

THE GAZETTE

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

West Falmouth Religious Society of Friends

MAY 2021



Contents

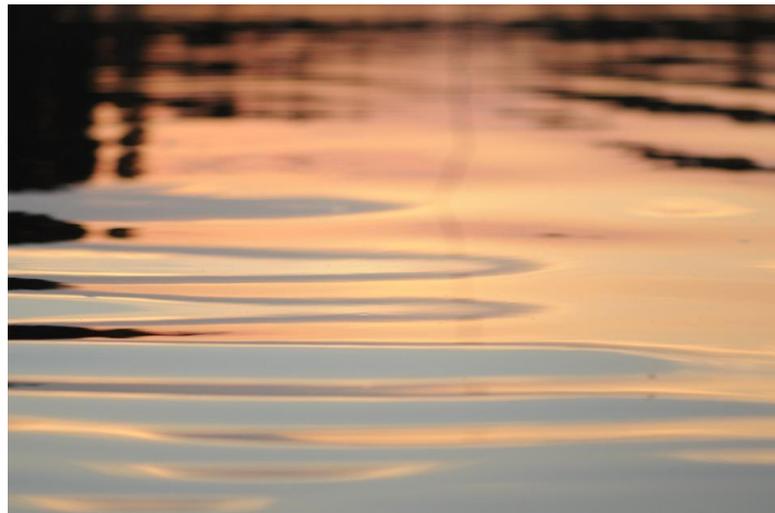
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From The Monks of Mount Athos (excerpt)

“When a pond is greatly agitated by the breezes and the wind, one can throw in a pebble or even many pebbles and there is no noticeable effect. When a pond is perfectly at peace and one casts a pebble into it, the gentle waves spread in every direction till they reach even the farthest shore.

I have noticed in the greater quiet that thoughts for better or for worse are much more perceptible, carrying so many resonances. When we are in the midst of a busy everyday life, so many thoughts go in and out of our minds and our hearts that we do not perceive the effect they are having upon us. But when we come to achieve a deeper inner quiet, then we are much more discerning. The way is open to following even the most gentle leadings of the Spirit and to avoid even the most subtle deviations”

Pennington, M. Basil. *The Monks of Mount Athos: A Western Monk's Extraordinary Spiritual Journey on Eastern Holy Ground*. Nashville, TN: Turner Publishing, 2003, p.69.



Officers

Fran Lightsom, clerk

(508-548-9186;

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Molly Cornell, recording clerk

Clyde Tyndale, treasurer

Regular Events

Adult Discussion Group

Sundays at 9:00 a.m.

Peace and Social Order

2nd Sunday at 12:00 p.m.

Erica Adams, convener

Growth and Learning

3rd Sunday at 12:00 p.m.

Sunny Davidson, convener

Empathy Practice (NVC)

Usually 1st Saturday 9:30–11:45

Brenda Nolan, convener

Restorative Circle Practice

Usually 1st Saturday 1:00-3:00

Brenda Nolan, convener

Ministry & Counsel

Cynthia Rankin, clerk

(508-360-7536)

Sunny Davidson, co-clerk

West Falmouth Meeting for

Worship with Attention to

Business

Usually 4th Sunday

(May 23, June 27)

Note: Due to COVID, many of these events are on hold. Check with committee conveners to be sure.

Upcoming Events

New England Yearly Meeting

Beacon Hill Friends House – Simple Morning Meditation Practice

– Held via Zoom **Monday through Friday** from 8:00 – 8:30 a.m.

The meditation is 15 minutes long, and begins and ends with a brief introduction to the practice. Orientation for newcomers begins at 8:00 a.m. and practice begins at 8:10. Join once or join regularly! The meditation is free and open to the public. See <https://bhfh.org/virtualprograms/simple-morning-meditation-practice-5/>.

Walking with the Bible – A monthly series of Bible hours on the *first* Sunday of the month cosponsored by Woolman Hill and Beacon Hill Friends House. On Sunday, **May 2** from 4:00 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. the guest leader will be Benigno Sánchez-Eppler who teaches at Amherst College and at the Quaker Peace Institute of Cuba Yearly Meeting. He has collaborated on translating early Quaker writings into Spanish. Open to all. Register at <https://donorbox.org/walking-with-the-bible-spring-2021-series>.

Quaker Earthcare Witness in partnership with Friends General Conference is hosting monthly online worship sharing. The next will be on **April 28** and **May 26** at 8:00 p.m. Learn more and register for either of the remaining sessions at <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZArdyhrzwjHd3WkD1z2zBoyqzj5SZEetUG>. For additional worship sharing opportunities see <https://www.fgcquaker.org/resources/online-worship-opportunities>.

JHYM Retreat (Junior High Yearly Meeting): Theme TBA, **April 30-May 2**. A virtual weekend retreat for Quaker youth in grades 6 - 8. Watch <https://neym.org/events-calendar/2021/04/jhym-retreat> for more details.

Roots of Injustice, Seeds of Change: Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples –Saturday, **May 15**, 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. In this two-hour participatory workshop, sponsored by Friends Peace Teams, we will hear the story of the colonization of this land in the words of Indigenous leaders, Euro-American leaders, and Western historians. We will take part in the story through experiential exercises and share our responses and reflections in small groups. Together, we will explore steps we can take to build relationships with Native peoples based on truth, respect, and

justice. Next available workshop is May 15. April workshop is full. Register at <https://friendspeaceteams.org/trr-2021-05-15-workshop/>.

West Falmouth

Weekly Sunday Worship continues to be held via Zoom. We invite Friends from Yarmouth and East Sandwich to join us. An e-mail with the specifics on connecting to this virtual format will be sent a day or so before. The Zoom meeting opens at 9:30 a.m. Starting at 9:50, we settle into worship.

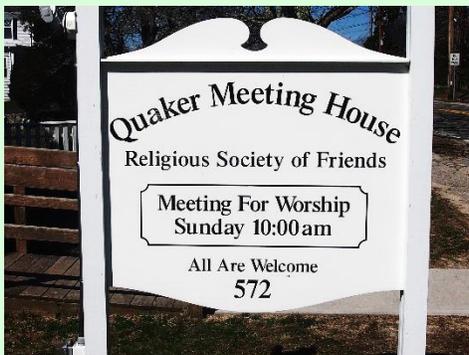
Quaker Women – We continue to meet weekly via Zoom on **Thursdays** at 7 p.m.

Peace and Social Order –Sunday, **May 9** at 11:30 a.m. via Zoom.

Meeting for Worship to celebrate the life of Alta Mae Stevens will be held on **May 25** at 2:00 p.m. Worship will be outside on the lawn at Quaker House. In the event of rain, the meeting will be May 26.



Weekly Outdoor Vespers will begin on **May 11** at 4:00 p.m. behind the meetinghouse. Please wear a mask, practice physical distancing, and bring a chair and bug spray. Vespers will be canceled if the temperature is 55 degrees or below, or if it is raining.



Also of Interest

Weekly Taizé service. Thursday evenings in **May** (6, 13, 20, 27) at 7:00 p.m. This is a style of worship that comes out of an ecumenical monastic order in central France with a strong devotion to peace and justice through prayer and meditation. The service will include recorded chants, spoken prayers and readings, and about twenty minutes of traditional Quaker silent waiting worship. See <https://neym.org/events-calendar/weekly-taize-service-online>.



Cape Cod Museum of Art through May 30 -- artist Jane Lincoln's show, ENOUGH, focuses on mass shootings in the U.S. since 1949. The show originally consisted of forty-one pieces each telling the story of a mass shooting, with each person killed in the event represented by a ragged hole in a black ground. In the week before she hung the show Lincoln had to update the display with three more pieces to represent the killings in Atlanta, Boulder and Indianapolis. See <https://www.ccmoa.org/enough>.



FCNL Virtual Events –

Witness Wednesdays, Silent reflection, together, in community. 5:15 – 6:15 p.m. Registration required.

May 5 - <https://act.fcnl.org/event/witness-wednesday-virtual-events/2158/>.

May 12 - <https://act.fcnl.org/event/witness-wednesday-virtual-events/2159/>.

May 19 - <https://act.fcnl.org/event/witness-wednesday-virtual-events/2160/>.

May 26 - <https://act.fcnl.org/event/witness-wednesday-virtual-events/2161/>.

Thursdays with Friends, A discussion of current events and their impact.

May 13, 4:00 – 4:30 p.m. *State Suppression of Voting Rights* with Rev. Adam Russell Taylor, author and president of Sojourners. Register at <https://www.fcnl.org/events/thursdays-friends-state-suppression-voting-rights>.

May 27, 4:00 – 4:30 p.m. *Episode 28*. Register at <https://act.fcnl.org/event/thursdays-with-friends/2109/>.

Learn to Lobby in 30 Minutes! May 18, 6:00 p.m. Are you excited to take action, but not sure where to start? Do you want to organize a virtual meeting with your Member of Congress, but still have more questions? FCNL is providing the training you need to have an effective lobby visit. Join a 30-minute interactive call where we will share inspiring stories from our grassroots network, conduct a short skills training and answer questions about how to schedule and plan your visit. Register at <https://www.fcnl.org/events/learn-lobby-30-minutes-7>. Will also be offered June 22 at 6:00 p.m.

FCNL News and Updates –

Read *The For the People Act Moves Closer to a Vote with Senate Hearing*. Author Kameryn Point reports on the For The People Act, described by NYU's Brennan Center for Justice as the most significant voting

rights and democracy reform bill in more than half a century. See <https://www.fcni.org/updates/2021-04/people-act-moves-closer-vote-senate-hearing>.

Pendle Hill Events –

Daily worship via Zoom from 8:30 – 9:10 a.m. See <https://pendlehill.org/explore/worship/join-us-online-for-worship-in-the-barn/>.

A First Monday Lecture with Marcelle Martin: *Healing the Disconnect*, Monday, **May 3**, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. via Zoom. Free and open to the public, but registration required. See <https://pendlehill.org/events/healing-the-disconnect/>.

Online Reading Group – On **May 12**, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. via Zoom, the group will read *Holding One Another in the Light*, Marcelle Martin’s Pendle Hill Pamphlet #382. Register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/pendle-hills-reading-group-may/>.

Kairos: A Spiritual Journey, a spiritual retreat with Francisco Burgos, Pendle Hill’s executive director, **May 13 – 16**. This *kairos*, an ancient Greek noun describing an opportune and decisive moment, is rooted in meeting for worship and worship sharing; *lectio divina* (divine reading); silence; community; work; study; and celebration. Basic fee of \$100. See <https://pendlehill.org/events/kairos-a-spiritual-journey/>.



Eric Edwards burning brush at Quaker House, April 2021. Photo credit: Molly Cornell.

Good News on Social Justice -- On April 20, in an historic moment in this country, a Minneapolis jury found Derek Chauvin, a white police officer, guilty of the murder of George Floyd, a 46-year old Black man. Placing the verdict in context, Benjamin Crump, attorney for the Floyd family and lead prosecutor, noted in his post-verdict remarks that the verdict did not represent *justice* -- *justice* would bring George Floyd back to his loved ones. Rather, what the Floyd family got was *accountability*, the *first step towards justice*. The Floyd family remarks following the verdict were notable for their generosity of spirit, casting the tragedy, the trial, and the verdict in terms of the larger community of marginalized people. Crump reflected this same spirit in an earlier interview with Bloomberg Law, where he said, "I take cases that not only will have an impact on the individual and their family but will have impact on society and impact many people."¹ As Diane Randall of FCNL noted, "The guilty verdict gives us hope that justice in this country is possible."²

The lawyers reported receiving unprecedented amounts of email on the case, frequently of a threatening nature. The Court itself received unprecedented amounts of email and telephone calls regarding the case. In response, on April 20 Judge Peter Cahill ordered information pertaining to the jurors – names and other identifying information, juror profiles, juror questionnaires, and the original verdict forms containing the signature of the jury foreperson -- be filed under seal and remain sealed in the court record until further order of the Court.³

¹ <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/business-and-practice/attorney-ben-crump-talks-death-threats-and-push-for-equal-justice>.

² <https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2021-04/step-forward-racial-justice>.

³ Read the order at https://mncourts.gov/mncourtsgov/media/High-Profile-Cases/27-CR-20-12646/Order-Other_4-23-2021.pdf.



"We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long, but bends towards justice."

From a speech by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., *Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution*, delivered at the National Cathedral, March 31, 1968.

Good News on the Climate Crisis -- There has been much hopeful news about the climate crisis during the past month. Since this is a global problem, requiring global action, the most potentially impactful of these is the list of actions and goals announced by the Biden administration at the recently-concluded global climate summit. The headline was that the President committed the U.S. to a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.¹ Stay tuned for the details on how Congress will respond to the challenge.

At the state level, the Baker administration has signed into law a new roadmap for 2050, laying out how the state will achieve a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and achieve net zero emissions by 2050.²

And finally, a positive-within-a-negative announcement is anticipated from the U.N. The negative: global emissions of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, reached a high last year. The positive: according to the anticipated report,³ methane, largely arising from oil-field leaks, is relatively easy and cheap to reduce compared to CO₂. Because the lifetime of methane is short, around ten years, a reduction now can result in a sharp near-term reduction in the risk of global warming. "Overall, a concerted effort to reduce methane from the fossil fuel, waste and agricultural sectors could slash methane emissions by as much as 45 percent by 2030, helping to avoid nearly 0.3 degrees Celsius of global warming as early as the 2040s," according to the *New York Times* update on the report.⁴

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/24/business/bidens-climate-change.html>.

² <https://www.hklaw.com/en/insights/publications/2021/03/massachusetts-gov-charlie-baker-signs-comprehensive-climate-change-leg>.

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/24/climate/methane-leaks-united-nations.html>.

⁴ Ibid.



Chinese style watercolor by John Davidson.

Readers Write

Sadness of Last Piles of Snow in Brandon, VT

In Brandon VT for the weekend
late March 16 degrees last night
warming trend breaking out
full force these next few days
walking around sun out
people in shorts everyone
smiling through their masks

A guy plays guitar in the gazebo
he's really good and little kids
stop to dance as only 1 year olds can
pure joy in the body this could be
Spring in the 60s when love was in the air
but it isn't.

Rounding a corner a tiny
micro park consisting of maybe
50 square feet a single bench
a fence over a drop off to a falls
where ice remains lurk and shine
in the shadows covering rocks
impossibly beautiful nestled resistant to
the larger warm-up. So far.

People engage conversations
the sun the warmth the hope
of Spring seems universal uplift
in the local collective while
the lights are out in the Mean Streets
(Thank You Lou Reed)
of my perverse mind noting tho
nearly April Spring shouldn't come
this early up here in North Central VT

Yet another local flight of the wrong birds
on their way to the shrinking cooler
climes the birds know the profound
sadness of these last piles of snow.

Bill Holcombe



Nolle Prosequi

Lewis Randa

Nolle prosequi is a Latin phrase meaning “will no longer prosecute.”

Darn it! The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, I was informed, belatedly, does not support the charge of disturbing the peace issued against me during my peaceful civil disobedience arrest on February 5, 2020. I was granted, to my dismay, *Nolle Prosequi*.

The disturbing the peace charge resulted during a protest of the U.S. Senate’s acquittal of President Donald J. Trump in his first impeachment. I stood with others holding the Peace Chain on Main Street in Sherborn, Massachusetts expressing my objection to the acquittal, but unlike the other protesters, I refused on the third and final demand by police to leave. I had met with the police beforehand and explained every detail of the action, including that I would peacefully consent to arrest.

I was handcuffed, fingerprinted, brought to Framingham District Court where I spent the afternoon in a holding cell with a dozen men arrested for various and assorted crimes before pleading not guilty to disturbing the peace. What mattered most to me was not being found innocent, but rather having the opportunity to share with the judge what peaceful protest that involves civil disobedience looks like from the inside out. I was guilty, certainly, of any number of other charges, which were not issued —but disturbing the peace wasn’t one of them.

The issuance of the *Nolle Prosequi* was handed down despite my efforts to claim the right to explain to the judge the extent to which I sought to organize peace, not disturb it. As Quaker, I felt it necessary to take the action I did on behalf of my country. It was abundantly clear that Donald Trump was a clear and present danger to our democracy; for me, doing nothing wasn’t an option.

It is well to note that this action took place in the street in front of the Pacifist Memorial in Sherborn, where a 9-foot statue of Gandhi towers overhead. And it is also worth noting that this memorial park honors the contributions of nonviolent activists. I was arrested, to be sure, for employing the tactics and strategies of the more than eighty pacifists honored there. If I am guilty of anything, it is taking seriously the teachings of Gandhi, Dr. King, Daniel Berrigan, Muhammad Ali, Howard Zinn, Pat Farren and dozens of others whose bail money for peaceful, civil disobedience would amount to a small fortune.

In receiving the news of the issuance of *Nolle Prosequi*, I felt, in an absurd and self-contradictory way, that *my* peace had suddenly been disturbed. Against the backdrop of the January 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, I felt compelled to present to the judge what Nonviolent Direct Action entails -- its moral authority, its concern for the protesters, the police, and the general public -- its willingness to speak truth to power in the face of adversity. Though I wasn’t afforded the opportunity to make that contrast before the Court, “I tried.” These two words best exemplify the life of this peace activist, and countless others who continue on the path of nonviolent resistance.



Nolle Prosequi

The Helping Hands Gift Card Initiative

Alan Burt

In my discussions with a number of homeless outreach workers, hunger came up as a serious problem area for the homeless who were not able to stay at the shelter. Their food stamps would run out towards the end of each month, adding hunger to the misery of being homeless. I shared this problem with two other Quakers, Bill Holcombe and Lewis Randa, and we came up with a program to address this area of need. We named the program *The Helping Hands Gift Card Initiative*. The focus of this program is to purchase Stop and Shop gift cards that can be used for food as well as for gas as a number of the homeless are living in their cars.

Thanks to the generous donations from a number of individual Quaker members, along with the Sandwich Monthly Meeting and other community members, we raised nearly \$6,000.00. As a result, more than 100 homeless men and women received \$50.00 stop and shop gift cards this winter. Some of the donations were used to purchase personal items, which were needed and greatly appreciated by some of our homeless neighbors.

I had the honor to distribute some the cards to homeless men and women who were spending most of their days on the Hyannis Village Green. There are no words adequate enough to share the prayerful thanks I got from so many of the card's recipients. I did not do all of this work on my own. My dear friend, Billy Bishop, the co-founder of Homeless Not Hopeless gave out a number of the cards to the street people in Hyannis. I gave cards to street outreach workers at the department of mental health and the housing assistance corporation. I also gave cards to Robyn's Resources who distributed them to homeless Wampanoag individuals in Mashpee. And I gave cards to the caseworkers in the Belonging To Each Other Program in Falmouth, who like these other organizations work directly with the homeless.

So many of the men and women who are living on the streets are not only hungry for food, they are hungry for loving attention. The *Helping Hands Gift Card Initiative* responded most lovingly to both needs.

Although winter is over, this program is still very much needed. I am therefore asking for your further support. And please spread the word about this program. Make sure to note that no one is on the payroll, that 100% of donations go directly to the poor. If anyone wishes to know more about this program, please call me at 508-648-2246 or email me at alanburtmail@yahoo.com.

Loving Appreciation

Alan Burt, Quaker

Donations can be made to the Peace Abbey Foundation, a nonprofit organization at 16 Lavender St., Millis, MA 02054. Please enter *Helping Hands Gift Initiative* on the memo line of your check. If you need more information on making a donation, please call Lewis Randa, the director of the Peace Abbey: 508-259-8508.



What We're Reading

John Davidson: *Assad or We Burn the Country: How One Family's Lust for Power Destroyed Syria* by Sam Dagher

I found interesting the lengthy description in *Assad or We Burn the Country* of the way in which the Assad regime had used the Western press and senior politicians for over forty years before the war started in 2011 and played extensive games with Western intelligence services trading information for influence. It explains the utterly self-confident conviction of Bashar, his wife Asma, and their advisors that the West could always be manipulated and would not be serious about upholding international law against killing civilians. The Arab Spring of 2011 started in Syria with children and adolescents writing slogans on walls when the Arab world was swept by a wave of optimism and widespread hope that the democratic outcome in Tunisia would be repeated across the region.

Sam Dagher is a local journalist who grew up in Syria, developed extensive connections there with wealthy regime families, and was working there as the war in that country got going following the Arab Spring in 2011. In reading his well-written and carefully researched account, the reader keeps wondering-- how could a small elite group (the Ba'ath military and party leadership led by the ruling family) proceed to slaughter or drive out of the country more than half of their nation's citizens? The answer is that it happened little by little, then all at once. The Assad family dynasty had used mass murder as a tool of dictatorship since seizing control in the 1960s, and they as the war started really had no plan B, as they abhorred the idea of relocating elsewhere. As the killing got out of hand following the slaughter of those involved in the initial peaceful demonstrations, the military decided to continue doing what they knew best, which was mass killing of civilians as well as soldiers. Large-scale military assistance from Iran and Russia allowed the regime to retain control after 2012, when it became clear that the United States, France, and the Arab countries wanted Assad gone, but were unwilling to intervene, and were either unwilling or unable to put together an effective military force to stop him. Bashar and his allies concluded that time was on their side, and regarded their impunity as a given, due to the wayward and unsteady attention of those who opposed him in the West.

Sam Dagher provides a level of detail on the history of the family regime which is impressive, as he clearly lived there for much of his life, allowing him to present an insider discussion of regime-connected families who made a lot of money out of corruption and state-sponsored monopolies. Bashar al Assad's older brother Bassel was the heir apparent back in the early 90s, and as the self-confident playboy was supposed to take over the dictatorship when his father died. Bashar was shy and not very social, sent off to London to train in ophthalmology. Bashar became the substitute heir in 1994 after Bassel managed to kill himself in his Mercedes-Benz 500E, driving off an embankment at top speed racing to the airport in a fog to catch a plane to Europe. Bashar had always been shunned by his father and had been in the shadow of his handsome and charismatic "golden knight" brother - the equestrian champion and daredevil army officer who parachuted from planes (p.78). Bashar had to overcompensate by becoming the "great leader" truly committed to the army's doctrine of mass killing of civilians, while repeatedly claiming to journalists in his excellent British-accented English that he only wanted peace. Dagher does a good job of explaining the Alawite paranoia and



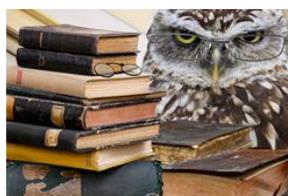
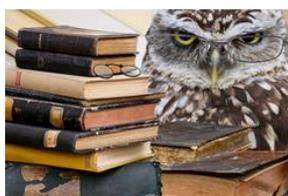
fear of public elections in Sunni majority Syria, as well as the attitudes of machismo and gangsterism which explain the willingness of the military to conduct mass slaughter. The Alawites are a Shiite sect which had long been an oppressed and looked down upon minority in Sunni-dominated Syria. The name comes from Ali, the grandson of the prophet who was said to be his rightful heir, killed by the Sunnis at the battle of Karbala. As the thugs of the regime ravaged Syria, not only killing with barrel bombs but demolishing and making uninhabitable vast areas, they scrawled on the ruins of homes “Assad or we burn the country.” This explains the unwillingness of millions of refugees to return to their former homes, despite the conclusion of the war in most parts of the country aside from Idlib province.

It is worth noting that the Western embassies and intelligence agencies actually concluded in 2012 that Bashar would not be able to retain power, and that the rising against him would succeed. The regime had been underestimated, but then it sent its agents to Tehran for extensive training in cyberwarfare and surveillance and thus was able to successfully infiltrate and monitor the armed groups who arose against them (p.269). The opposition had no central leadership or strategy, which put it at an enormous disadvantage, and none of the various hastily constructed “fronts” were large enough to take on the army. Advocates of peaceful resistance, not the gunmen or Islamic fanatics, posed the gravest threat to Assad family rule, and thus the terror organs of Bashar sought from the outset in 2011 to first destroy the advocates of democracy and peaceful change. Through the rest of the war, they claimed that there was no peaceful democratic opposition, only armed Islamic fanatics as they razed to the ground one Syrian city after another. The brutality of the regime was an advantage against the divided opposition, whose struggles over leadership and ideology were fueled by the competing agendas of regional powers such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, as well as Western intelligence agencies.

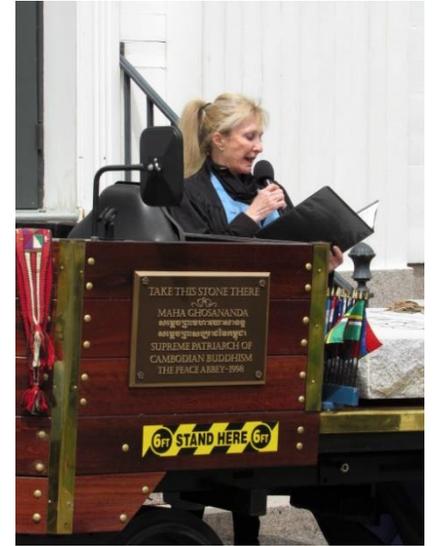
Sam Dagher’s account is journalistic rather than social scientific and is not focused on the phases or periods in the war over the past decade. For example, he fails to mention that global warming contributed to the bad crop yields which led to building resentment among poor Sunni farmers against the Alawite regime before the war started. Although his account of the initial three years of the war is a good read, the reader who wants a more systematic discussion and more focus on the later historical periods (2014-2021) should consult the article on Wikipedia entitled “the history of the Syrian Civil War.” The seventeen-phase periodization set out there is quite useful to understand what happened over the past six years, and provides extensive information on the Turkish intervention, the phases of the Russian intervention, and the American role. As in a discussion of the Spanish Civil War or the Thirty Years’ War, some of the periods and some of the events are much better documented and understood than others.

I would recommend this book to any Quaker who might be interested in the problem of war crimes or genocide in the modern world, as well as the broader issues of contemporary international relations. War should be a thing of the past, but the tragedy of Syria as well as the recent decision of the Burmese military to open fire on crowds of peaceful protesters shows that this problem is still with us.

Dagher, S. *Assad or We Burn the Country: How One Family’s Lust for Power Destroyed Syria*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Company, 2019.



April 18th Global Pandemics Stonewalk, Duxbury, MA



The Pandemics Stone was pulled from First Parish Church to Holy Family Church on April 18. The Rev. Catherine Cullen blessed the Stone on its departure (upper right) and Father Bob Deehan (shown in middle photo) blessed it on its arrival. The last photo shows the Stone being pulled through the Mayflower Cemetery, immediately adjacent to First Parish Church.

West Falmouth State of Society Report for Calendar Year 2020

2020 was a year of pandemic and learning for West Falmouth Friends.

Depth of Worship

How is worship in your meeting? How do you know?

In response to COVID, we learned to use Zoom for meetings for worship, business, and committees. In many ways this opportunity has been a boon to the cohesion of the meeting community and the depth of our gatherings for worship. Although virtual meeting was initially difficult, our Zoom worship experience has become a sanctuary. Occasional spoken ministry brings a personal spiritual message to those present. After worship we have enjoyed an opportunity to hear a greeting from everyone present, many of them heart-felt, many of them providing an opportunity to share the joys, challenges, and sorrows of each other's lives. Attendance at our virtual meetings for worship rivals that of our previous face-to-face meetings bringing together new and long-distance friends.

Exploring the Quaker Faith Tradition

How do you explore the Quaker faith tradition together as a meeting community?

How do children and youth in your meeting explore the Quaker faith tradition?

How do you help newcomers as they explore the Quaker faith tradition?

In the spring, our women's group shifted from monthly potlucks to weekly gatherings. Zoom has offered a presence that strengthens us by being able to see one another. Our members actively engaged in writing postcards to encourage voting, and training and offering workshops on restorative justice affirming our values. The circle talk group made the transition to a screen of rectangles and continued to practice sharing and listening from the heart. Our first day school adapted to a Zoom breakout room with visits from Friends to share how they live their Quaker faith.

Loving One Another

How do you demonstrate love and care for one another within your community?

Are there unresolved conflicts, or old wounds that need to be tended to?

Friends regularly communicate with elderly Friends and seek to be aware of needs and special hardships of members and attenders when they arise. We try to communicate with enough frequency to prevent isolation and encourage connecting with those unable to attend Meeting for Worship. The diligent work put into the Gazette has helped us stay connected. Before the critical stage of the pandemic, Friends gathered for mid-week worship at a retirement home.

Friends from neighboring meetings have joined our Zoom worship, along with many from out of state. Their faces and voices brought us joy. We were especially glad to see one elderly member who managed to join us regularly from her sick bed in Ohio. However, we have missed local Friends who did not join us for worship via Zoom. During warm weather, we experimented with socially distant outdoor worship and committee meetings. We gathered in spirit for both an outdoor memorial meeting and one held via Zoom.

Shifting to Zoom has been challenging. We have grown in technical skills, behavioral norms, and worship-care practices, all of which take time. Unfortunately, while we were learning, we have unintentionally offended each other. However, we are working on this. We need to honor each other and acknowledge some of the pain and hurt so we can live into our faith. The relationship of NEYM and FUM is still an unresolved conflict in our meeting at large.

Supporting One Another in Living Your Faith in Your Whole Lives

Does your meeting spend time considering together how Friends live the Quaker faith tradition in the context of their daily lives? Does this exploration include: your families? your friendships, your work and school, your personal finances and property, and your neighborhood or local community? If so, what have been the fruits of these conversations? If not, what prevents you from having this type of conversation?

Many individual Friends participated in a variety of virtual based Quaker meetings, courses, retreats, and gatherings with Friends beyond our local meeting, some of which include QUNO, AFSC, Quaker Earthcare Witness, FCNL, Quaker Institute for the Future, and NEYM Global Climate Change.

Discerning God's Leadings and Taking Action

Within the last year, how have you acted on God's leadings as a community?

Resilience

Can you tell a story about an experience your meeting had this year that you learned from? What happened, and what did you learn?

Right relationship with our indigenous neighbors was a major theme this year. We supported the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe in their trouble with the Federal Government, their petition to change the Massachusetts flag and seal, and donated to the tribe's food pantry. The anniversary of the Mayflower landing at Plymouth was the occasion for Friends to learn about the cultures and history of the original residents of our region. We stood in a silent worship on our town green in solidarity with our friends of color, affirming Black Lives Matter.

Presence and Relevance Beyond the Meeting

How do the gifts and the needs present within your neighborhood/local community impact your Meeting?

How does the presence of your Meeting impact your neighborhood/local community?

Early in the year, Friends worked with the West Falmouth Library on a series of history programs. The January talk on "Quakers in War and Peace" focused on historical Cape Cod Friends opposing war. A West Falmouth Friend organized a February "Wampanoags Speak" program with Wampanoag speakers, which had the largest audience by far for any public event ever held at the library. The remaining Quaker-led events were delayed because of the pandemic, but in September a walking map of West Falmouth was released, containing information on the Quaker history of the village and including Quaker sites. Repairs are being done to our building as we continue meeting online. We look forward to gathering in our meetinghouse again when it's safe to do so.





**Next Gazette Deadline
Monday, May 24**

Endpage: Louise Luckenbill's
tulips now blooming in Salt Lake City.
Photo credit: Christine Chastain.

The Gazette is a publication of
West Falmouth Preparative Meeting
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Alta Mae Stevens, Founding Editor
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