

THE GAZETTE

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

West Falmouth Religious Society of Friends

JUNE 2022



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CHAPTER VII

THE QUAKERS AS PEACE-MAKERS

IT is a mistake to call Quakers "non-resisters" or "passivists". They are neither. They do not face any giant evil with a passive attitude. They seek always to organize and to level against it the most effective forces there are. They know as well as anybody does that instincts and passions are not changed by miracle and that peace cannot prevail where injustice and hate are rampant. They seek to do away with war by first doing away with the causes and occasions for it; that is, by removing the fundamental grounds from which war springs, by eliminating the roots and seeds of it in the social order, and by forming an atmosphere and climate that make war unthinkable.

Jones, R.M. *The Faith and Practice of the Quakers*. Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1958, p. 103.

Ed. Note: Photo from David Douglas's copy of the book with his annotation.

Officers

Fran Lightsom, clerk

(508-548-9186;

fran.lightsom@gmail.com)

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

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

June 26, July 24

July Birthdays

Bernie Nolan, 21

Carolyne Jordan, 22

Eric Edwards, 22

Rita O'Donnell, 22

Rpd Zwirner, 22

Ellie Armstrong, 23

Brenda Nolan, 27

Marilyn Brice, 29

Upcoming Events

New England Yearly Meeting

Spring Midweek Meditations – This spring Brian Drayton (Souhegan, NH, Friends Meeting) has offered monthly opportunities for Zoom-based worship-sharing and conversation, based on various selections from the writings of Isaac Penington. The final session in the Spring series will be on Wednesday, **June 15**. A week beforehand Friends will receive the Zoom link, the month's text and a few short questions for quiet reflection. Each gathering will open with quick greetings, followed by 15 minutes of conversation about the text. The rest of the time will be spent in worship-sharing. The final 5 minutes will be silent before we depart from our miniature retreat. To RSVP, please send an email with "Midweek Meditation" in the subject line, to Brian Drayton: drayton.be@gmail.com.

Save the Date! Annual Sessions 2022, August 6 – 11. After two long years, we expect Friends will be able to joyfully gather together, in person, at **Castleton University**, Castleton, VT for the Annual Sessions of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends. Some portions of the program are being planned as hybrid events so that those who wish to may participate by Zoom. For details, check with <https://neym.org/sessions>.

Wednesday, **June 2** – **Film: *The Truth Tellers***, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. *Truth Tellers* is a new documentary chronicling the lives of courageous Americans fighting for indigenous rights, racial equity, and climate justice. The film explores the intersection of these issues through the eyes of Robert Shetterly, a long-time Maine activist and artist. See the film and join a conversation with Shetterly. Learn more and register at <https://neym.org/events-calendar/2022/06/film-truth-tellers>. Note: this event is restricted to Friends in New England.

August Birthdays

Jonathan Joyal, 1

Larisa Davidson, 2

Karen Hunter, 8

Nancy Holland, 27

Events in the Quarter

Saturday, **June 4 -- Pride Day** at Buttonwood Park Zoo in New Bedford, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Sunday, **June 5 -- Pride Day** in Fall River 12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m.

On both days, there will be a **Quaker table** with representatives from meetings in the New Bedford/Fall River area.

Sunday, **June 12 -- Work party** after worship at **New Bedford**. Lunch included!

Saturday, **July 9 – Smith Neck Flea Market**, 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Vendors may rent an 8' table for \$20. Rain date: July 16.

Saturday, **July 9 – Sunday, July 17 -- Westport Book Sale.**

Saturday, **August 13 – Smith Neck Annual Clam Bake**, 1:30 p.m.

2022 Sandwich Quarter Meetings for Business

Saturdays, **July 23** at West Falmouth and **October 22** at Westport Meeting.

Saturday, **September 24 -- Ministry & Counsel** at Mattapoisett.

Sandwich Monthly Meeting

West Falmouth

Weekly Sunday Worship is held both at the meetinghouse and via Zoom at 10:00 a.m.

Peace and Social Order



Sunday, **June 12: Native Land Conservancy**, 12:30-1:30 -- Gail Melix, a Manomet Wampanoag and Quaker, serves on the Board of the Native Land Conservancy and will speak on indigenous land rescue and preservation.

Sunday, **July 10:** Andrew Gottlieb, executive director of the **Association to Preserve Cape Cod**, will speak on *Water Quality: Challenges Facing Cape Cod*. Gottlieb serves on the Mashpee Select Board and was Chief of the Office of Commonwealth Development under Governor Romney.



Sunday, **August 14: Committee Meeting**, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.



September 11 Reports: QUNO and Quaker Earthcare Witness -- Updates from Carolyn Lamar Jordan, QUNO representative and Rod Zwirner, QEW founder and representative.



Also of Interest

International Meeting for Worship -- noon to 1:00 p.m. EST

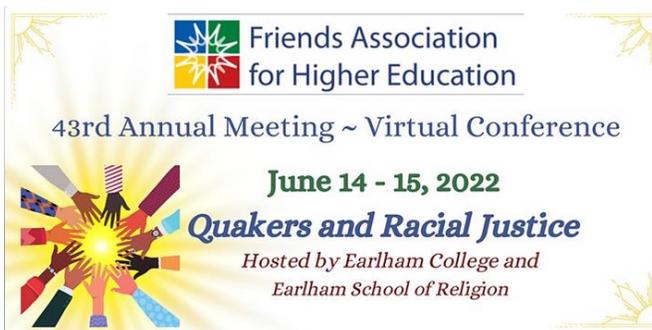
Join Friends around the world for a one-hour international Meeting for Worship every day at noon. Let us join together in holding in the Light the situation in Ukraine, the decision makers, the soldiers, the citizens, all the people whose lives are in danger and already disrupted by fear. See <https://neym.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Meeting%20Details.pdf>.



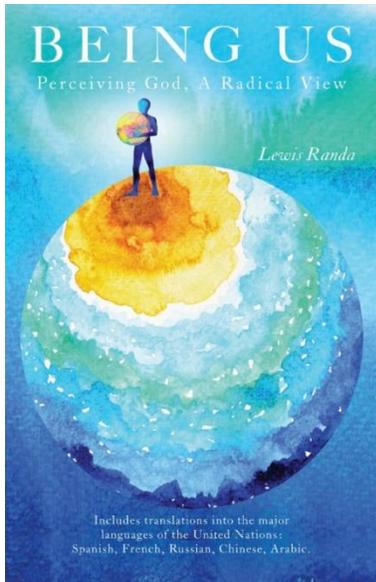
Saturday, June 18 – Mass Poor People’s and Low-Wage Workers’ Assembly and Moral March on Washington and to the polls

Why Do We March? We Assemble and March on June 18 because any nation that ignores nearly half of its citizens *is in a moral, economic and political crisis*. There were 140 million people who were poor or

one emergency away from economic ruin *before* the pandemic. Since March 2020, while hundreds of thousands of people have died, millions are on the edge of hunger and eviction, and still without health care or living wages, billionaire wealth has grown by over \$2 trillion. Learn more about the Poor People’s Campaign and the June march and register at <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/>.



Learn more and register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fahe-virtual-conference-2022-quakers-and-racial-justice-tickets-293872730247>



Lewis Randa's newly published book, *Being Us*, contains his article "The Dream," originally published in the February 2020 issue of *The Gazette* as part of a special section on meditations. The book addresses various perceptions of divinity and the appendix provides translations into the major languages of the United Nations. Lewis will be giving each of the three Cape meetings a copy of the book.

Above Us Only Sky, an exhibit curated by Erica H. Adams featuring Erica and five Boston-based artists. At the **Atrium Gallery** in **Moakley Federal Courthouse**, Boston Seaport, through **June 29**, Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. See <https://www.artsy.net/show/array-contemporary-above-us-only-sky>.



Blues Progression © 2022, Erica H. Adams, Watercolor and Ink Brush on Paper, 11 x 30 inches.

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/>.

Online **speaker series** in collaboration with Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre (UK) -- *Claiming Our Collective Power: Social Witness Among Friends*, Wednesdays, **June 1, 15, & 22**. How are our communities called to prophetic witness and social action in this moment of interconnected crises including environmental catastrophe, international war, economic oppression, racial injustice, and suppression of human and civil rights? Come share best practices, and inspirations with Friends from around the world. Learn more and register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/claiming-our-collective-power-social-witness-among-friends/>.

Illuminate Summer Speaker Series in collaboration with Barclay Press – *The Gospel of John*, Mondays, **June 13, 27, July 11, 25, and August 8, 22**. This series addresses the life, teachings, and actions of Jesus as described in the Gospel of John, the most theological of the four gospels. Learn more and register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/illuminate-summer-speaker-series-2022/>.

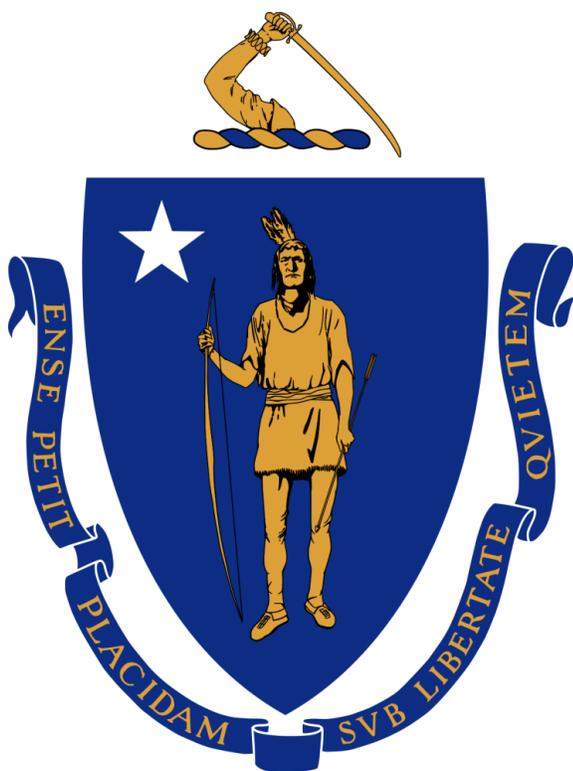
A First Monday Lecture with Lewis Webb, Jr. – *Illuminating Our Paths to Abolition*. Akin to the beacon to true north and freedom, there is a light above and within that illuminates our individual and collective journeys towards abolition of the prison industrial complex -- this is our North Star. Together, we will chart our paths to healing and restoration while dismantling systems of harm and punishment. Via Zoom, Monday, **June 6** from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. Free to the public, registration required. Learn more and register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/illuminating-our-paths-to-abolition/>.

June Online Reading Group – On **June 22** from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. we will be considering Quaker theologian Philip Anderson’s pamphlet, *Navigating the Living Waters of the Gospel of John: On Wading with Children and Swimming with Elephants* (PHP #352). This selection complements our upcoming Illuminate Summer Series on the Gospel of John (see above). Free and open to the public, registration required. Learn more and register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/pendle-hills-reading-group-june-2022/>.

Special Commission Votes to Seek Total Redesign of Massachusetts Flag and Seal

In the October 2019 issue of *The Gazette* Gail Melix, Wampanoag and Quaker, wrote about why the Massachusetts flag and seal needed a complete overhaul. On Tuesday, May 17, 2022 the Special Commission on the Official Seal and Motto of the Commonwealth voted unanimously to seek a complete redesign of the flag, seal and motto of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

“The six Indigenous members of the special commission (co-chair Brian Weeden, chairman of the Mashpee Wampanoag, Cheryl Andrews-Maltais, chairwoman of the Aquinnah Wampanoag, Melissa Harding-Ferretti, chairwoman of the Herring Pond Wampanoag, Elizabeth Solomon, treasurer of the Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag, and Brittney Walley, member of the Hassanamisco Nipmuc Tribe) ... pressed their colleagues to decide whether the full commission intends to seek minor revisions to the current flag, seal and motto, or to reject the current imagery entirely and start anew....The united call of the Indigenous leaders for a total redesign received a ringing endorsement from the director of Mass Humanities, commission co-chair Brian Boyles,” who spoke just prior to the unanimous vote of his colleagues. See full article and read Boyles’ statement at <https://changethemassflag.com/2022/05/19/special-commission-votes-to-seek-total-redesign-of-flag-and-seal/>.



Readers Write

A Postcard from the Appalachian Trail

Paul Denoncourt

I am now 24 days into this epic trek. I've covered 336 miles, from Harpers Ferry, West Virginia to Unionville, New York, 15% of the entire trail. Two of the four hikers with whom I started have quit and gone home. I've endured subfreezing nighttime temperatures, rain (once for two consecutive days flooding the trail), one bout of hypothermia and, so far, ten blisters.

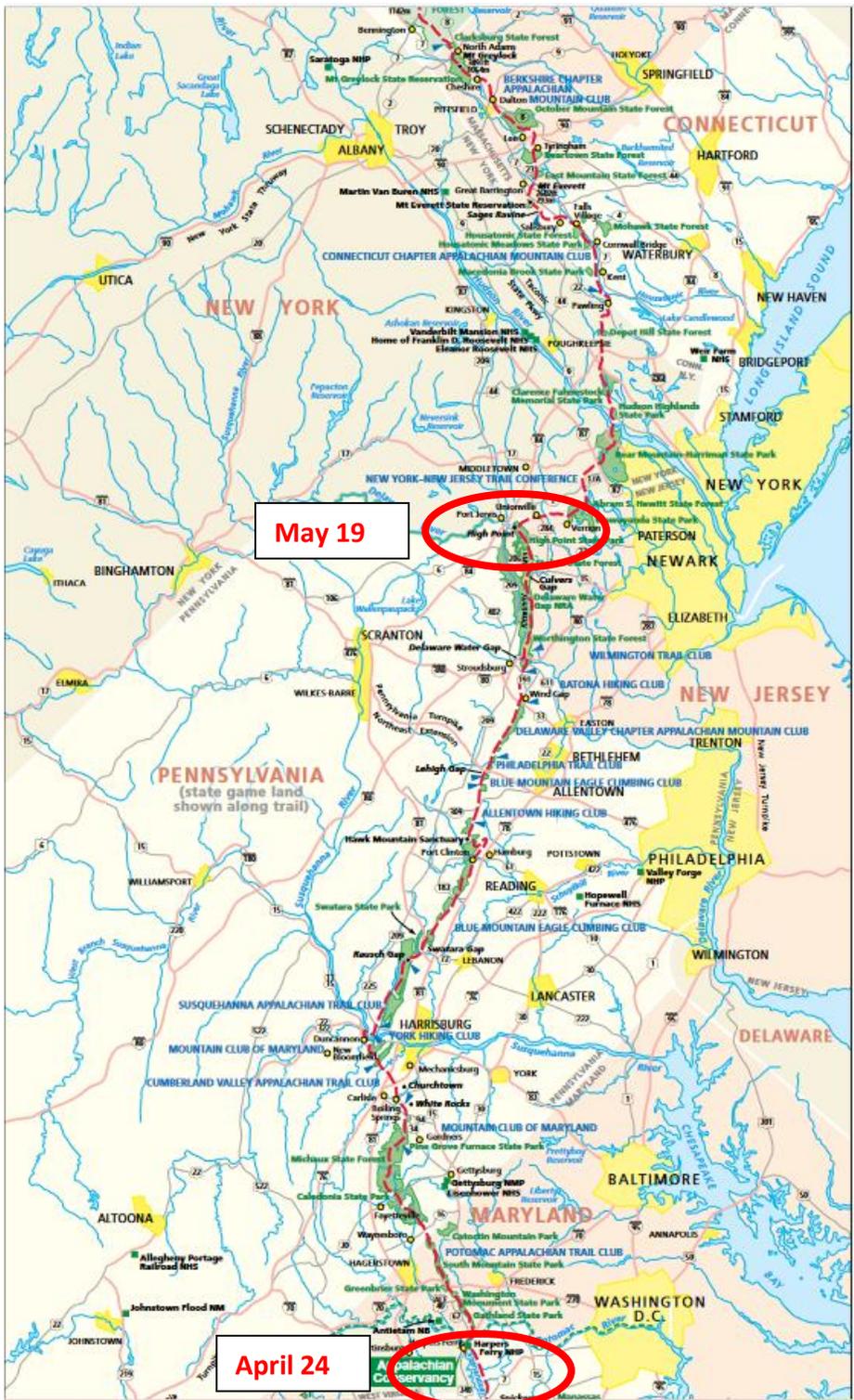
Despite the hardships, it has been fun. I've seen many amazing things. I did not know that before the Washington Monument in D.C. was built, a smaller monument to our founding father was constructed in Maryland; the trail goes right by it. I had my first ever encounter with a Timber Rattlesnake in, of all places, New Jersey. It ended happily for both of us. Just today I found this napping fawn trail side. I do not know where his mom was, but I left him to his innocent slumber.



May 19, 2022. Photo credit:
P. Denoncourt.

I have met many incredible people. My fellow hikers have all been friendly and, true to the code of the trail, we help each other out. When my down jacket fell off my pack, another hiker found it and carried it to the next shelter to return it to me. I did the same with someone's lost water filter. When I became hypothermic in a cold rain, a stranger stopped, dried me off, helped me get into dry clothes, and heated coffee to warm me internally. So far I have not met a bad person among the thru-hikers. Off trail people have been equally helpful from drivers who picked me up hitchhiking into town for a resupply to the kind lady who paid my bill at a Dunkin' just because I am a thru-hiker. One former hiker set up a trail-side kitchen and cooked a hot meal for every hiker who came along that day!

But the most amazing experiences occur within my mind. After several days in the woods wherein my mind was allowed to wander randomly, it ran out of things to think about and became somewhat -- although not completely -- still. It was only then, in the silence of mindful walking in Nature, that I sensed Spirit talking to me ever so softly. I did not hear voices, but received thoughts that came from beyond me. These thoughts always had to do with the trail, as if Spirit and the trail were one. Usually it goes like this: I realize I have a problem - for example, once I couldn't find the next shelter - then Spirit tells me, "I'll take care of it." In the lost shelter example, soon thereafter six young men emerged from the woods -- not the trail but the woods -- in khakis, collared shirts, and dress shoes. They were Mormon missionaries from Utah taking a day off from their work in the D.C area for an outing in the woods. We started talking and they informed me I had missed a side trail to the shelter. Although it was out of their way, they brought me back to it. The last thing I expected were Mormons to pop out of the woods, but Spirit works in amazing ways.



As additional synchronistic episodes like this occurred, and they did, I realized that I am not hiking the Appalachian Trail with Spirit riding along like an element of my subconscious, but Spirit is hiking the Appalachian Trail and I am going along for the ride. What a reversal of perspective! I no longer worry about logistical trail details. I know Spirit will work things out and will usually surprise me in the way it does so. Maybe Spirit does the same in my, and our, off-trail lives, too. I now thank Spirit when an exciting event -- like finding this fawn -- occurs. What a paradigm shift! The trail has already changed me!

Ed. Note: A number of East Sandwich Friends are spiritually accompanying Paul on his several-months-long journey on the Appalachian Trail. At 3 p.m. daily they stop what they are doing and hold Paul in their thoughts and in the light. They invite you to join them. Here are some of their observations about what this experience has meant to them.

Lewis Randa: Walking with Paul -- When my cell phone alerts me that it's once again 3:00 p.m., I stop what I'm doing, and imagine Paul along a winding path, weary,

though steadfast on his journey towards a destination that is as much a state of mind as a place on his trail map. I wonder what he's thinking, how he's feeling, what concerns him. I conjure up images of Paul sitting on a hill overlooking a broad expanse he is about to traverse or relaxing at a river bank where he dangles his aching feet, or in a meadow with his long legs outstretched, resting, knowing a group of Friends are befriending him in unison with Light and well wishes.

Companioning Paul from afar has provided an inner journey that refreshes my state of mind, offers a reprieve in the course of a busy day — a time that I too can mentally wander off in the woods and stop in amazement at nature’s beauty that I envision. Invariably I am left with a sense of awe and appreciation for what Paul has undertaken — and a humbleness at the capacity of the human mind to reach out and touch, to be in unison — despite the separation of distance and circumstance.

Companioning Paul on his long journey infuses me with a sense of wonderment these days — and getting to know Paul on a deeper level, this way, is quite extraordinary. It strengthens my appreciation of the spiritual realm. It reminds me of the gift and importance of the simple act of imagining.

Alan Burt: Each time I pause and hold Paul in the Light, I remember his sharing at the fireside chat with a few of us. As I reflect upon that, I feel honored to be a mystical part of Paul's spiritual journey. Here, Paul has entered into the light of inspiration, and so very consciously choosing to honor it in a remarkable and transformational journey on the Appalachian Trail. Even as I imagine him taking one step after another, I feel welcomed, nurtured and strengthened by him, in ways known and unknown.

Gail Melix: Every day at 3:00 p.m. my phone alarm goes off immediately connecting me to Quaker friends who have set their alarms similarly. I imagine us gathered together holding Paul in the Light and beaming our collective love into his space.

I mostly imagine him on a wooded path surrounded by green leaves and pine needles, the sun in its many positions of the day, the cycling of the moon at night and his notice of it. I wonder about the balance between his silent times and his conversation with others. I think about what a gentle man he is, how his footsteps and presence must be seen as a blessing by the Earth. I am anticipating his stories of the journey.



Nan Garrett-Logan and John Gates at the May 25th vigil on Falmouth Green to mourn the shooting at Uvalde, Texas. A similar vigil mourning the victims of the Buffalo, New York shooting was held only 10 days earlier. Photo credit: R. O'Donnell.

The Earthcare Ministry Committee of the New England Yearly Meeting gathered in Quaker House for an in-person retreat the weekend of April 29. Everyone arrived with a negative COVID test and no COVID symptoms. And it was a joy!

Because of COVID, we had not had an in-person retreat for three years. So we just basked in the pleasure of seeing one another again. And interspersed with silent worship, healthy meals, and a long walk at The Knob, the retreat gave us a chance to think deeply about what we wanted to do for the next several years and how we could best structure ourselves to reach our goals.

Prior to coming to the retreat, we had made one decision: we wanted to focus on **climate justice**. One definition of climate justice is this:

“Climate justice’ is a term, and more than that a movement, that acknowledges climate change can have differing social, economic, public health, and other adverse impacts on underprivileged populations. Advocates for climate justice are striving to have these inequities addressed head-on through long-term mitigation and adaptation strategies.”¹

As a religious group, we all felt called to address the climate-related inequities in New England. But the challenge was to come up with something we could do together across such a wide geographic area. We came up with a dozen or so ideas and spent time discerning the one that called to us the most. And the “winner” was --- **Green Amendments**. One of our members, Margaret Marshall, has been working on a Green Amendment for her home state of Maine, and her enthusiasm for this topic was contagious.

“STATE GREEN AMENDMENTS ARE: State-level constitutional provisions that: grant residents an affirmative right to certain environmental conditions; locate those rights under the state bill of rights, rather than elsewhere in the state constitution; and broadly include environmental rights like clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment.”²

Green Amendments were pioneered by Pennsylvania (1971) and Montana (1972), and most recently, passed by New York (2021). Four other states (Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, have constitutional provisions about environmental protections, but these are not in their Bill of Rights (and hence don’t meet the above formal definition). Other states, including Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, New Jersey, New Mexico, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia, have at various times considered a Green Amendment, but have not yet passed one.

Typically, a Green Amendment is quite simple. For example, the New York version is:

“Each person shall have a right to clean air and water, and a healthful environment.”²

The logic of a simple, short amendment is that it is much broader (if you enumerate all of the rights, any not listed will be excluded). Interpretation of the amendment is then left to the courts. However, this strategy has not always worked well. For example, in Pennsylvania the original judicial interpretations were quite narrow, and it wasn’t until 2013 (42 years after the passage of the amendment) that the state supreme court found a state or local statute unconstitutional because of the Environmental Rights Amendment, in the case of Robinson Township et al. v. Commonwealth (2013).² This and subsequent Pennsylvania and Montana decisions have, in fact, been the impetus for the passage of other Green Amendments because they demonstrated that such an amendment could have far-reaching positive impacts. Some key impacts from these early decisions included²:

- *...the Environmental Rights Amendment requires all branches 11 of government to consider environmental impacts before proceeding, and outlined the government’s responsibility to “refrain from unduly infringing upon or violating the right” guaranteed to each resident, including “anticipatory protection” of the environment. Addressing issues of equity, the*

¹ <https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2020/07/what-is-climate-justice/>

² <https://rockinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CLPS-green-amendments-report.pdf>

court further held in its decision that some “communities will carry much heavier environmental and habitability burdens than others” under Act 13, and that “this disparate impact is irreconcilable with the express command that the trustee will manage the corpus of the trust for the benefit of ‘all the people.’”

- The Amendment was found to be “self-executing,” meaning that the state legislature did not need to pass specific enabling legislation. In the specific case, for example, it found that the Amendment required that funds from the leases of land for oil and gas extraction had to be used for environmental purposes and not put in the state’s general fund, as had been the practice.

Our group has thus tentatively decided to work to support Green Amendments for all the New England states. We also decided to reorganize to become a “team” rather than a “committee,” reflecting our desire for a looser connection to NEYM’s governance structures.

All in all, it was a great weekend. We’ll be working out the details over the next few months. But we’ve already decided to change our name to the New England EarthQuakers.



EarthQuakers at the retreat included, left to right: Kim Stoner and Gail Melix, co-clerks, plus Reb MacKenzie, Neil Blanchard, Rod Zwirner, Margaret Marshall and Steve Gates (latter two not shown).

One of the ways in which we supported each other during our retreat was an exercise that helped us name the strengths and gifts we carry as individuals: Weavers, Experimenters, Frontline Responders, Visionaries, Builders, Caregivers, Disrupters, Healers, Story Tellers and Guides. It was affirming to hear peers naming what they see as our individual strengths and prompted thoughts/feelings about how these gifts might turn into actions for ecojustice.

All is Green!

Steve Gates

Finally, the moment arrived. Our electricity bill for March was negative! Not just a little negative, either:

No Payment Due	
Amount Due On 03/25/22	\$56.11
Last Payment Received On 03/08/22	-\$56.11
Balance Forward	\$0.00
Total Current Charges	-\$92.14

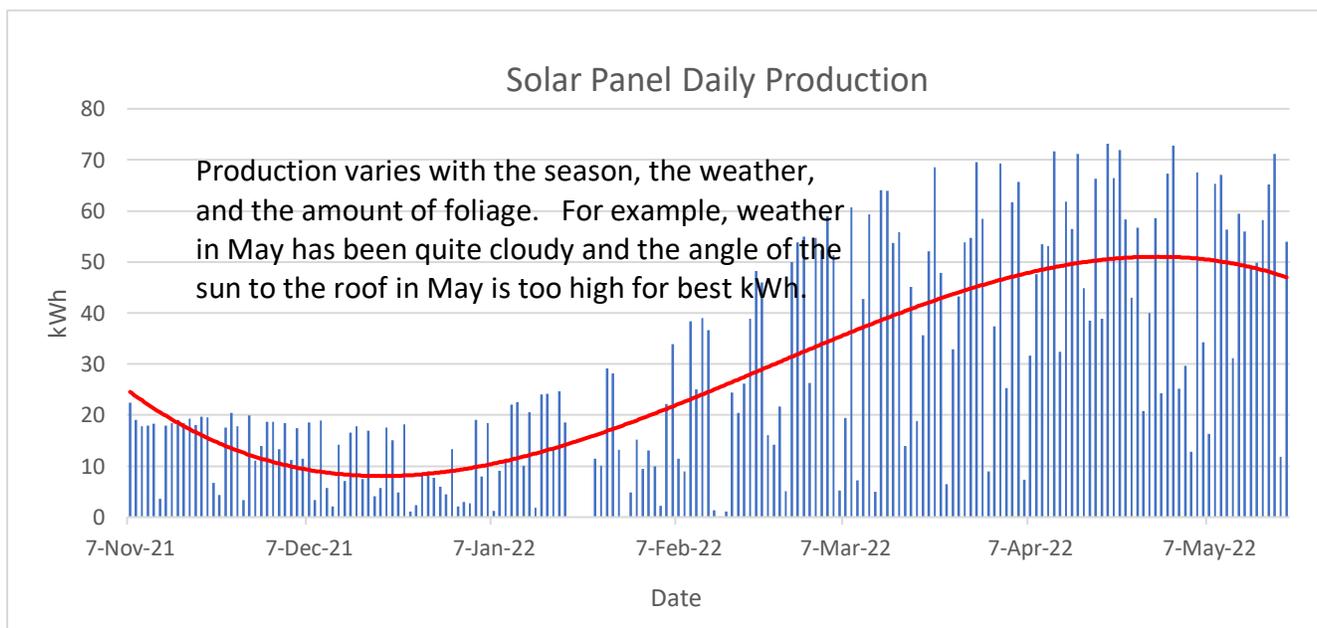
The bill was for -\$92.14! And for April, it was -\$195.37.

So let me explain a bit. No, that didn't mean that the power company (Eversource) sent us a check for \$92.14. Instead, they credited our account for this amount, against the times (in

the winter months) when the panels don't produce as much energy as our home consumes. The goal is that, over the course of a year, we have a net zero energy bill.

But it gets even better. Shortly, we will be receiving a check from Eversource every month as part of the Massachusetts "SMART" program.¹ This program provides a financial incentive to solar energy system owners during the first 10 years after the installation of the panels. And beginning in the summer (soon!), we will also be participating in the Mass Save "Connected Solutions" program,² which pays us an extra bonus for each of up to 60 times during the summer when they will draw power from our solar energy system's battery. These incentives, plus the federal and state tax rebates, help explain how the system can pay for itself in 6 or 7 years.

A side benefit of all of this is that our family has become much more aware of energy conservation, of the ebb and flow of the seasons and the weather (see graph below), and of our good fortune to be able to play a small part in helping to save our planet.



¹ <https://www.mass.gov/solar-massachusetts-renewable-target-smart>

² <https://www.masssave.com/saving/residential-rebates/connectedsolutions-batteries>

The Chamber-Pot Theory of the Climate Crisis

Opinion by Steve Gates

I've been thinking recently about the climate crisis and how to make sense of why humans are (not) responding to it. The scientific community is virtually unanimous in its view that we are heading toward a series of disasters ... and yet we (especially we in America) are not doing anywhere near enough to avert those catastrophes.

A picturesque view of the problem is what I'd call the Chamber-Pot Theory of the World, the gist of which is "use it and then lose it." Chamber pots were, in essence, a way of not having to go to the outhouse in the middle of the night. And in the morning, the maid (if you had one) would take the pot and throw the contents out the window, perhaps calling out "gardyloo" (a corruption of "garde a l'eau" or beware of water) to warn passers-by.¹ Out of sight, out of mind, problem solved.



Over time, of course, we modified our collective behavior as our understanding of the issues (e.g., the smell on the street, the germ theory of disease) and our technologies (e.g., indoor plumbing and the flushing toilet) improved. But even today, we still move the wastes only as far as our back yards (septic system) or perhaps the local water treatment facilities. In fact, most people have no idea where our waste goes, or what happens to it, except that it "goes away." But of course, it doesn't "go away" for everyone – particularly those living close to the waste treatment plant. And on a bad day (big storm with lots of runoff) even the waste facility may overflow its contents into the nearest stream or river, potentially affecting everyone downstream.

Numerous other examples of this type of behavior abound such as: how we handle our garbage; toxic holding ponds for coal ash, uncontrolled disposal of plastics – often in the form of microplastics – into the general environment, lawn and farm fertilizer leakage into the nearest waterway. Using nuclear power with little or no thought given to the long-term storage of the radioactive waste. And of course, our "disposal" into the atmosphere of the waste methane and carbon dioxide that are the products of our use of fossil fuels.

In all of these instances, there are real consequences to the way we dispose of these "wastes." Huge increases in asthma rates. Algae blooms in our waterways. And global warming.

But because the effects are not in our back yard (so far), we find it easy to look away. It's easy in part because the impact of these practices is often borne by those furthest away from their source, or least responsible for their creation, or both. Think here of our export of our manufacturing sector to other parts of the world, particularly China, where there are fewer restrictions on pollution – and which then, naturally, become highly polluted locations, which send some of their waste on to places like Cambodia where there are even fewer restrictions. Something very similar has also happened to our "recyclables."

Here are some examples that are closer to home. Have we ever done testing to determine if our historical meetinghouses contain toxic substances? We put nitrogen-rich fertilizer on our lawns, apparently unconcerned that the runoff to our ponds and streams leads to algae blooms that clog and poison our waterways. We don't talk about the five different types of pollution plumes slowly moving into populated areas from Joint Base Cape Cod.²

¹ <https://www.agecrofthall.org/single-post/chamber-pot>

² https://www.savebuzzardsbay.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/current-issues_toxic-pollution_groundwater-plume-massachusetts-military-reservation.pdf



The Chamber-Pot Theory, then, is one of massive moral myopia. That is, the further away something is in time and space from us, the less concerned we are about it. And what is further away from us than a climate crisis in our grandchildren’s time, caused by gases we can’t see far above us in the atmosphere?

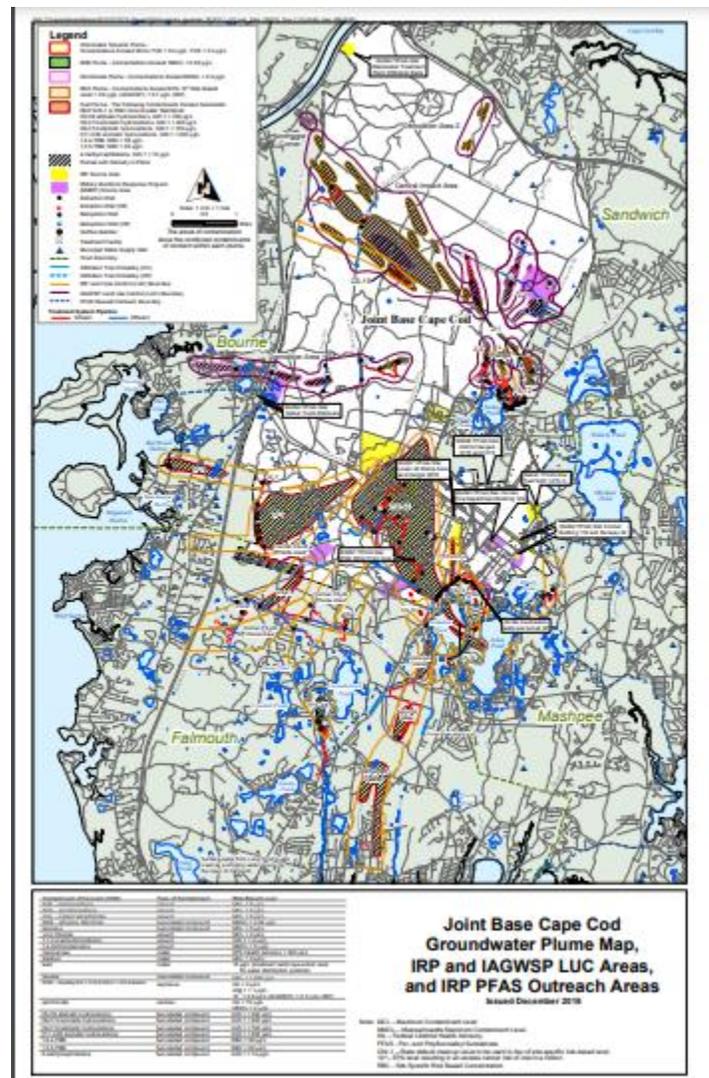
So should we all wring our hands and shake our heads about the prospects of solving these problems? No.

What gives me hope is that 72% of the population in the U.S. now agrees that global warming is actually occurring,³ And acknowledging we have a problem is the first step (of many) in solving it. We are all complicit.

it is now time for us –yes, including you and me -- to move on to the next step – which is to take action. By taking action, we move out into the world, and address our moral myopia. Pick something to tackle, no matter how simple or local, and just do it. Eat vegan. Measure how much electricity you use and reduce your consumption. Buy an electric car or solar panels. Join a group that is tackling the problem. Find a way to reduce the amount of fossil fuels you consume. Help your neighbors figure out what to do. Write a letter to your congressman. Oh, and one other thing – do it soon!

One way to expand our moral horizons is to consider the world of our grandchildren (and beyond). What will our planet look like in, say, 50 years? Will our grandchildren be asking why we, their grandparents, could not act to save a planet so that they could live comfortably? Why indeed?

To be clear, I’m not proposing we go back to chamber pots. But the model I like better is composting – turning the detritus that we produce into something that will *feed* the next generation. And even better is that we turn our moral eyes onto those around us who are already most affected by our collective bad decisions and see what we can do to help them as they improve their situations. That’s what climate justice tries to do. It would seem to me that our Quaker testimonies require no less of us.



³ <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us/>

Gun News in Falmouth

Nan Garrett-Logan

For what appears to be the first time in any Massachusetts town, on Monday, May 23rd the Falmouth Select Board adopted a policy to allow the destruction of surplus guns. This initiative was motivated by the Falmouth Gun Safety Coalition and their dogged work to follow each thread of possibility as far as it would lead.

Unfortunately, this particular Select Board did not request that the *current* surplus of twenty-three semiautomatic long guns, 'assault rifles' in common parlance, be destroyed. The current batch will be turned in to Powderhorn Outfitters in Hyannis for a credit toward new weapons. According to communications between the Falmouth Police and Powderhorn, the guns can be and will be legally sold to individual Falmouth Police officers.

These same guns can then be traded back to any federally licensed gun store in Massachusetts or elsewhere to be sold to individuals in any of the forty-three states that do *not* prohibit individual ownership of these military-grade weapons.

Given our current economic stresses such sales may be an appealing way the police can augment their incomes to pay for gas, child care, food, and rent.

Although it's not what we were hoping for at least we got the radical mention of destroying guns and the admission that guns are a different kind of equipment than other town equipment.

How do we measure that up against the mass murders in Buffalo and Texas this month? And those striking events, in turn, demand we admit that each day there are over one hundred gun deaths nationally, not counting mass murders. How do we give people enough hope to keep alive the more than sixty of these one hundred who decide to end their own lives with a gun? * Words fail.

*<https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>

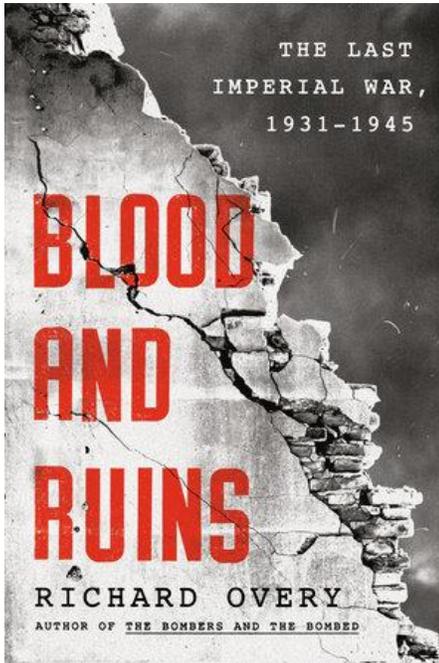


Signs at May 25 Vigil on Falmouth Green after Uvalde shooting. Photo credits: J. Gates.



What We're Reading

John Davidson: *Blood and Ruins: The Last Imperial War, 1931 – 1945* by Richard Overy



The Second World War has produced an almost endless series of well-researched articles and books, but distinguished academic British historian Richard Overy's recent effort to review all of this material and reconceptualize our understanding is worthy of praise. He seeks to recast the way we view the war, including its origins and aftermath, as "the last imperial war." He notes it had an almost century-long lead-up of global imperial expansion, which reached its peak in the territorial ambitions of Italy, Germany and Japan in the 1930s and early 1940s, before descending into the largest and costliest war in human history- and the end, after 1945, of all territorial empires.

Mr. Overy pushes us to take a global and social scientific perspective on the war, one that looks more broadly than the typical focus on technical aspects of the military conflict between the Allied and Axis states. Although he reviews the battlefield deaths and strategies, he digs deep into the research which has been conducted on the thoughts of those involved over the past eighty years.

Above all, Overy explains the bitter cost for those involved in fighting, and the exceptional level of crime and atrocity that marked the war and its protracted aftermath -- which extended far beyond 1945. He writes (pg. 818) "The absence of a secure moral compass meant that few moral perpetrators expressed much regret either at the time or subsequently." Many of the atrocities were collective acts, in which responsibility was distributed across the group, freeing individuals from the usual burden of guilt. Battlefield crimes in particular supplied a sort of rough justice in the absence of any formal policing. One American submarine captain claimed after the war that when he was asked whether he had any conscientious qualms about all of the sailors and soldiers he left to their fate in the water, he would reply 'no, as a matter of fact, I considered it a great privilege to kill those bastards.' (quoted by Overy from Sturma, 'Atrocities, Conscience, and Unrestricted Warfare: U.S. Submarines during the Second World War' p. 458.) Among the many descriptions collected at their trials in the 1960s of the security policemen who murdered Jews in the East, any sense of moral failure is reserved not for the victims, but for moments in which they let down their companions or failed in their duty (Overy cites his own research, "Ordinary Men, Extraordinary Circumstances," pp. 518-519). In these and other cases cited by the author, the idea of criminality was largely absent from post-war reflections. He correctly points out that in wartime, criminality was projected instead onto the victim community as the object of profound resentment (p. 818).

He explores the problem of just or unjust war under the conditions of the time, pointing out that total war had only two possible alternatives for a nation at war- total victory or total annihilation (pp. 596-660). Under these circumstances, any course of action that would achieve victory was justified, regardless of its

legal implications. Regimes on both sides pursued victory at all costs, and this was the moral cement that held the war effort together. The war for survival was everywhere viewed, by definition, as a just war, distorting the conventional legal and ethical description of the term which suggested that natural justice rather than Darwinian struggle ought to determine whether or not a war was just (p. 597). The popular view in September 1939, recalled a young German, was that “we had been attacked and we had to defend ourselves,” and it was the Western powers who were engaged in a conspiracy, not Germany (p. 598). (The Germans had staged an elaborate border incident involving an attack by Germans in Polish uniforms to prove that Poland was the aggressor state before their invasion of September 1939.) Defense of the German core against its enemies became the overriding moral obligation of the German people, inverting the injustice of German aggression into a just war for national survival. Such moral inversion was common to all of the axis states. Thus it should not be surprising that in Putin’s Russia today, with its total control of all media and means of communication, the state has no difficulty convincing the majority of the population that their country is under attack from NATO, and their country is not the aggressor but the victim.

There were profound moral dilemmas for those churches where pacifism was a theological imperative, and Quakers were opposed to war as such, but in a war commonly defined as a clash between Christian civilization and the forces of darkness, pacifist churches found themselves forced to make compromises (p.654). The small number of Quakers in Germany issued a ‘Peace Testimony’ in 1935, reaffirming the Religious Society of Friends’ commitment to pacifism, but it was not made binding on members and all but one of those conscripted undertook military service as non-combatants (Overy cites Anna Halle, ‘the German Quakers and the Third Reich,’ *German History*, II, 1993, pp. 222-226). In Britain, the Quakers were allowed to retain their rejection of violence because at the same time they encouraged active participation in civil defense and medical relief both at home and in the field as an example of what was called, paradoxically, ‘front line pacifist service’ (Overy cites his own research entitled ‘Pacifism and the Blitz’ pp. 222-223).

The moral rejection of participation in the war was in the end confined to men (and a number of women) prepared as individuals to declare their conscientious objection. This was a courageous response in the face of firm public disapproval and the coercive nature of the wartime state. Objection was only formally possible in the United States and the British Commonwealth, though under strict conditions. Neither the Soviet Union nor Nazi Germany had a legal provision for conscientious objection, and those who did object were treated as deserters and imprisoned and, in many, cases killed (p. 657). A total of only 43,000 Americans refused military service out of the 12 million mobilized (p. 659). Small though their numbers were small, conscientious objectors, where they could, defended the principle that even in total war it was possible to defy the moral imperatives imposed by the community in favor of individual moral choice.

Thought-provoking, original, challenging and comprehensive at 878 well-footnoted pages, *Blood and Ruins* will compel us to view the war -- and the ultimate struggle over the future of the global order-- in novel and unfamiliar ways. The discrediting of imperialism in the aftermath of World War II is still with us today, in that Putin calls NATO “imperialism” (and therefore the cause of the ongoing war in Ukraine) while the U.S. government refers to his attack on Ukraine as an attempt to resurrect a dead empire and

its subordinating social order. As Overy points out, neither the Soviet Union nor NATO practiced imperialism in the classic sense of the word (p. 876). However, the great majority of Ukrainians today regard the Soviet domination of their country as imperial, while Putin's description of NATO as imperialistic is open to dispute by the (generally formerly pacifist) majorities in countries such as Finland and Sweden, which far prefer NATO guarantees to the possibility of Russian attack.

Overy, R. *Blood and Ruins: The Last Imperial War, 1931-1945*. New York, NY: Penguin Random House, 2022.

From the Editor: The last few weeks stand out even in a series of very difficult years. How do we address the hopelessness so many of us feel, the need to know that we are somehow moving forward, to say nothing of the sheer exhaustion? In this issue, some F/friends have helped us by writing about their engagement with the natural world, and their work on climate justice, antiracism, and nonviolence.

Here is something else that is cheering albeit in a different way. This is something I have found that is so wonderful it makes me laugh again and again. I am referring to the Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain. If you don't know of this group, you should.

Start here:

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLgJ7pk0X-s>.

Theme from Shaft:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIMT-oEIQuo>.

Fly Me Off the Handel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUijx65ss9I>.



Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain, screen shot from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUijx65ss9I>.

Dear F/friends, *The Gazette* will be on hiatus for July and August. The next issue will be in September, the deadline for which will be Monday, August 22. Please keep me apprised of your work and activities. Have a wonderful summer! Rita O'Donnell, Editor.



Photo credits: Cover, End pages, Spring Garden, Rhododendrons, May, 2022, S Gates.

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