

THE GAZETTE

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

West Falmouth Religious Society of Friends

MARCH 2024



WINTER MORNING

I am learning to love the darkness.
The deep blue-black of winter mornings
As the window shades to palest white,
The black silhouette of birch branches
Before the sunrise scatters light.

When did I change? I've always been
One who loved candlelight and flame,
Who wanted brighter rainbows, warmer suns.
Now I wake every morning, look and look again
At that dark velvet-blue.

I love the moment for itself, no need
To wait for the sun's coming, as a seed
Holds the whole plant, blossom, fruit and leaf,
So night holds dawn, and winter—spring, death—life.

And love holds light and dark, and death and time,
As birch twigs hold the stars in one bright line.

Denise Ginzler in the Fall 2023 Issue of Smoky Quartz, an online journal of literature and art. <https://smokyquartz.org/>. Denise is a member of the Monadnock Meeting in Jaffrey, NH.

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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

**Sunday Morning Gathering in
the Library Corner at 9:00 a.m.**

Ministry & Counsel
Brenda Nolan, clerk
(508-274-2701)

**West Falmouth Meeting for
Worship with Attention to
Business**
Usually 4th Sunday
March 24

Upcoming Events

New England Yearly Meeting

Living Faith – A day-long event at Friends Academy in North Dartmouth, Saturday, **April 6**. The gathering will focus on spiritual nurture and multigenerational fellowship. If you would like to be part of the Planning Team, you can let Yearly Meeting staff know how you are led to help by filling out the form at <https://airtable.com/appPUbTZ6gBHAV5aY/pagxudeeigooy2AyV/form>. Register for Living Faith at <https://neym.regfox.com/2024-living-faith>.

International Meeting for Worship – Join Friends around the world for a one-hour international Meeting for Worship. Daily from noon to 1:00 p.m. Learn more at <https://neym.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Meeting%20Details.pdf>.

Sandwich Quarterly Meeting

Quarter Calendar

Meeting for business – April 27 at Dartmouth/Smith Neck. Meet for coffee and greetings at 9:30 a.m.

Ministry & Counsel -- March 23 at East Sandwich Preparative Meeting at 10:00 a.m.

New Bedford – Work party after worship followed by lunch – Sunday, **March 10** and every second Sunday.

West Falmouth

Listening Session for State of the Society – Sunday, **March 10** at noon (hybrid). Ministry and Council invites members and attenders to gather and voice their responses to these questions: How has the Meeting supported your spiritual journey over the past year? What are our opportunities and challenges?

Adult Discussion Group – Sundays at 9:00 a.m. Gatherings are in the library corner of the meetinghouse. All are welcome.

Quaker Education Sessions. Eric Edwards will offer a first session on Sunday, **March 17** at noon on the topic *Quaker Governance: A Historical and Contemporary Perspective on Structures within the Society of Friends*. Over the years Eric has served as clerk of the preparative, monthly, and quarterly meetings and is currently a member of the Faith and Practice Revision committee for NEYM. Friends from East Sandwich and Yarmouth Meetings are cordially invited to join West Falmouth Friends. In person at the meetinghouse and on Zoom.

Peace & Social Order. Now in its fourth year, Second Sunday forums will continue on a quarterly basis. Several books from previous speakers have been donated by P&SO to the library: *Smarter Planet or Wiser Earth? Dialogue and Collaboration in the Era of Artificial Intelligence* by Gray Cox; *Quaking Dover* by Jnana Hodson; *The Beloved Border, Humanity and Hope in a Contested Land* by Miriam Davidson; and *My Soul's Journey to Redefine Leadership: a New Phoenix rises from the Ashes of 9/11* by Virginia Swain. Note that videos of previous 2nd Sunday presentations can be found at <http://www.youtube/@westfalmouthquakers>.

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

First Monday Lecture with Mary Crauderueff, Doug Gwyn, and Janaki Spickard Keeler – *Tracts for Our Times: Celebrating Ninety Years of Pendle Hill Pamphlets*. **March 4**, 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. On campus and via Zoom. Learn more and register at <https://pendlehill.org/learn/workshops-courses-events/event-registration-march-first-monday-lecture-03-04-24/>

First Monday Lecture with Steve Chase – *Rethinking US Policy Toward Israel/Palestine: One Quaker's Discernment Journey*. April 1, 2024, 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. On campus and via Zoom. Learn more and register at <https://pendlehill.org/learn/workshops-courses-events/event-registration-april-first-monday-lecture-04-01-24/>.

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

Quaker Earthcare Witness: <https://quakerearthcare.org/>

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>

Also of Interest:



Black Lives Matter: Falmouth Kneel at Noon
Silent vigil for 9 minutes 29 seconds in support of Black lives, weekly on **Sundays** at **noon** on the Falmouth Village Green.

The Unitarian Universalist congregation in East Falmouth is offering a yearlong educational series on *The History and Culture of the Wampanoag Tribe*. The next two presentations by Linda Coombs are *After King Phillip's War* on **March 16** and *Historical Trauma* on **April 20**. Both are at the UU Meetinghouse in East Falmouth from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Learn more and find the full program for the year at <https://www.linkcapecod.org/upcoming-and-past-events>.



Planning session to discuss the Native Land Reparation Pledge -- Join fellow Quakers Lewis Randa, Gail Melix, Alan Burt and others, Friday, **March 1st** at 10:00 a.m. at The Peace Abbey Foundation Office located at 8 Town Square, Plymouth, MA. Free parking in lower lot next to church. This is an opportunity to join together, share ideas, and collaborate on ways to move ahead spreading the word about the Pledge in a spirit of justice and reparations. The Pledge (shown below) is a pact one makes with one's conscience to pledge 1% of the sale price of one's home to a native tribe. It is a promise to be fulfilled at the time of sale if the conditions in one's life permit; it is not legally binding. Come join us! We hope to see you there!

NATIVE LAND REPARATION


To All Whom It May Concern,

Be It Known That: _____, residing at _____, _____, _____ respectfully pledge to donate 1% of the sale price of our home to the _____, within whose ancestral land this property is located. I realize that the land, including the air, water, and biological life, is a natural relative to the tribe, and no amount of money can repay them for it having been wrongfully taken from them centuries ago.

I intend to fulfill this sacred commitment, embraced in the spirit of personal responsibility and reparation, when the day comes to sell our home. Until then, I will continue to care for the land and its inhabitants with ecological integrity and respect, and will honor it as our natural relative, for we are stewards of all creation. Ultimately, the land belongs to Mother Earth.

Homeowners: _____

Date: _____




Seal of Notary Public

The Native Land Reparation Pledge is a solemn pact one makes with their conscience and is not legally binding. It is a conscientious promise to be fulfilled if the conditions in one's life permit.

Photos from Our Meetings



Views from East Sandwich Meetinghouse, February 2024.



Meeting Windlasses -- Left: East Sandwich, February 2024; Right: West Falmouth, June 2018.

Linda Gaboriau, New Member

Lewis Randa

Below you'll find a wonderful and succinct reflection on becoming a member of East Sandwich Meeting by long-time attendee, Linda Gaboriau. As someone fortunate enough to have gotten to know Linda over the years, it is an honor to take this opportunity to share the following which provides valuable insights into her understanding of Quakerism, the significance of attending Meeting for Worship, and why she embraced membership. Linda, as those who know her can attest, epitomizes the qualities of thoughtfulness, conscientiousness, and eloquence that are dear to the humanist Quaker tradition. Lewis Randa

My friend and neighbor, John Cullity, suggested that my late husband and I attend the East Sandwich meeting, some 12 years ago. We were both, and I continue to be, touched by the simplicity of the place of worship and the mindfulness and the generosity of spirit of the people we met there. The values of peace, simplicity and equality are goals I try to set for myself, in my personal and political principles and actions. In fact, I believe I am a more socio-political than spiritual person. I do not feel comfortable speaking about my "spiritual journey." As someone who works in the arts, I guess, humanist best describes my world view. Certainly, the Christian precept of "do unto others..." resonates for me and I am always deeply touched by the caring attitudes and actions of the members of the East Sandwich Meeting. They represent for me a true sense of community in this age of polarization.



Photo by Josée Lambert

So why become a member? I've been thinking a lot about that. To begin with, I do share the core values espoused by Quakerism as I understand it: tolerance, community, simplicity (as a goal) and the individual responsibility to make time and place for the spiritual, the divine, in our lives. Raised as an Episcopalian (my mother was a lapsed Roman Catholic), as an adult I slowly became a non-theist and have come to see Jesus as a holy man, like the Buddha, a prophet like Mohammed, whose teachings can guide our lives.

During Meeting, I do not pray, I try to contemplate moral dilemmas, my connection and responsibility to others, and the need to reach that place of stillness and peace within. I deeply appreciate the hour of self-directed silent worship. And I am inspired by the generosity, the goodness, the social activism and awareness of the people who make up the East Sandwich Friends community. In these times of upheaval, in the U.S. and in the world, I have come to need time spent in your company.

But once again, all of this is available to me without becoming a member. So, again I ask myself, why become a member? The closest thing to an answer I have come up with is: to express a commitment to practicing the values I've mentioned, and to add to the numbers of people who, "officially," nominally, share that commitment. And to give weight to that commitment, I assume that membership comes with added responsibilities. What and how could I, as a member, contribute to the Meeting? "Ask not what the Meeting can do for you, but what you can do for the Meeting."

Readers Write

Lessons from the Hay Field

Ann Prentice

For the last 20 summers I've been working with my husband and neighbors growing and baling hay at Whip's Farm. We work about 100 acres of fields in the Eel River Valley in Plymouth. It includes two fields owned by The Wildlands Trust, a land conservation trust based in Plymouth.

Hay farming is totally dependent on the weather. Rain is needed to grow the hay and dry sunny spells are crucial for harvesting. Starting in late May, as soon as the ground is dry and there are 3 or 4 days of warm sunshine forecast, the tractors are on the fields. A field is mowed, tilled (equipment that fluffs the hay to speed drying), raked into windrows and, when finally cured, the hay is baled. The hay crew then comes on the field to pick up the bales. Trucks pulling trailers are driven slowly around the field as the bales are thrown to the person stacking the load. Once fully loaded the trucks are driven to barns and unloaded. On the average we get in around 8,000 bales a year.



Jock baling a field after the hay has been raked in windrows.



Bales being stacked on a trailer. It's our grandson, Aaron Prentice, in the white shirt.

My husband, Jock, does tractor work, especially running the baler. It's work he's been doing most of his life. The Prentice family never owned any farmland but they have been farming in Plymouth for generations; managing estate farms, dairy farms and the Plymouth County Jail farm. When our grandson drove tractors in the hayfields while he was in high school and college, he became the 5th generation of the Prentice family to work in these fields.

I'm part of the crew of volunteers that pick up and unload the hay, exhausting, sweaty, dirty work. It is also good physical work, with plenty of laughter,

friendships and learning. This is a crew made up mostly of neighbors who live within a couple miles of the fields. Some have known each other and their families for generations. The older men grew up working together on the local farm. Many of us have been working on the hay crew for years, others are new to farmwork. By working together, we've developed a strong sense of community, cooperation and friendship.

We are a wide range of ages, from pre-teen to the 80s. The elders have the experience, but depend on the young for their muscles. Great strength is needed to throw bales, weighing 30-40 pounds, over eight feet to the top of a load. When unloading the hay into a barn we need their nimbleness to climb onto towering hay stacks.

At the end of each hay season we celebrate with a pizza party. At this year's gathering we started to talk about the lessons we've learned in the hay fields. It was a deep and amusing discussion. We all agreed that we learned the importance of cooperation along with many practical lessons.

The basic rules of the hay field are usually learned the first day. They are:

1. Wear work gloves and bring water, lots of water.
2. Never pick up a bale by one string; the bale will break apart.
3. Always carry a pocketknife; broken bales need to be cut apart and re-baled.
4. Always hook up the safety chains on a trailer; never trust just the hitch.
5. And never ever walk between a truck and the trailer; If you do this it is certain that you'll be yelled at because you will be crushed if the driver doesn't see you when they drive ahead.

We all have also learned the vital importance of working together. To get the hay into the barns we need to work as a competent unit, using our variety of strengths, knowledge and skills. Constant problems arise requiring all our abilities - broken equipment, threatening rain, stuck trucks, and on and on. Some are good mechanics, or tractor drivers, or truck drivers, or experienced farmers, or have physical strength. Those who can neatly stack over 100 bales on a trailer and not lose any along the road have learned a very valuable skill.

A day will start with acres of dry hay and after hours of working together we can proudly finish with all the bales neatly stacked in a barn. Or we learn defeat when a sudden thunderstorm ruins a field of hay before we pick it up. It is often grueling work, but good work. We are outside in a beautiful valley with views of farm fields, the Pine Hills, ponds and horses grazing in pastures



Jock Prentice with the baler and tractor after finishing baling a field.

Disagreements and anger can arise when all are stressed or exhausted. Conflict avoidance is used when the rush to get in the hay is more important than any annoyance. Small conflicts, which are usually misunderstandings, can be talked out or laughed about over a beer after work. Bigger problems can be worked out or forgotten during the winter.

Over the years I have learned much about myself and farming. I learned to appreciate my own physical strength and stamina. I take pride that in my mid-70s, even on hot summer days, I am still able to pick up and throw bales. This is countered by the increasing times I'm humbled by my waning strength. I can no longer stack bales higher than head-high so I usually drive the trucks. My agility is also diminishing. I can still crawl under the baler to restring the twine, but getting back out and onto my feet again is not a pretty sight.

Age is limiting the tasks I can take on, and there are others that I've never mastered. If the truck I'm driving has a long trailer there is no way I can accurately back it up. I've accepted that flaw in my abilities and shamefacedly ask someone else to back up the trailer for me. That also puts added importance on strengthening my social skills. Getting along with others increases the chances that they won't mock me when I have to ask for help. I'm especially nice to the retired firefighters on the crew as they can proudly back up any vehicle.

I've been publicly humiliated when accidentally driving over a hay bale but I do take pride in never having run over a person. Yet. Humility can be a hard but valuable lesson to learn.

The most cherished personal lesson is learning to be open to the strong spiritual connection to this valley. It has given me a sense of place, 'a love of place.' I did not come from here but I have grown roots in this valley. I care deeply about my neighbors and the land.

After years of walking and driving over the fields I have learned the local terrain. I know which fields will be the first to dry after a rain. I notice where the remains of old foundations stick above the ground. I have watched the invasive plants spreading into the hay and the bittersweet vines creeping over the trees on the edges of the fields. From the years of driving heavy trucks through the fields I know the exact locations of the wet spots. Once you get a truck stuck up to its axles you learn to avoid the low mucky areas. I know to beware of the dreaded 'East Wind.' It's a damp wind coming off the ocean that puts a stop to the drying of the hay.



Me and the baler (Jock took this photo).

I know the traditional names of the fields. The Schoolhouse Field was named for the one-room school that once stood there. It's where my father-in-law started school. The Hoxie Field is named after the Nate Hoxie family. Nate was a well-known hunting and fishing guide. The Ox Barn Field, the Four Corner Field, Jordan Road Field, Howland Pond Field and others are named for their locations.

All these experiences have deepened the connection I feel to this area. When I stand in a field in warm sunshine with the sound of bobolinks and the scent of drying hay, I am in total peace. Until someone yells, "Pick up a bale. The hay doesn't get itself into the barn." A bit of the peace will still stay with me, even when throwing bales onto a truck.

The ties to this valley are strengthened by knowing the names of the families who have farmed these fields and knowing of the Wampanoags who farmed, hunted, and fished in this fertile valley. Even when it is not hay season I walk these fields and the surrounding woods. I watch the deer in the evenings and early mornings. I climb the trails through the woods on the Pine Hills. In the Spring I watch the bald eagles and herons who follow the alewives swimming up the streams to spawn in the ponds. It is humbling to be surrounded by such natural beauty.

I am well aware that in a few years my husband and I won't be able to do farmwork. We will become watchers instead of workers. The friends and stories from the hay fields will always be cherished.

As with all farming the hay operation may have to change. The farm fields and woods are mostly protected but surrounding developments have drastically increased the traffic on these narrow roads. Driving equipment between fields has become dangerous, hindering the farming operations. Hopefully there will be ways for farming to continue in this area. There will be changes and more lessons for others to learn.

Ed. Note: Photos taken over the years by Ann with the exception of Ann's picture which was taken by her husband, Jock.



Friendship Garden Update

Steve Gates and Kim Allsup

As reported in the January 2024 *Gazette*, a working group of Friends under the auspices of the Peace and Social Order Committee met during December and January to discern what we might do to address food insecurity on Cape Cod. Here we report on how our leading has evolved and how it has been supported by West Falmouth Friends and The Peace Abbey.

The working group's objective was simple: *Help achieve food justice in Falmouth.*¹

The Proposed Plan

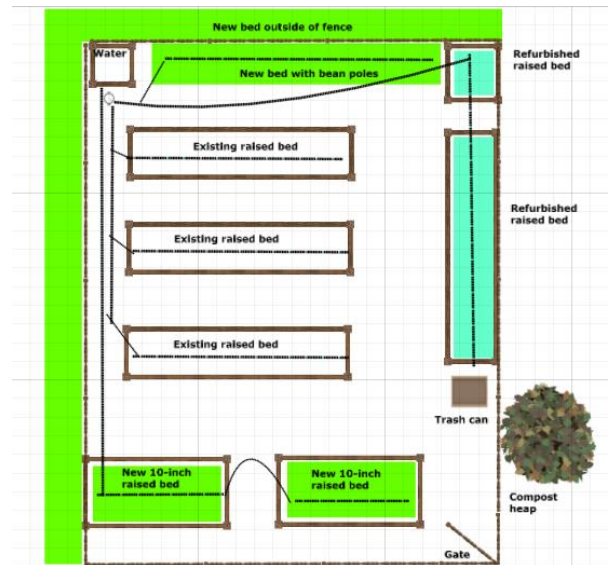
While there are many ways to achieve food justice, the working group chose to approach this objective primarily by building raised-bed vegetable gardens and providing gardening mentors so food-insecure individuals can grow produce steps from their homes. The connection between each gardener and a personal mentor is unique to this project and led to the project's name: Friendship Gardens of Falmouth. We also chose to build one or more community gardens where food-insecure individuals could come together to learn about gardening and create community. The first of those community gardens will be the garden next to Quaker House.

At this point in the project, we imagine envision 3 phases:

Phase 1 (2024): The garden at Quaker House is used to help figure out the best way to create raised beds and grow vegetables in those beds. We will host weekly gardening sessions where everyone can share the work, the conversation, and the joy of being in nature. The effort will rehabilitate the Quaker House garden to grow food for food-insecure individuals. A special focus will be on two 4' x 8' beds which will each be a model Friendship Garden similar to those we plan to offer to food-insecure people in Falmouth in Phase 2.

Phase 2 (Fall, 2024): Work begins with a few individuals who receive raised garden beds, soil, plants, materials, and a personal mentor.

Phase 3 (2025 and beyond): The focus of this phase is to deliver a significant number of raised beds. This phase will also include an evaluation of phase 2 and the development of a team of mentors and other volunteers.



The refurbished Quaker House garden will have (in light green, above) 2 new 4 x 8 raised beds and two new beds outside of the fence. One of the existing beds will be reserved for the summer tenants.

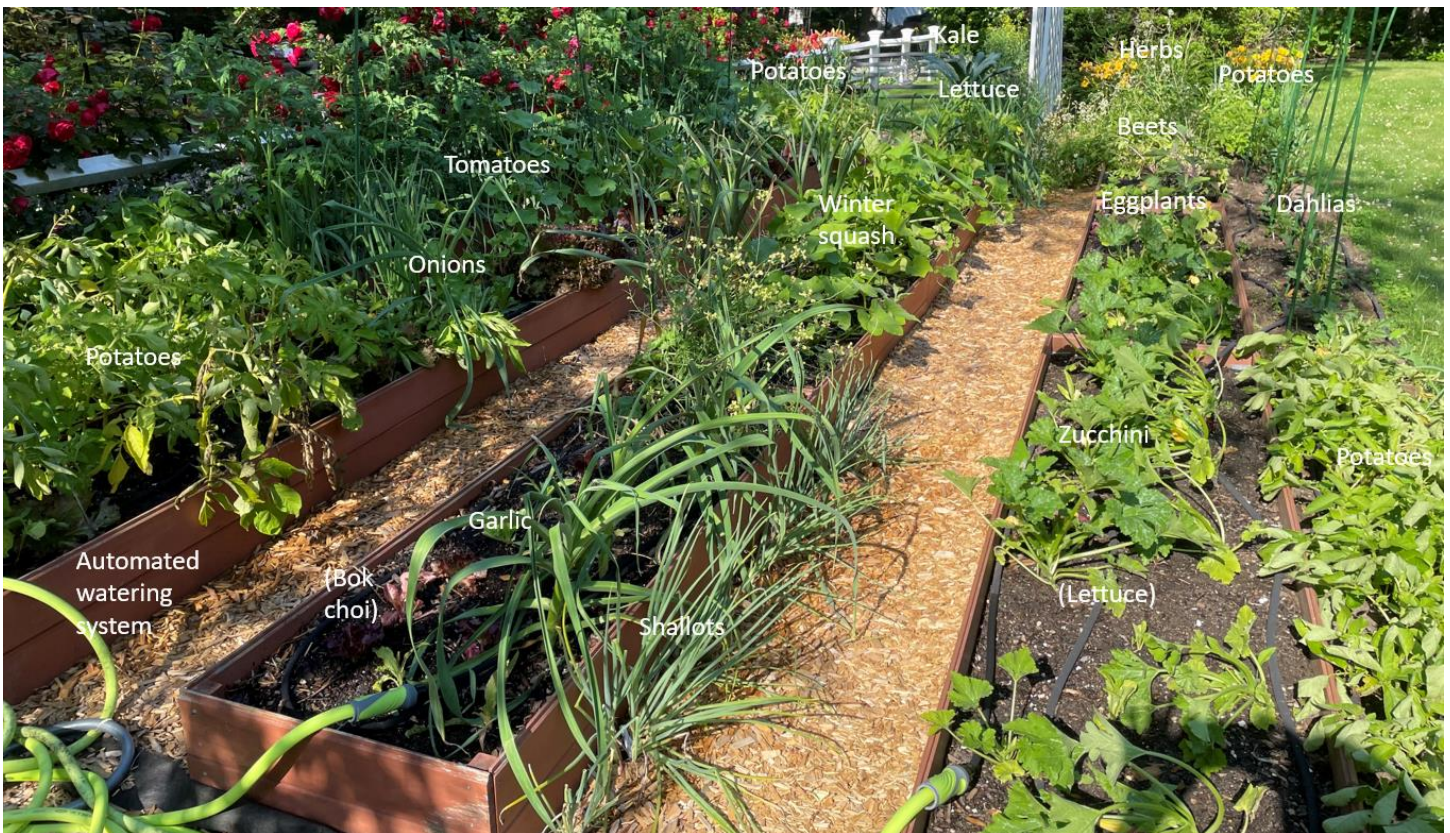
¹ “Food justice asserts that no one should live without enough food because of economic constraints or social inequalities. Food justice reframes the lack of healthy food sources in poor communities as a human rights issue.” Mares, T.M. and Alison, H.A., Mapping the food movement: addressing inequality and neoliberalism. *Environment and Society*, Vol 2, Issue 1, 2011.

Progress to Date

At the January 28 Meeting for Business, Friends reached unity around supporting the work of this project by funding it with up to \$3,000. In February, The Peace Abbey, led by director Lewis Randa,² agreed to provide a non-profit home for the project.

The project will soon shift into high gear on the major activity of Phase 1, which is to renew the garden at Quaker House. We hope to have an initial set of cold-tolerant vegetables in the ground by early April, with the garden filled by mid-May. Later in 2024, we will begin Phase 2, using the remainder of the \$3,000 and other monies from fund-raising efforts to begin constructing raised beds for food-insecure families.

We welcome your participation in all phases of this project! This Sunday, March 3, after meeting in afterthoughts we will ask everyone to name the vegetable they consider a must-grow in a family vegetable garden. Following hospitality, we will have a hybrid meeting in which we invite anyone willing to help plan the details of the two 4 x 8 gardens. Details will be sent out separately. Please call Steve or email Kim if you have any questions.



Steve's street-side raised-bed vegetable garden (July, 2023)

² The Peace Abbey has supported numerous peace and social justice projects. Readers of the *Gazette* may recall articles on two of these: The Global Pandemics Touchstone and The Native Land Preservation Action / Reparation (see p.4 of this issue).

On the Trail: Update

Paul Denoncourt

Last summer in my Appalachian Trail Postscript (July 2023 *Gazette*) I reported that after completing the Appalachian Trail I experienced something the literature identified as Post-Trail Depression. It was really more a grieving for what was lost on completing the hike than actual depression, but one of the recommendations I found was to set a new goal, i.e., find a new purpose. So, I “set my sights on hiking the John Muir Trail (JMT) in California’s Sierra Nevada in the summer of 2024. Over 220 miles, it winds through Yosemite, Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks. It is described as the most beautiful hiking trail in America. Although much shorter than the A.T., the terrain is more difficult. Almost entirely above 8,000 feet of elevation, it ends at the summit of the tallest mountain in the continental U.S.: 14,500-foot Mt Whitney. Altitude sickness is a risk. Your backpack is heavy with food as resupply opportunities are scarce. Being above the tree line for weeks makes you vulnerable to weather. The number of hikers is strictly limited; each hiker must carry a permit, and permits are issued by a lottery system six months in advance. The odds of scoring a permit are small as there are many more applicants than there are permits. I have discussed this with Spirit to whom I have turned the permit problem over. Meanwhile, I have begun the planning process.” (July 2023 *Gazette*, p.13).

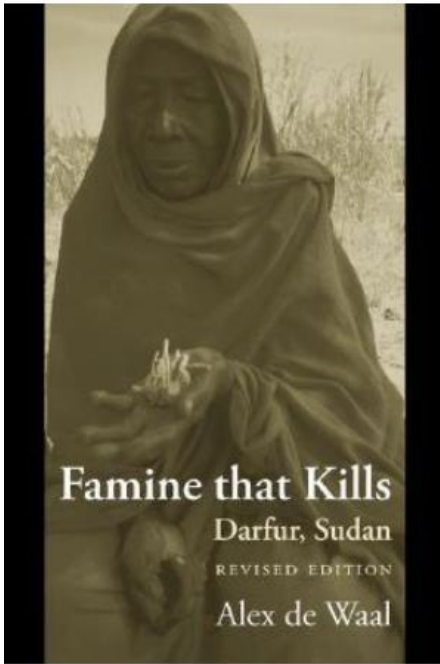
As a sign of Faith that Spirit will handle it, I have deliberately not considered a “Plan B.” To date, six drawings have occurred and I have yet to score a permit. There are still three more drawings, and while I know that that is two more than Spirit needs, I confess the waiting is painful. Perhaps I am being taught an uncomfortable lesson – that Faith must trump disappointment. I had thought Faith eliminated disappointment, but being human, I guess they coexist – a most uncomfortable condition. In the meantime, I am in limbo.



Looking ahead to summer 2024 on the John Muir Trail. Seven Gables is located in the heart of the Sierra Nevada between Yosemite and Kings Canyon National Parks.

What We're Reading

John Davidson: *Famine that Kills Darfur, Sudan* by Alex de Waal.



Famine is on the rise across Africa this year. Although famine killed more than 70 million people during the 20th century -- nearly as many as died in World War II, according to South African Economist Stephen Devereaux, one of the foremost experts on the topic -- by the early part of this century many observers thought that famine had been overcome, due to technological advances in food production and distribution, economic growth, and a much-expanded global response capacity.¹ But more recently, famines in Somalia in 2011 and later in South Sudan made it clear that acute food shortage had returned as a major threat.² By 2023, the list of famine-risk countries had grown to at least seven, including Somalia once again, neighboring Ethiopia and South Sudan, as well as Yemen, Afghanistan, Nigeria and apparently Darfur in Sudan, which is being wracked by civil war. Most recently with the breakdown of the Russian-Ukrainian grain export deal, the number of acutely food-insecure people has reached perhaps its highest level in history, threatening starvation from Madagascar to Haiti and Myanmar.

In addressing this global crisis, the first question that arises is -- what is famine and what causes it? A well-known and widely respected book dealing with this issue is Alex de Waal's *Famine that Kills Darfur, Sudan*. Published originally in 1989, the 2005 revised edition examines the famine in 1984-6 in the Darfur region, with a broader discussion of trends there over the century. The author critiques what he calls the "disaster tourism" of the media, and searches for the political and economic as well as ecological roots of famine, emphasizing the decline of the soil due to desertification as well as the negative impact of the distant and predatory Nimeiry dictatorship in Khartoum. In discussing the definition of famine, the author emphasizes inadequate access to food because livelihoods have been damaged or destroyed. This led in the specific case study under investigation (after two years of failed rains) to widespread malnutrition, ill health, and death. In this case as in most famines, deaths are frequently caused by infectious diseases, rather than outright starvation, in large part because severe malnutrition compromises human immune systems, making people -- and especially young children who frequently comprise the majority of famine deaths, as well as those over age sixty -- much more susceptible to common diarrhea or diseases like measles. The author does not provide a precise estimate of the extent of the famine, but his statistics indicate that excess deaths during the 1984-85 famine period were about one hundred thousand (p. 176).

¹ Maxwell, D. "Famine: a renewed threat in the 21st century?" *Great Decisions 2023*, Foreign Policy Association, Inc.: New York, NY, 2023, p.65.

² *Ibid.*, p.66.

Famine is the confluence of a complex set of interactions that include an extreme lack of access to adequate food but are manifested in acute malnutrition, ill health, and ultimately excess mortality. The author begins by discussing the soil and history of Darfur. He conducted extensive field research among the tribes and villages of the region, and describes the extensive desertification which had taken place over the previous decades. He starts by describing the village of Saiyah, which made the visitor sad and pessimistic because the villagers seemed locked into a downward spiral of impoverishment and environmental destruction, while their responses (based on their cultural history) served only to destroy the environment they depend on (p.42). The author describes a social system “that cannot contain a relentless pressure to expand cultivation, which destroys fallowing, pasture, and forest, and undermines the ecological foundation for its existence (p. 42).” The author next discusses the farming community of Nankose, which was a more productive but highly economically stratified village speaking Arabic and Fur located two hundred miles to the South. De Waal, to his credit, focuses on identifying the poor, as these are the people most likely to suffer the effects of famine. He also describes the people of the town of Zaghawa, who displayed flexibility and had migrated to other places across Darfur in the face of a series of droughts.

The history and concept of famine in Darfur, looking at the food dearth of 1913-14 as well as the famine of 1888-92, are discussed in detail, these being remembered as the “famine that killed (p.113).” The author then discusses rainfall and drought in great detail. The climate was getting drier, and the desert was creeping southward. Local people and experts were in agreement that environmental decline was occurring, although there were various disputes concerning the causes and consequences of environmental decline due to desertification, concerning the role of animals and the causes of the decline in rainfall, but there was a general consensus that it was happening (p.86). De Waal wrote that since 1969, a combination of drought, desertification and economic changes have transformed Zaghawa society (p.93). He explains that they moved away from herding cattle toward goats and camels. The Zaghawa in the author’s view “do not subscribe to the Fur or the Arab moral geography,” but he had difficulty describing the Zaghawa moral philosophy.

The author emphasizes the conflict between local and external interpretation, and discusses famine according to the general model of understanding and responding to famine that has developed in Darfur: hunger, destitution, and death. These can be summarized (p.227):

1. Hunger, that you just put up with. In discussing hunger, the author considers the importance of skill at gathering wild grains and discusses at length the market in grain such as millet as deficient and far from “free.” He concludes that “People appear to have chosen to forego eating grain (p.140).”
2. Destitution, which you do your utmost to prevent. The most important general conclusion here is that people’s principal aim during the famine was to preserve the basis of an acceptable future way of life, which involves not only material wellbeing but also social cohesion. This frequently involved keeping camels, goats or other animals alive so as to utilize their food potential, as well as keeping access to land for farming.
3. Death, which is beyond your power to influence.

I would recommend this book to any Quaker, because it does a good job of analyzing mass hunger leading to disease, destitution and death from the standpoint of those who actually experience it. Certainly, those who actually face famine and resulting death do not obsess about it, or sentimentalize it, because their situation would not allow such a luxury.

de Waal, A. *Famine that Kills Darfur, Sudan*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005.



An amaryllis once belonging to Alta Mae Stevens blooms again.

Front cover: Snowdrops near Quaker House. Back cover: View from East Sandwich Meeting - house. S. Gates, February 2024.

The Gazette is a publication of
West Falmouth Preparative Meeting
Rita O'Donnell, Editor
Alta Mae Stevens, Founding Editor
Stephen Gates, Photographer
Brenda Nolan, Transmitter

The next Gazette will be the May 2024 issue. Deadline is Wednesday, April 24.

