image by Lynn Finnegan. From <https://fwcc.world/worldquakerday/>

News about some other Quaker organizations can be found at the following links:

American Friends Service Committee: <https://afsc.org/>. AFSC works in many areas, among them: stopping the export of cluster munitions to Ukraine, stopping the militarization of the U.S. border, and the passage of a farm bill to reduce hunger and address climate change. For ideas on how you can easily join in AFSC’s important work for social justice see <https://afsc.org/get-involved>. You can sign up for their newsletter at the same site.

Quaker United Nations Organization: <https://quno.org/>

Friends Committee on National Legislation: <https://fcnl.org/>

Friends World Committee on Consultation: <https://www.fwccamericas.org>

Friends General Conference: <https://www.fgcquaker.org>

Ken Agin, New Member

Bill Holcombe

Bill Holcombe recently interviewed Ken Agin, who has completed his clearness process for joining the Sandwich Monthly Meeting. This is a condensed version of their conversation.

BH: So, Ken, I know you will be officially joining Sandwich Monthly Meeting soon. How did you come to Friends?

KA: My nephew Jamie suggested it. He knew that I needed more people in my life, more in the way of a social life.



Photo credit: K. Agin, August 2023.

BH: How long ago was that?

KA: I thought 3 years, but he said it was more like 5 or 6. I think he is right.

BH: Tell me about your initial experience.

KA: Day One, after my first full visit to East Sandwich, I knew I'd found my community. I spoke to a Friend saying I wanted to join and she wisely suggested I give it some thought. So I did. I thought about it a lot and asked to join a short time ago.

BH: So you knew right away

KA: I did.

BH: Can you talk about God? What is your belief?

KA: I have absolutely no idea what God is but then if I think on it, I believe that God is the Best, the Best that can possibly be. It reminds me when I was going to meetings with Jehovah's Witness (also not a member) just before coming to Friends. In one sermon, the person speaking said: "God hates sin." That struck me profoundly and I thought that had to be the most positive hate there is. I'd been struggling for years with my negativity, and that was it . . . feeling no guilt. After that I embraced all my difficult emotions thinking if that's how I feel then that is what I'm supposed to feel and in a positive way.

BH: Does it make you part of God?

KA: It's all God. Everything all around and in us.

BH: You've told me you had an epiphany at some point

KA: Yes. I was 55, it was the middle of January, I woke up one morning and literally let go for the first time in my life. Then came a flood of revelations. The first one was understanding what the words 'I feel good' mean for the first time! My God! I realized then just how traumatized I had been since I was very young. It's been a rough journey but certainly not boring. Thank God, I found the East Sandwich group. I resonate with just about everybody at the Meeting. They're all intelligent, sensitive, loving, caring, accomplished people. Birds of a feather do flock together. What an amazing group.

BH: What do you feel you bring to Friends and to the larger community?

KA: Interesting question. I feel the best thing I can do is be myself and not try but work at being the best version of myself. Consequently, it's very gratifying how accepted I feel by the meeting.

As far as the larger community goes, for one thing, I'm a caregiver. I've got two guys who live with me, one older than I am and one younger. One is so positive. First thing in the morning he'll have a smile on his face. The other one is very different. He's got a lot of aggression but, interestingly, it's very important to him to do the right thing. I've been taking care of these guys since 2012 and soon came to realize I needed to not be so controlling. I started out giving orders to one of them and he read me the riot act. It was then I realized I needed to change, not him.

I chose to be a caregiver because I needed to earn a living. I was not being altruistic. Fortunately, it works for me. I'm far from perfect but I've had many accolades over the years from Capabilities, the organization I work with. And even from my guys -- unsolicited. All of that really means a lot to me.

BH: Travel? Do you feel limited?

KA: Not really, but the job is like golden handcuffs. As a caregiver I'm not supposed to be gone more than 3 hours at a time. I don't miss travel so much because I have found peace and live in such a beautiful spot. Also, the world has changed so much in my lifetime, so much culture is lost and, consequently, so is much of my interest.

BH: Any last thoughts as we wrap up?

KA: Funny I was just thinking how much I love ice cream.

BH: That's a great way to wind up!



Friends outside East Sandwich Meetinghouse. From left: Ken Agin, Bill Holcombe, Gail Melix, Alan Burt and Lee Burns. Photo credit: L. Randa, July 3, 2022.

Readers Write

Brief Report from Yearly Meeting

Ruth Zwirner

NEYM annual sessions was held early in August in hybrid format. It was in person at Castleton University in Castleton, Vermont. We attended business sessions and other presentations via Zoom. Emily Condori Mamani, a Quaker from Bolivia who studied at Earlham School of Religion, presented the Bible half hours. She shared bible verses and related them to her physical and spiritual life.

BE LIKE A WATERED GARDEN:
OPEN TO GRACE,
LOOSE THE BONDS OF INJUSTICE

ISAIAH 58:6-12



The sessions clerk was challenged with keeping us focused on business agenda items and also concerns that arose. A few recollections:

--Report of working on right relationship with indigenous peoples;

--In the report from FUM there was an appreciation of NEYM being a part of FUM and carrying the concern of LGBTQI+.

--The finances and shortfall of money to the YM was brought forward. How can we support our staff and programs and can Monthly Meetings and individuals help financially?

--As our epistles were being shared, the Young Adult Friends brought a concern that they are feeling overwhelmed especially with caring for the youth of YM. How can activities and support be improved?

There also were fun times:

--Anna Fritz gave a cello concert which included songs of climate, justice issues, and prayer.

--There was a coffee house which we did not attend.

--Joseph Bruhac and his son Jesse, members of the Nulhegan Abenaki Nation, presented a program of music, lessons, and storytelling.

Sessions 2023 was a full experience with worshipful business and events shared by many. Hopefully there will be a local gathering to more fully share.

Recordings of the bible half hours and the Bruhacs' presentation are now available. See <https://neym.org/2023-sessions-recordings>.

Walking a Dirt Road with Thich Nhat Hanh

Such a glorious presumptuous title

Up and down country dirt roads
in a fine mist sun shining through

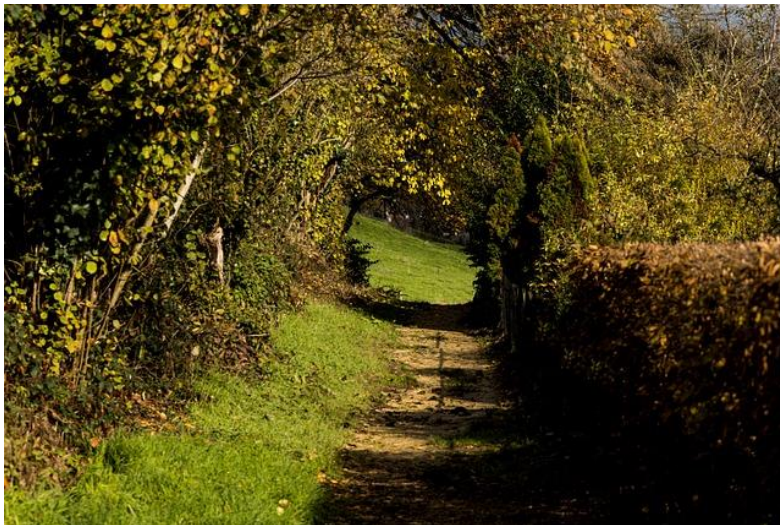
Apple trees unintended un-tended
fruits drop bittersweet

Blue sky smiling looking up
per the Master no longer with us
to please his Living Buddha his Living Christ

Saying to my self as reminder
affirmation: coming to terms this fine afternoon

I am an old man with a failing heart
not quite yet decrepit
getting there getting there

I am an old man worried about
his failing heart his mortality.



Part II Meals on Wheels

Meals on Wheels

Sky blue and clear—why hurry?

Wouldn't he have loved doing this?

He would walk deliberately
talking moreover listening
to each old friend with care
each with their own needs
to engage to disengage
in their own time their own way.

A dance of sorts
with tension 'tween need to deliver
by lunchtime and right timing
some wanting more
some perfunctory
some the ritual
check in on our mutual bouts with arthritis
how to make each brief encounter
a perfect vignette.

Finding the right rhythm—he
would do this flawlessly.

And sometimes in right time and space
so do I.

So do I.

Bill Holcombe

August 2023

A central tenet of panentheism is that everything that exists *is* God. As a Quaker pacifist, I have found that living with that awareness brings about many spiritual and philosophical benefits. Among them:

Unity and interconnectedness: Panentheism recognizes the inherent unity and interconnectedness of all things. When you see everything that exists *as* God (not simply as God's creation), you develop a greater sense of the sacredness of all life. For me, that has proven to be life-changing. This awareness promotes a sense of harmony, compassion, and empathy towards all living beings as well as the environment, and is most fully and profoundly expressed through a vegan life style.

Transcendence of dualism: Panentheism (God is all things), challenges the notion of a strict separation between the divine and the material world. It sees the divine as immanent within creation while simultaneously transcending it. This perspective allows you to transcend the limitations of dualistic thinking regarding divinity and embrace a more holistic view of reality.

Spiritual growth and self-realization: Recognizing the divine in everything encourages spiritual growth and self-realization. By understanding that we are all part of the divine whole (not simply having "that of God within you"), you can cultivate a much deeper connection with your own personal divinity. This leads to a greater sense of purpose, self-acceptance, and a journey towards self-transcendence.

Reverence for the natural world: Panentheism emphasizes the divine presence within nature which is the essential element of veganism. When you perceive all of nature as a sacred manifestation of God, you develop a profound reverence for the natural world. This inspires a deeper sense of awe, wonder, and stewardship towards the environment, leading to a more sustainable and responsible relationship with nature.

Embracing mystery and paradox: Panentheism acknowledges the limitations of human understanding and embraces the mystery and paradox of existence. It recognizes that the nature of God and reality is beyond complete comprehension. This perspective invites a sense of humility and curiosity about the unknown, and fosters a lifelong journey of exploration and spiritual inquiry. Seeing yourself as the outward and physical embodiment of God makes life more sacred, more wondrous!

Inner peace and harmony: Living with the awareness of the divine in everything brings inner peace and harmony. It provides a sense of belonging, purpose, and a deeper trust in the unfolding of life's experiences.

Ethical implications: Panentheism places a profound emphasis on the interconnectedness and inherent value of all life. This decidedly nonreligious philosophy of God encourages ethical behavior and a sense of responsibility for the well-being of others and the environment. It inspires a commitment to social justice, compassion, and the promotion of a more inclusive and equitable world. I came to the awareness that everything that exists *is* God in a dream that I wrote about in a previous issue of *The Gazette*. I've also written a reflection on this experience in the book *Being Us*.

L. Rand, "The Dream." W. Falmouth, MA: *The Gazette*, January 2021, pp. 8-9.

L. Randa, *Being Us: Perceiving God, A Radical View*. Pittsburgh, PA: Palmetto Publishing, 2022.



A Second Sight

Alan Burt

With both sadness and joy, I am writing about the life and recent death of Father Charles Strobel who passed away on August 7, 2023. I have written a little about him and his work previously, but now, with his recent passing, I feel led to say a little bit more about him.

Although I never met Father Strobel, I was forever changed by his book, “Room in the Inn,” in which he recounted how he came to know, to love, and to help the homeless in Nashville, Tennessee in 1985. When I read his book in 2001, I realized that I could no longer look away from the suffering of the poor all around me. And I wondered why it had taken me so long to see them and to help them as my faith in practice.

At first, I didn’t know what to do with this awakening but, as I wrote in my book, *Blessings of the Burden*, the answer came to me in a very simple and mysterious way.* I was at a stop light in Hyannis at the corner of North and Winter Street. As I turned my head to the left, I saw Hal White, an elderly homeless man standing on the corner. He looked at me and winked. I then found myself turning left which I had never done because that was where the homeless shelter was, where *those* people were. To my bewilderment, I then pulled into the Salvation Army and began my life’s work.

In writing this, a connection I had never seen before suddenly became clear, and that is how Father Strobel and I each began our work with the homeless. My life’s work was initiated by reading his book and shortly afterwards crystalized in much the same way as his work did.

Father Strobel shared, I think in his book, an extraordinary experience he once had. He was sitting on a plane one evening waiting for it to take off. While waiting, he looked out the window and saw a breathtaking sunset. About 30 minutes later, as the plane was lifting into the air, he saw something he never thought possible. He saw the sun set two times in one day. He was struck by this experience, never forgot it, and came to cherish it. Yet a day came unexpectedly in which that experience transformed itself into something else, something so personal and powerful that his life was changed forever.

I’ll draw on my memory of his second sight experience as I have carried it with me all these years and so personally connected with it. He described himself as sitting in his church when he looked out the window and saw a group of homeless men and women standing outside in the parking lot. Although he had seen homeless individuals a number of times in the church parking lot, he described this particular moment as offering a different way of seeing. Mysteriously he found himself walking out the door of the church to invite them in for the night. He knew that what he was doing was going to be something he would continue to do, and he wondered what his church board and superiors would think about his impulse to bring the homeless in without permission and without consideration of the implications of such a decision. But there he was, immersed in what he described as the most powerful experience of his life. He saw that there was room in the inn, room in his church, and that he had to let them in.

Father Strobel went on to create the nonprofit organization, “Room in the Inn,” in 1986. Dozens of churches in Nashville joined in the mission with him to provide a shelter space for the homeless during the fall and winter months. Today the Room in the Inn organization has 7,000 volunteers to help shelter more than 1,500 people who are homeless. In addition to providing nightly shelter Room in the Inn has

expanded its mission to help the homeless in a number of important and lifesaving ways including case management and housing.

As I finish writing this, I find myself tearful in my expression of gratitude for Father Strobel. “I never met you, but in the story of your life, teachings and death I have been forever changed and transformed in my willingness and ability to love and help those most in need. Many of us find ourselves closest to God as we open our eyes in new ways to see, love, and help those most in need.”

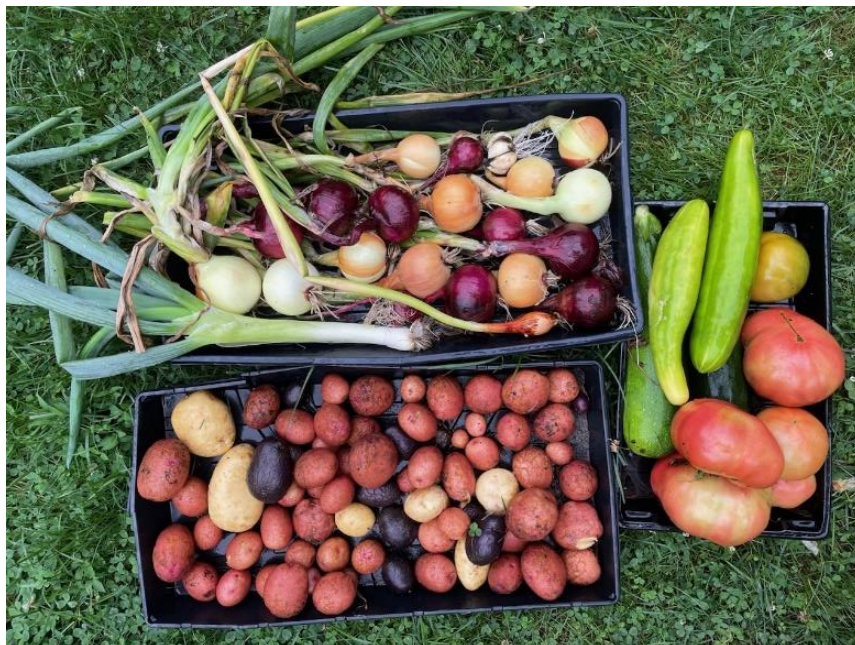
*Alan R. Burt, *Blessings of the Burden*. Grand Rapids, MI: Willam B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013.

Ed. Note: New York Times columnist Margaret Renkl and novelist Ann Patchett both live in Nashville and knew Charles Strobel. Patchett wrote about him in 2013 -- see <https://chapter16.org/the-worthless-servant/>. Renkl’s recent tribute, “Proof That One Life Can Change the World,” can be found at <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/14/opinion/nashville-father-strobel-homelessness.html>.

Dear Friends, I am again asking for donations for the *Stop and Shop gift card initiative*. As before, I can get donations matched. We have distributed over \$15,000 in gifts cards to the homeless over the past 2 years. Here’s how you can help us in the coming year.

Send your donations to: The Peace Abbey Foundation, 16 Lavender Street, Millis, MA 02540. Please note *Stop & Shop gift card initiative* in the memo line of your check. For further information please contact Lewis Randa (508-259-8508 or lewismranda@gmail.com).

Blessings, Alan Burt



I've been reading and thinking quite a bit lately about the little-heralded but very important study commissioned by the Falmouth Coastal Resilience Action Committee. This study, done by the Woods Hole Group for the committee in 2019-2020, was focused on Surf Drive, which is one of the most likely coastal areas in Falmouth to be flooded before 2100 because of rising sea levels brought on by global warming.¹ The study was quite specific about the expected impacts (assuming a "business as usual" scenario): 1200 feet of Surf Drive and portions of the Shining Sea Pathway where it crosses Surf Drive will be under water at high tide twice a day by 2050 or so. Town Hall will be flooding by 2070 and ultimately need to be relocated. Quite a few homes in the Bywater area will be flooding by 2050. The good news is that if the world successfully deals with global warming, then many of these impacts will be delayed. However, at this point we need to plan for the worst-case (business as usual) scenario.

The study looked at a number of options to deal with coastal flooding, such as a high sea wall and building up or bridging the areas that will be affected. But for both cost and aesthetic reasons, it recommends considering moving the town's Ellen T. Mitchell Bathhouse and sewer pumping station that will be flooded, and a buyout and relocation of the affected residences -- "managed retreat" in the parlance of the study -- replacing them with a waterfront park, or possibly instead with salt marshes to provide more natural protection.

Of course, managed retreat requires quite a bit of planning and lots of money. The expectation is that the town will be hiring a person to help organize the planning. And the money would undoubtedly come from a combination of local, state and federal resources. But rather than focus on the technical questions of how to make Falmouth, the Cape and, indeed, the entire East Coast more resilient, I'd like to talk about some of the moral issues associated with managed retreat.

The first and most important moral issue, it seems to me, is also the one with the clearest answer. *Should we spend our money on resilience (or adaptation in the usual climate change terminology) or on reducing greenhouse gas levels (what climate scientists refer to as mitigation)?* There are at least three reasons for preferring mitigation:

- Mitigation helps the entire world, not just our local area.
- The spending on mitigation, climate scientists tell us, should be large and immediate, if we are to achieve the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 that must be achieved if we are to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.
- Mitigating now will give us a much clearer picture of what time frame we really have for adaptation. For example, in the Surf Road study, we might expect about 7.5 feet of sea level rise by 2100 in the "high scenario" (business-as-usual) that would result if we did no further reduction of greenhouse gases, but about 5 feet of sea level rise in the "intermediate scenario" (where we reach a stable level of greenhouse gases by 2100). I have attached 3 sea-level rise scenarios below to show, for example, how sea level rise might affect our W. Falmouth meeting house area. (Images from the NOAA Sea Level Rise Viewer²).

¹ <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2b1e9d6368c94efa98a83d02046f8384>

² <https://coast.noaa.gov/slr/#/layer/slr/0/-7863207.53710017/5101411.581605407/16/satellite/none/0.8/2050/interHigh/midAccretion>



Meeting house at 0 feet sea level rise (today). The red oval approximately marks the W. Falmouth meeting's property.



Meeting house at 5 feet of sea-level rise. The small marshy area in back of the meeting house has grown to be a large seasonal pond (green) and the sea has inundated some areas (light blue). Possible flooding of Quaker House basement.

A 5 ft sea-level rise is expected for the Cape somewhere between 2075 and 2100.



Meeting house at 8 feet of sea-level rise. We have ocean-front property! Quaker House is possibly flooded. Portions of Old Dock Rd., the bike path and 28A are flooded. Some nearby homes are seaward of high tide.

We are only likely to experience this amount of sea-level rise before 2100 if the world follows the "business as usual" approach to mitigation.

The second moral issue with respect to managed retreat is that it typically favors the wealthy, and often displaces the poor. In general, houses along the shore are the most expensive on the Cape. We will therefore be spending huge amounts of money to move those on the shoreline to other locations. And what typically happens in managed retreat is that homeowners try to move to a nearby location, usually displacing lower-cost housing in that location. So, while we maintain the community that lived along the shore (albeit in a new location), we often also displace the community that lived nearby. Managed retreat also favors wealthy states; many poor states in the U.S. will be far less able to afford the kind of spending that will be required.

And if we have a global perspective, managed retreat is going to be necessary in many parts of the world. Is it moral to spend lots of money on managed retreat in our own community without assisting those in other parts of the world who are most affected by the global warming we have caused but who are least able to afford to pay for the retreat? (Twenty-five percent of the greenhouse gas emissions historically have come from the U.S., which has only 4.2% of the world's population.³)

The third moral hazard is that we in theory should treat everyone equally, but will we in practice? It is highly likely that the climate crisis will continue for decades, at a minimum, and more and more homes will be what a friend called “seaward of high tide” as the crisis continues. Will we still be willing to support managed retreat 30 or 40 or 50 years from now, or will we simply refuse to fund the process at some point, leaving the next generation to fend for itself? It obviously will cost an enormous amount of money; one measure of this is that it is estimated that \$1.4 trillion worth of property in the U.S. is located within 700 feet of the shore.⁴ This question of equity becomes even more complicated as we increasingly see private insurers leaving states with high climate disaster risks.⁵

The fourth moral risk is that money will go to managed retreat instead of other types of spending for adaptation that are more critical. For example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has pointed out that improving our antiquated electricity grids in the U.S. is highly synergistic with moving to “green” electricity generation and distribution.⁶ If we spend money on managed retreat instead of improving our grids, will we be making it harder to move to a fossil-fuel-free future?

But the fifth moral issue is about what happens if we *don't* do managed retreats. Will our children and grandchildren end up with far bigger costs or fewer viable options because we do nothing now? I recently visited one of the shore areas near my home and was amazed to see numerous examples of homes that were torn down to build new, bigger homes in the existing flood plains. Perhaps those homes will be “seaward of high tide” within a few short decades. Shouldn't we be planning (and creating building codes) better than that?⁷ Also, should we pay for managed retreat of homes built knowingly in flood plains?

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/11/12/climate/cop26-emissions-compensation.html>

⁴ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590332219300806>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/31/climate/climate-change-insurance-wildfires-california.html>

⁶ https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf

⁷ I would note that the new homes are at least being built on stilts, to conform to current building codes. Interestingly, once a house is “seaward of high tide” it could theoretically be declared a “navigational hazard” and then legally removed without recompense.

I'm not sure that I know the answer to any of these moral questions. But it seems to me, religious institutions have an obligation to raise moral issues in their communities. If we don't, who will? The local group Faith Care Environmental Network provides a good example of how to inject moral questions into the debate about what to do about climate change; we might wish to consider how our membership in this group might be used to address the specific questions about managed retreat.

Or perhaps Friends could begin by asking ourselves the question, "Should W. Falmouth Quakers begin planning for a managed retreat from their current location? Or should they leave that problem to another generation of Friends to deal with 20 or 30 years from now?" What is the moral answer to *that* question?

Youth Climate Cases and Democracy

Rod Zwirner

You may be aware that the youth climate law suit in Montana recently received an historic favorable ruling. For considerable detail on this case, the original federal suit, plus actions in other states see the website www.ourchildrenstrust.org/biden-doj. I would like to provide some context as to how the Obama, Trump and Biden administrations have *all* tried to obstruct justice in this most important area of concern for our country and the whole planet.

In 2015 the original Juliana v. United States case was filed with Quaker Earthcare Witness as one of the Friends of the Court. The claim was that the Federal government is taking away the young plaintiffs' equal protection, dignity, liberty, health and safety, and public trust which are predicated on their right to a clean and healthy environment. The suit was blocked in the 9th Circuit by a 2 to 1 decision, but the dissent was so strong that an appeal was submitted. Since then there have been over thirty actions that keep stalling the case because there is no real basis for refuting the claim. Since Congress is so dysfunctional, we have an impasse and this is why the Montana decision is so important. Democracy is not working and our oligarchy is run by those benefitting from business as usual.



Quakerdom *does* have a national Call but, in my opinion, the focus of the Call is too narrow and our failed media coverage is ignored. Truth is not prospering and there is a need for some very creative, worshipful thinking and action.

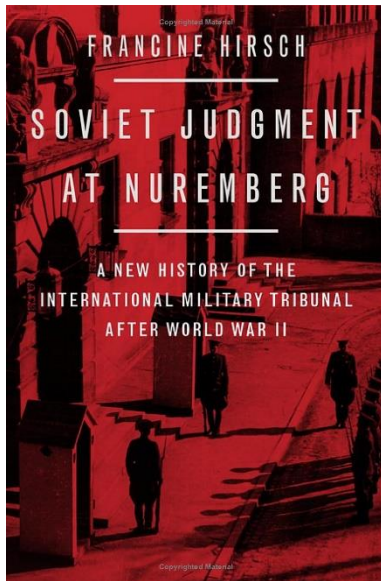
You can read the original and updated Calls to Action and register for a national Zoom conversation led by Parker J. Palmer on September 28 at <https://quakercall.net/>.

Also, a very interesting article on democracy can be found at <https://scheerpost.com/2023/08/27/missing-links-in-textbook-history-defining-democracy/>.

What We're Reading

John Davidson: *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg: A New History of the International Military Tribunal After World War II* by Francine Hirsch.

Without the Soviets the Nuremberg trial would never have taken place, but the conventional historiography up until recently has obscured their key role. Soviet jurists conceived of the legal framework that treated a war of aggression as an international crime, giving the trials a legal basis. The Soviets had borne the brunt of the fighting against Germany, taking about 27 million casualties, and their almost unimaginable suffering gave them moral authority which Western lawyers and diplomats did not contest in the immediate aftermath of the war.



Francine Hirsch's account, *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg*, offers the first complete picture of the International Military Tribunal, including the many ironies as the Soviets took their place among the countries of the prosecution in late 1945. Everyone knew that Stalin had allied with Hitler before the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June of 1941. The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact hung heavy over the courtroom, as did the suspicion that the Soviets had falsified evidence in an attempt to pin one of their own crimes, the mass killing of Polish officers in the Katyn Forest, on the Nazis. Key members of the Soviet delegation, including the Soviet judge and chief prosecutor Vyshinsky, had played critical roles in Stalin's infamous show trials of the 1930s. For the American prosecutor Robert H. Jackson and his colleagues in the British and French delegations, Soviet participation in the IMT undermined the credibility of the trials and even the moral righteousness of the Allied victory. The USSR was at this very time in 1945-6 moving around

international borders and populations, setting up client states from East Germany to Poland, and claiming that the conquests of the Red Army were in no way a war of aggression. As the author makes clear, Stalin was continually maneuvering to cover his tracks and hide all evidence of the secret annex to the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement of 1939, even as the defense lawyers made reference to the secret protocol to that agreement (pp. 225-227; the defense case and the Katyn Forest massacre are discussed on pp. 247-262 and 293-294).

The Soviet lawyers and diplomats after World War II worked with their Western counterparts freely, although they were supervised from afar by Stalin, to indict Nazi war criminals while establishing in the process some of the basic principles of modern international law. The very central principle that a war of aggression violates international law and is a crime was created in large part through the arguments of Soviet legal theorist Aron Trainin, who authored the July 1944 book *The Criminal Responsibility of the Hitlerites* (pp. 50-51; Trainin's role in the defense case is also discussed on pp. 269-270). This doctrine, now codified in the UN Charter, has now come back to haunt the Russian Foreign Ministry as Russia wages a war of aggression against Ukraine, denying the historical validity of the Ukrainian nation much as Hitler denied the legal sovereignty of the USSR. The United States government has ordered the Pentagon to share evidence on Russian war crimes in Ukraine and cooperate with the International Criminal Court, indicating that we are moving toward a world in which the crime of aggression will again take center stage.

What struck me in reading the book was the amateurish quality of Stalin's diplomacy in the period immediately after the war. There were almost no available translators, for example, putting the USSR at a huge disadvantage, and creating a bottleneck in setting up a system of simultaneous translation, because during the war speaking German in public was grounds for trial and perhaps execution (pp. 82-83 on translation issues and the indictment; defense case and translation are on pp. 263-264).

There were no prosecutors with skills in cross-examination because the Soviet legal system had emphasized purge trials. The Soviet lawyers imagined a trial to be a show trial, and Vyshinski was their leader, who expected that the Nuremberg process would resemble the Moscow Show Trials which he had organized in the late thirties (pp. 78-87). The parallel to the present which comes to mind is the current weak quality of Russian diplomacy, due to Putin's centralization of all authority on himself, which faces problems similar to weakened USSR Foreign Ministry after the war and the Stalinist purges. The Russian Foreign Ministry under Putin has again come under the control of a dictator who hates Western-educated international relations experts, which puts his country at a huge disadvantage compared to where Russian international relations were at the end of the Soviet period in 1989 or even in 1999 when Putin came to power. There had then been thousands of multilingual diplomats as well as hundreds of supporting attorneys capable of telling the truth or at least understanding it, but now any advocacy of peace is grounds for termination within the Foreign Ministry. Putin's centralization of all power on himself and the sidelining of all diplomats was critiqued by Boris Bondarev, the ex-Russian diplomat who published an article in *Foreign Affairs* last year claiming that no one within the Foreign Ministry was given any warning of Putin's planned attack on Ukraine, or even allowed any input into the unilateral demand which Russia made on the West before the war to send NATO back to its position in the mid-nineties.*

The trial at Nuremberg involved only 24 Nazi war criminals, and the growing Cold War between America and the USSR meant that US interests were increasingly at odds with Russian interests, ruling out any further joint prosecution of Nazis. Francine Hirsch does not point out that the U.S. was already making deals with the head of the Abwehr (German military intelligence) to get the massive files on the Red Army hidden by the German army in boxcars in the Alps, but she does mention that the U.S. did not wish to antagonize German public opinion, which was increasingly anti-Russian.

Before the second world war the USSR had been one of seven great powers striving for global hegemony. Suddenly, after the war and the introduction of the Atomic Bomb, the Stalinist state found itself as one of two surviving superpowers, with a strong incentive (given its destroyed condition) to establish alignment and agreement with the West against all "wars of aggression." For the last seventy-eight years, and to this day the world state system is held together by international legal norms and the existence of nuclear weapons. These two factors have prevented a third world war, weak and arbitrary as they may seem to the average person or the average Quaker. For those of our readers who preferred to watch the film *Oppenheimer* rather than the Barbie movie, clearly only a balance of hydrogen bomb terror could and will keep heavily armed states from destroying each other. The UN Charter's prohibition on armed aggression has usually been respected in principle, although in several cases circumvented in practice by those in power, so it is an interesting test of the entire system to see if Putin's invasion of Ukraine will survive public condemnation. I would recommend this book to any Quaker who might be interested in history and politics.

Francine Hirsch. *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg: A New History of the International Military Tribunal After World War II*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2020.

*Boris Bondarev, "The Sources of Russian Misconduct: A Diplomat Defects from the Kremlin," *Foreign Affairs*, November-December 2022.



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Back page: Gourds in August.
Photo: S. Gates, August 2023.