

THE GAZETTE

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

West Falmouth Religious Society of Friends

JANUARY 2024

Taking Sides

Today I am taking sides.

I am taking the side of Peace.

Peace, which I will not abandon
even when its voice is drowned out
by hurt and hatred,
bitterness of loss,
cries of right and wrong.

I am taking the side of Peace
whose name has barely been spoken
in this winnerless war.

I will hold Peace in my arms,
and share my body's breath,
lest Peace be added
to the body count.

I will call for de-escalation
even when I want nothing more
than to get even.

I will do it
in the service of Peace.

I will make a clearing
in the overgrown
thicket of cause and effect
so Peace can breathe
for a minute
and reach for the sky.

I will do what I must
to save the life of Peace.
I will breathe through tears.
I will swallow pride.
I will bite my tongue.
I will offer love
without testing for deservingness.

So don't ask me to wave a flag today
unless it is the flag of Peace.
Don't ask me to sing an anthem
unless it is a song of Peace.
Don't ask me to take sides
unless it is the side of Peace.

*Irwin Keller, Oct. 17, 2023. See Rabbi
Keller's blog at <https://www.irwinkeller.com/itzikswell/taking-sides>.*

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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
Cynthia Rankin, clerk
(508-360-7536)

**West Falmouth Meeting for
Worship with Attention to
Business**
Usually 4th Sunday
January 7, January 28, and
February 25.

Upcoming Events

New England Yearly Meeting

Meeting for Worship for Newcomers and Seekers – January 14 from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. (and second Mondays every month). Learn more and register at <https://neym.org/events-calendar/meeting-worship-newcomers-and-seekers-online>.

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 – January 27 at Mattapoisett 10:00 a.m. Coffee and greetings at 9:30 a.m. Following lunch, John Rider will speak on *Doing Right by the Right Whale*. After a history of Quaker involvement in the hunting of the now critically endangered North Atlantic Right Whale, what is being done and what can be done to help them recover and thrive?

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



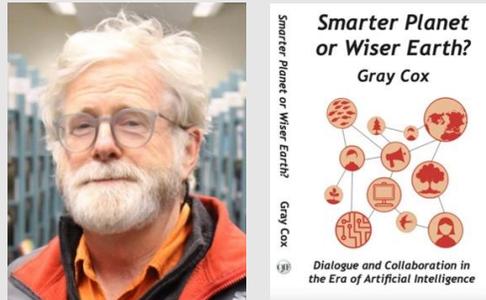
New Bedford – Work party after worship followed by lunch – Sunday, **January 14** and every second Sunday.

West Falmouth

Peace and Social Order – Sunday, **January 14** at 12:30 p.m. *A Quaker Approach to a Wiser Earth in the Era of Artificial Intelligence*. See next page for details. Note that videos of previous 2nd Sunday presentations can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/@westfalmouthquakers>.

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

A QUAKER APPROACH to a WISER EARTH in the ERA of ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



GRAY COX: Acadia Friends Meeting, Clerk: Quaker Institute for the Future
Faculty: College of the Atlantic Human Ecology program.
Author: Smarter Planet or Wiser Earth? (2023)

Artificial intelligence is transforming our world in ever more powerful and pervasive ways
How might it help promote what, in the FCNL phrase, is “The World We Seek”?

> In what ways does it threaten it? How can we as Friends best understand the ethical, economic, political, cultural, technological and spiritual challenges and opportunities it presents?

> How can we, as individuals and as communities, best speak to that of God in others in the context of the powers of reasoning and persuasion being exercised through AI?

Gray will present highlights from his new book which aims to offer a systematic Quaker perspective on these issues.

ZOOM TALK: SUNDAY January 14, 2024 at 12:30 -1:30 pm ET
Question + Answer period follows.

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

BIO: GRAY COX teaches philosophy, peace studies, language learning, and artificial intelligence at College of the Atlantic. He is author of The Ways of Peace; A Quaker Approach to Research and, in 2023 Smarter Planet or Wiser Earth? Dialogue and Collaboration in the Era of Artificial Intelligence available wherever books are sold and free as a pdf www.smarterplanetorwiserearth.com A member of Acadia Friends Meeting and Clerk of Quaker Institute for the Future, Gray is a singer/songwriter.



2nd Sunday Zoom Forum – a Quaker Series

HOST: Peace + Social Order Committee West Falmouth Preparative Meeting, MA (USA)

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2024

THE BLACKQUAKER PROJECT


5 FEBRUARY 2024

"Truth and Justice: The BlackQuaker Project Challenges Quakerism in the 21st Century"
Pendle Hill Presentation
Monday, 7:30 PM ET over Zoom Webinar


24 FEBRUARY 2024

THE BLACK QUAKER LIVES MATTER FILM FESTIVAL & FORUM:
"THE BAYARD RUSTIN LEGACY FORUM"
Saturday, 1:00 PM ET over Zoom Webinar

The BlackQuaker Project celebrates Black History Month with two notable events. Dr. Hal Weaver will offer a First Monday Lecture at Pendle Hill on **February 5**. See the following page for further information on Dr. Weaver's presentation. In addition, The Bayard Rustin Legacy Forum will explore the remarkable life and contributions of Bayard Rustin through a series of presentations from a distinguished panel of scholars and activists. The forum is sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee. Saturday, **24 February** from 1:00 -3:00 p.m. Learn more and register at https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ejLCWRumRe-3zOFhPfWKRA#/registration. Registrants are strongly encouraged to watch *Rustin* on Netflix prior to attending as the forum will not include a screening.

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

First Monday Lecture with Lauren Brownlee and Zenaida Peterson – *Addressing Patterns of Racial Wounding and Racial Justice in Quaker Communities*. **January 8, 2024**, 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. via Zoom. Register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/addressing-patterns-of-racial-wounding-and-racial-justice-in-quaker-communities/>.

First Monday Lecture with Dr. Harold D. (Hal) Weaver, Jr. – *Truth and Justice: The BlackQuaker Project Challenges Quakerism in the 21st Century*. **February 5, 2024**, 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. via Zoom. If Quakers were so active in the Abolitionist movement, then why are there so few African American Friends today? This haunting query, initially posed by a concerned Black Cuban Quaker visiting Wellesley Friends Meeting some years ago, will serve as a springboard for a presentation challenging Friends to greater commitment to Truth and Justice through new, innovative narratives and models. Register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/truth-and-justice-the-blackquaker-project-challenges-quakerism-in-the-21st-century/>.

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>

Annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday Breakfast

Monday, **January 15, 2024** from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. at the Sea Crest Resort in North Falmouth. The breakfast, hosted by Falmouth’s *No Place for Hate*, will feature Manuel Fernandez, Chief Equity Officer for Cambridge Public Schools, speaking on “Fostering Equity and Inclusion in the Community.”

Advance tickets are \$30 adults / \$15 students. Go to <http://www.npfhfalmouth.org/events.html>. *Deadline for advance ticket sales is January 11.* Space is limited. Tickets will be sold at the door only if space is available.



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.

Photos from New Year's Eve Gathering in East Sandwich





Lee Burns, New Member

Alan Burt

Alan Burt recently interviewed Lee Burns, who has completed the clearness committee process for joining Sandwich Monthly Meeting. This is a condensed version of that interview.

AB: Lee, tell me about yourself, your life which has brought you to Friends.

LB: I was born in Boston and lived with my parents of two faiths in a small apartment in Dorchester. In elementary school, the population of children changed from nearly all Jews to a more diverse class with a quarter of the students being African American. Thus, I was exposed to diverse cultures and faiths during my formative years. Our family moved to Randolph, a suburb south of Boston, where I attended middle and high schools. I did well and participated in several activities (news editor of the newspaper, science fair committee, spring track). Subsequently, I was an Army medic working in an emergency room and teaching emergency medical treatment to soldiers and ROTC cadets.

AB: Tell me more about your education.

LB: After completing my service, I earned a bachelor's degree in Biology followed by master's and Ph.D. degrees in Zoology from UMass. My training continued at Columbia University Medical Center, where I was a post-doctoral fellow studying blood diseases.

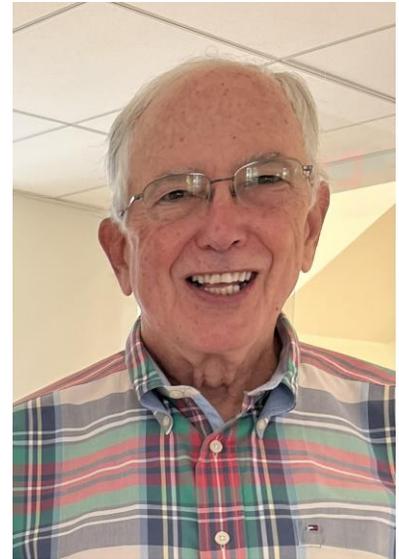
My professional career started at a new biotechnology company in Maryland in 1980. After three years, I transferred to the National Institutes of Health until I retired in 2009. My research throughout this time continued with a focus on isolating human genes and studying their cellular functions and perturbations of mutated DNA. Some of the proteins from the genes are currently being used to treat people. In addition, one endocrine tumor gene is in clinical trials to confirm its inhibition of specific leukemias.

When I retired in 2009, my family moved to Plymouth and then to Sandwich. Environmental and political advocacy groups became the focus of my volunteer activities.

In Plymouth between 2009 and 2017 I worked with Whale and Dolphin Conservation, the Natural Resources Coastal Beach Committee, the Network of Open Space Friends and served as a member of town meeting. In 2016 I cosponsored a citizen warrant to "ban thin plastic grocery bags" and from 2013-2018 I chaired the town's Energy Committee during which time we submitted a warrant to regulate "Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Systems."

In Sandwich I'm currently a member of the 350 Mass State Legislative Team and have long been active with the Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown. I also served on the Steering Committee of 350 Cape Cod from 2018 to 2023.

AB: Our meeting has learned from you and expressed our gratitude for your life's work to save the lives of people, wildlife, the land and the environment. Let's now focus more closely on what turned you to the Quaker faith.



LB: After my service in the Army, I remained nonreligious. It was clear to me that I didn't need a church doctrine to guide me to be a responsible person. Right and wrong was obvious. Also, I became a veteran against the war in Vietnam, supported equal rights for women and African Americans. For example, I tutored minorities at the Black Africa House at UMass and at the North Manhattan Academy in NYC. At NIH, I was on the Minority Affairs Committee which awarded financial support for career advancement.

Later in Maryland, my daughters were enrolled in Sandy Spring Friends School for several years. It was a fantastic academic and social environment for them. I enjoyed the school too and would attend Friends Meeting occasionally. I remember going to Meeting after the 9/11 attacks and found Quakers searching for peace as our country was seeking vengeance. Although I was attracted to Meeting, my neighbor, clerk of Sandy Spring Meeting, dissuaded me as an agnostic from becoming a Quaker.

AB: So what brought you back for a second attempt to become involved with the Quaker Faith?

LB: After I moved to Sandwich, I became a regular attender in 2018 and later caretaker. I found comfort and friendship with people who value the six testimonies as I do. However, I remained reticent due to my agnostic beliefs.

AB: I know myself and others have shared that you have been a very involved, respected and beloved attender. And you seemed very content to remain an attender. So what then urged you to take the next step, that of becoming a member?

LB: During my time as an attender, I took on the position of care of the building and grounds of East Sandwich Meeting. I enjoyed and felt fulfilled in finding ways to make repairs and improvements, along with minimizing expenses by doing some of the work myself and with others in our meeting. After becoming involved with the planning for our first two Spring Hill Day Community Events and helping the meetinghouse get a CPA grant from the town to do major building improvements, I began to more strongly feel that I belong here. I felt it was time for me to take the next step; that of applying for membership as a way to further strengthen my commitment in being a Quaker.

AB: You've mentioned what happened the first time you shared the particulars of your faith with a clerk of another Friends Meeting. How did it go with the clearness committee this time, which involved members from our three preparative meetings?

LB: I continue to be open about my beliefs consistent with the Quaker Testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and stewardship. I then realized that these had been an important part of who I was. So I put my unique and personal beliefs on the table with the clearness committee. I was pleased with their understanding, acceptance and valuing of who I was and how I believed.

AB: For you to know, the clearness committee, East Sandwich Preparative Business Meeting and our Monthly Ministry and Counsel Meetings are recommending to the Sandwich Monthly Business Meeting in February that your request for membership be approved, which I'm certain it will be. I really enjoyed meeting with you and am so very excited in your becoming a member.

LB: Alan, thank you for meeting and allowing me to share major events in my life for our community.

Readers Write

Yarmouth Meeting Hosted Special Hospitality Event

Bob Kelley and Barbie Gale

On **Sunday, October 29th Yarmouth Friends Meeting hosted** a Special Hospitality for twenty-five local guests and fifteen of our members. This event was **an outreach between the local Indigenous community, Yarmouth Friends and the Historical Society of Old Yarmouth**. It began as a Yarmouth Indigenous reservation walk/talk, led by Nipmuc – Wampanoag Waban Webquish. The walk started at Packet Landing on Bass River, wound through the Friends cemetery and continued to the Indian Memorial. The event was timed to coincide with the break of Friends Meeting. On the way back the walk ended at the Aaron and Dorothy Davis schoolhouse where participants met up with members of Yarmouth Friends Meeting.

Many Friends participated in making traditional dishes eaten by Native Americans. The meal consisted of Three Sisters Soup, smoked salmon, stuffed quahogs, wild rice and cranberry salad, corn bread with apple and pumpkin butters, Indian Pudding with garnishes of pecans, dried cranberries and ice cream, pumpkin, apple and cranberry apple pies and fresh cold cider. The community outreach, sharing our Quaker heritage, as well as the Cape Cod history, along with our connection to the Native American Tribes who had once inhabited our land, was a heart-warming experience for everyone, and doing it over a delicious meal was a true Thanksgiving.

From right after the quiet moment of silent “giving thanks,” the Schoolhouse was filled with energetic voices sharing and asking questions on all subjects. It was not a “grab and go” event, rather a lingering of new and old Friends being in the moment with each other. This is the second year for this event -- we hope to make it an annual one.



Cranberry Pecan Thanksgiving Rice

Barbie Gale

A sweet, tangy and protein-packed side dish perfect for the holidays. This would make a perfect light autumn main meal as well. Hearty and filling! **Prep Time: 5 minutes; Cook Time: 50 minutes; Total Time: 55 minutes.**

Ingredients:

- 1 Tbs olive oil
- 1 shallot minced
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- 1 tsp dried rosemary
- 1 cup wild rice blend rinsed & drained
- 2 ¾ cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- juice of 2 mandarin oranges about ¼ cup
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- 1.5 Tbs pure maple syrup
- 1 Tbs tamari sauce
- 1 Tbs Dijon mustard
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅓ cup chopped pecans toasted, if desired

Preparation:

Place the rice in a fine mesh strainer and rinse it well under cold water until the water runs clear. This will remove some of the starch so the rice will be less sticky.

Heat the oil in a pot over medium heat on the stove. Add the shallots and garlic and sauté until soft and translucent, about 3 to 4 minutes. Add the rosemary by crushing it between your fingers as you sprinkle it in. This releases the oils of the dried herb and makes it more flavorful. Sauté 1 minute until fragrant. Add the rice, stir, and sauté about 2 minutes to toast the rice and bring out the nutty flavors. Add the vegetable broth, mandarin orange juice and dried cranberries. Stir and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for about 45 minutes, until all of the liquid is absorbed and the rice is cooked through. Turn off the heat and let the rice sit, covered, for about 10 minutes before fluffing with a fork. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, whisk together the maple syrup, Dijon mustard and tamari until smooth. Pour it into the rice mixture and stir until well incorporated.

To toast the pecans, add them to a dry non-stick skillet over medium-low heat. Cook, stirring frequently to prevent burning, for 3 to 5 minutes. You'll know they're done when they turn a shade darker and become fragrant. Add the pecans to the rice and stir to combine. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Storage/Freezing:

Store leftovers in an air-tight container in the fridge for 4 to 5 days.

You can even freeze this rice. Let it cool then spread it out onto a rimmed baking sheet and place in the freezer until frozen. Once frozen, transfer to freezer-safe plastic bags. Flatten the bag and squeeze all the air out. The rice should keep well for 3 to 4 months.

Food Justice and West Falmouth Quakers

Steve Gates and Erica H. Adams¹

On December 11, ten Friends met for a Peace and Social Order (PSO) Committee discussion of what W. Falmouth Friends might do as a social justice project concerning food insecurity in the Falmouth area. They heard about the food needs in Massachusetts and Cape Cod and decided to take the next steps toward a direct-action project to help address this need. They agreed to work toward bringing a tentative proposal to Meeting for Business on January 28.

A first meeting to develop the project occurred on January 2. At that meeting, attendees agreed to the following ideas:

- 1) We propose to begin by growing food in the Quaker House garden. This will require an expansion of the existing garden, and plans for building community while we do this.
- 2) We will, in parallel, begin exploring how we might expand this program over time to include supporting those in need in building their own vegetable gardens.

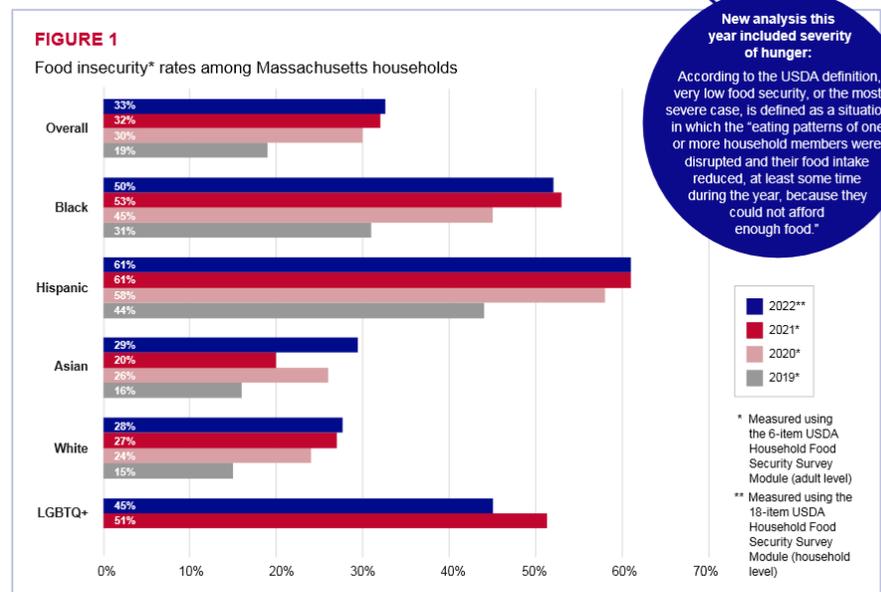
You are invited to attend the second meeting, on **Thursday, January 11 at 7 p.m.**, where we hope to agree on a proposal to submit to Meeting for Business. Please join us as we plan this exciting project! Zoom details will be published in the regular weekly list of events for West Falmouth.

Below are some of the details of what we discussed during our initial meeting on the subject.

The Need

There is considerable food insecurity in Massachusetts, and on the Cape. The chart from the Greater Boston Food Bank² at the right, shows that approximately 1 in 3 of all Massachusetts households experience some level of food insecurity, and 1 in 5 households experience “very low” food security. Even some middle-class families are experiencing food insecurity.³ Black, Hispanic and LGPTQ+ households are particularly likely to experience food insecurity. On the Cape, despite its relatively wealthy population, it is estimated that 10% (about 25,000) of the year-round residents experience food insecurity.⁴

Overall, our data found that 20% of households were experiencing “very low food security.”



¹ Erica H. Adams is clerk of the West Falmouth Peace and Social Order Committee. Steve Gates proposed the idea for this project.

² https://www.gbfb.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Ending-Hunger-Together_Opportunities-to-Improve-Food-Equity-and-Access.pdf

³ <https://www.thefamilypantry.com/About/Hunger>

⁴ <https://www.capecodtimes.com/story/news/local/2022/11/24/cape-cod-food-pantries-see-60-spike-in-need-for-services/69614472007/>

Ideas for Addressing the Need

Three ideas were considered for how WFPM might address food insecurity in our community. These were (1) participating in the Farming Falmouth effort based at the Tony Andrews Farm to provide fresh food for the Falmouth Service Center, (2) expanding the Quaker House garden to provide fresh vegetables to those in need, and (3) helping neighbors in need to build their own vegetable gardens.

Those in attendance enthusiastically discussed these three ideas in detail. There was support for all three ideas, but attendees preferred to start with expanding the Quaker House garden and then later expanding to helping neighbors in need to build vegetable gardens. There was also a sense, mentioned by several people, that building community within our group, with other churches or organizations, and with people in need was really important.

Why We Might Want to Do This:

- It is a direct expression of our love for our neighbors.
- We could help meet the “growing” food challenges in Massachusetts, even in the middle class.
- Our direct involvement shows Quaker commitment to environment and equality.
- If we publicize it, our outreach and engagement with the larger community might help others find their way to WFPM.

With Whom Might We Work?

We mentioned several groups we might consider working with:

- St. Barnabas’ *A Place at the Table* (feeding the homeless twice a week)
- Falmouth Service Center (feeding those in need)
- Wampanoag Food Pantry
- Members of our own meeting
- Willet Way (Falmouth) Habitat for Humanity build (low-income single women with children) in conjunction with First Congregational Church
- Village at Cataumet (families transitioning from homelessness)



Peas from Steve’s 2023 garden.

How Much Work Would Be Involved?

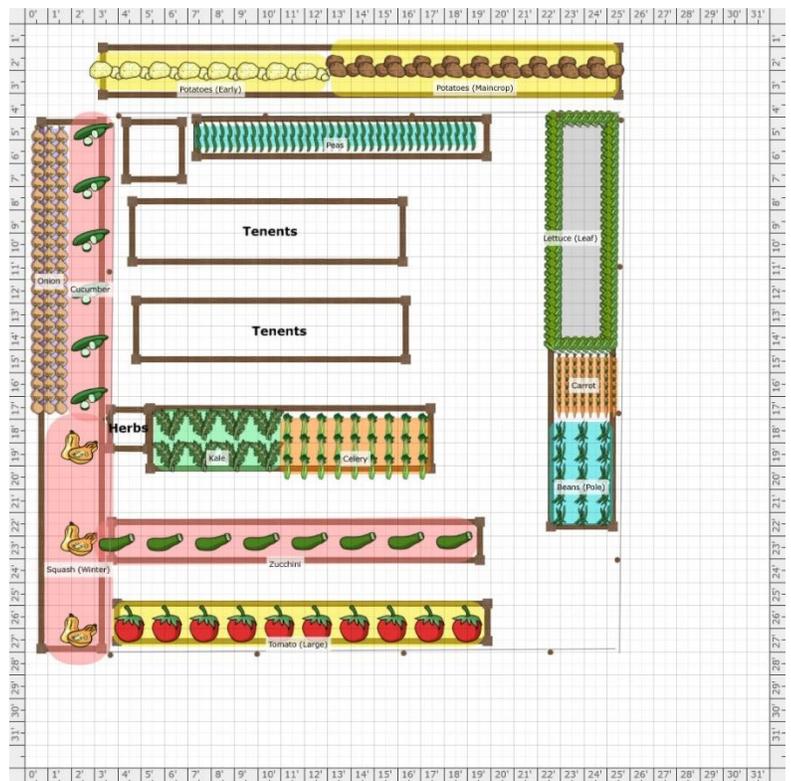
We will consider how to reduce the amount of physical labor involved in the project. Four ways to do this have already been suggested:

1. Working with another organization that is interested in food justice.
2. Reducing the amount of work required by adopting suitable gardening practices.
3. Hiring interns to work on the project.
4. Adopting a project that involves building gardens, rather than growing food.

How Much Food Could We Produce?

The Quaker House garden could produce a lot of food. For example, if we enlarged, weeded and prepared the garden as shown, it would provide space for the following (or even more if we plant multiple crops during the season, or further enlarge the garden):

- 10 tomato plants
- 8 zucchini
- 8 kale
- 27 celery
- 15 pole beans
- 72 peas
- 3 winter squash
- 6 cucumbers
- 72 onions
- 8 early potatoes + 10 main-crop potatoes
- 240 lettuce (multiple varieties)
- 56 carrots
- Misc herbs



Questions? Please contact Steve if you have any questions or suggestions.



Quaker House garden, December, 2023



Part of the harvest from Steve's 2023 garden

Reflections from a Long Cold Night

Alan Burt

On December 21st, I attended the Homeless Memorial Service at the 1st Congregational Church in Falmouth. I sat next to Lewis Randa as we listened to the names of the 36 men and women who had suffered and perished this past year on the streets of Cape Cod. After this beautiful and prayerful service, Lewis and I had dinner with members of the church, as well as with some of the staff and supporters of The Belonging to Each Other program which has been providing winter shelter and case management for the homeless for the past several years.

Lewis decided to join them in their annual sleepout demonstration of understanding and loving remembrance. I had decided to do my annual sleepout at the East Sandwich Meeting House on Saturday night. I was joined by three others from our meeting: Paul, Trisha and Carolyn. Before we settled down for the evening, Gail, Ken, Mo and her husband Jim came by for a visit. Along with sharing deeply and lovingly with us on what this night was all about, they brought us soup and bread to nourish us into the chilled night air.

Although I dreaded leaving the warmth of our community house, I eventually crawled into my sleeping bag to wonder and worry about the night ahead. By morning I had been cold and uncomfortable from start to finish. Each time I awakened, along with feeling cold and alone, I reminded myself that I was not homeless, that I had a home to return to in the morning, and that my suffering was almost over.

I then felt a deep sense of sorrow for the many who will remain homeless in the morning and in the days, weeks and months to come. As I then wept for them, I somehow felt comforted by the cold night air. Ironically, it had become my companion. And it was a good companion as it listened to me, as well as felt the tears flowing down my face. It did not abandon me. And as I was driving home, I could sense the promise from it, "from Spirit," to welcome me back next year for more loving remembrances.

I had been so lovingly touched as I shared my loving thoughts with my Friends at ESM the next morning. And from all of this, I felt a great sense of gratitude for the loving support of our preparative meetings and with considerable donations from individual Quakers to provide continuing support for our neighbors in need. Because of this, on Christmas Eve, I was able to provide fifty \$50.00 Stop and Shop gift cards to some of them. Have a Blessed New Year.



What if Hell Was Home?

Lewis M. Randa

"Why am I sleeping outside on the longest night of the year, Winter Solstice, yet again?" This I ask myself as I hunker down in my pup tent, shivering at first in my sleeping bag, attempting to fall asleep when hell on Earth is where my mind was taking me. Another sleepless night; and for what?

The hourly tolling of the church bells served as a poignant reminder of my purpose there, in the protected lawn area of the church parking lot. I was there, for among other reasons, to gain a brief glimpse of what individuals who are homeless experience. But I, unlike the homeless, am only pretending, sleeping outside to imagine what it's like for them: Think shaving your head to commiserate with someone you care about who lost their hair from cancer treatments.



Lewis in his tent the night of Winter Solstice. Photo credit: L. Randa.

Empathy for those who find *hell their home*, lies at the heart of this annual, sleepless sojourn for me — relegating my restless mind to wander in the recesses of the chilling fact that so many people, worldwide, have no place to call home.

What if I were truly homeless in Falmouth? Worse yet, what if I were at the U.S. southern border being denied entry, even though Lady Liberty in New York Harbor says “this shouldn’t be so”? What if my entire Ukrainian village fell victim to Russian invaders and what’s left of my home is a pile of rubble? What if I lost a dear one in the brutal, October 7th Hamas attack on Israel, leaving my home forever changed — a place only to mourn? Or if my dwelling and entire village in Gaza was razed by Israeli military reprisals, leaving no place to return to, no place to call home. This night held a weightier sorrow than those of previous years. Homelessness now takes on insufferable dimensions and meaning. It's enough to cry yourself to sleep over — yet slumber only provides the briefest of reprieves as we must wake up to the reality of this expanded understanding and relationship to homelessness.

The evening commenced with a moving service at the First Congregational Church in Falmouth, where the names of homeless individuals who passed away this year were read, followed by soup and conversation with parishioners. In the back row of the church, I met up with Alan Burt, the stalwart, steadfast advocate for the homeless, to hand over 50 Stop and Shop Gift Cards valued at \$50 each. These gift cards were part of a series of donations to The Peace Abbey from Quakers and other members of the Cape Cod community. Their worth exceeds their monetary value — they symbolize a profound message akin to the ethos of the organization Alan helped establish years ago, *Belonging To Each Other*.

Unquestionably, we belong to each other, but the striking disparities in income, home ownership, healthcare, and opportunities paint a very different picture which expresses itself in homelessness and the nightmarish reality of hell on earth for so many: A hell of *our* own making.

As I was completing this reflection, Shellie Souza (the office manager at the John Robinson Educational Center where the Peace Abbey Foundation has an office), gave me a beautiful cross knowing of my overnight in Falmouth. The cross, shown below, was given to her by a homeless man in Plymouth years ago, who, along with other homeless individuals, attended her wedding. I will keep this cross as a reminder that we must marry empathy with actions taken for others — particularly for those who know too well how cold and hellish being without a home, in the dead of winter, can be.



Photo credit: L. Randa, December 2023.

Dear Friends, I am again asking for donations for the Stop and Shop gift card initiative. Bill Holcombe of East Sandwich Meeting has arranged for all contributions for Gift Cards to the homeless on Cape Cod to be matched through his corporate contacts. Thus any contribution you make is effectively doubled.

We have distributed over \$15,000 in gifts cards to the homeless over the past 2 years. Here's how you can help us in the coming year.

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

Blessings, Alan Burt

A Question

Rita O'Donnell

A number of years ago we lived in Redding, CT. One cold winter night I was working at the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen in nearby Danbury. It was crowded, steamy and noisy. Not all of the clients were happy about being there and they weren't always pleasant. I served pasta and meat sauce for what seemed like hours, helped clean up and headed home.

It was snowing and I decided to take what my little son called "the way of many roads." This was the scenic route. The snow was falling, the trees were beautifully outlined, there were gorgeous open fields and the contrast between where I had been and where I was heading was stark.

On the drive home I began thinking about the people we would be hosting for dinner that night. These were friends we'd known for many years. One memory of a sailing trip with them arose. The boat was an enormous vessel, teak everywhere, large enough that four couples and three small children all had plenty of room. At some point the conversation turned to what our shared Unitarian church was doing to help our unhoused brothers and sisters. The conversation slowed and Michael, a six-year-old, asked, "Why can't the homeless live with us?" There was a heavy silence and then Stan, an adult, said, "And what is the answer to that question?"



Dorothy Day Hospitality House in Danbury, CT.
Image from <http://www.dorothydaydanbury.org/>.

The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.

Thurman, H. "The Work of Christmas," *The Mood of Christmas and Other Celebrations*, Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1985, p.23.

Finding Your Cat's Meow

Oh Maggie, it's that time of year to move down to Florida
I need to do this and that, wrap up the house, empty the freezer,
clear the food pantry, return the books to the library, etc., etc.
We reserved the flight late, so we're going to sit in the very back rows
I have nightmares, cannot sleep, how am I going to survive
when the plane lands and we have to wait for an hour to get out,
when everyone stands up to stretch their legs
Hello, claustrophobia!
Maybe I will faint, and they'll carry me out
Or I will insist they open the back door
Or I will open the back door
So many sleepless nights worrying and hyperventilating, how am I going to do it
Dear Lord, Dear Heavenly Father, please help me to manage that situation,
I am unable to do it on my own
Well, the plane landed smoothly after some turbulent weather,
I was still knitting and knitting, when I heard "MEOW" from the very back seats
I went to that seat and saw this beautiful cat from Nepal in a cage, so pretty
With green eyes just like a tiger, the owner told me he got her in Maine,
Where Stephen King lived, a very rare kind, named for a cat in The Hunger Games
I sat near the cage and admired that beauty for a long time
They had to beg me to leave the plane
How our negative thoughts paralyze us
Why can't we find positive ones and feel good, no matter what?
I asked the cat, "do you have claustrophobia?"
"Meow."

Maggie Saab
2023

Report from Great Hills: Turkey in Residence

A one-legged turkey has taken up residence in our yard
and that of our good neighbors

He has two legs but only one of them bears weight.

We're getting to know one another. I felt profoundly sorry to see him
hopping around.

For a while.

Now I see him eating, putting on weight, sometimes sitting and now hopping
away when he sees and hears me and I have come to see him not as an object of
pity but rather as a neighbor.

I regaled my neighbor Ryan with the old Bihari proverb:

"Fish or no fish, the blind heron sticks to his pond."

This turkey seems to be thriving between our two yards and driveways now filled
with acorn droppings. He eats and eats. Puts on more weight.
Sometimes sits out in the nether wooded area between our homes.

Recently I spied him next door in Dr. Dan's driveway with 5 other males and
Lo he quite apparently was leading them as they followed him into
the hillside brush between our yards.

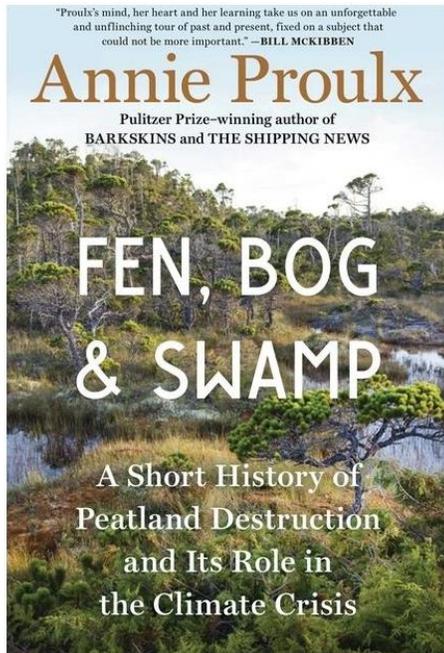
Good for you one-legged guy. Good for you.

Bill Holcombe
2023



What We're Reading

Sunny Davidson: *Fen, Bog and Swamp: A Short History of Peatland Destruction and Its Role in the Climate Crisis* by Annie Proulx.



Some of our ancestors thought of the prevalence of American swamps as a curse. Not Henry David Thoreau. He wanted his home facing on one, “not on the most beautiful garden that ever human art contrived.” He subtly fought the nature-destroying acts of his time from the power of money in his endearing writing. A swamp can be richly inviting.

But now our wetlands are mostly drained and lost, just when we are realizing their necessity for slowing global warming. We will not likely visit the wide Kankakee of Indiana, the vast wetlands of northern Minnesota and Wisconsin, nor the Black Swamp and Great Dismal Swamp of the South, or all central Florida as contained in the Everglades. By the 1980s roughly half of these American wetlands had been turned into rich farmland, and by 2009 aerial photography showed 62,300 more American acres had given way to housing or agriculture.

The Pantanal in Latin America is the largest wetland on earth, followed by the Vasyugan of Siberia, which is partly burning. The Lakelands in Canada, the bogs of Ireland and Europe, and most recently the famous swampland of Southern Iraq were considered obstacles to either development or warfare. Even Dante had the river Styx in hell, arising from drainage. And in the early twentieth century most people still believed that swamps created bad air and deadly disease. Now we know the role of mosquitos, but they can breed in puddles.

Swamps and birds and many kinds of beauty go together. In *Fen, Bog and Swamp* the novelist Annie Proulx presents her facts with an appreciation of wildlife and what is still left of it around our waters. She comes off as an easy writer, but not a scientist, as she tells her stories with some disconcerting stream of consciousness. The book is small but important, especially as burning peat has resisted extinguishing and emits stored methane and CO₂.

Proulx is fully aware of the confusion arising from the many local or old usages about wetlands that need to be redefined, so makes that her initial purpose. Peat and peatlands are made of centuries of moss, usually sphagnum, built up in wet areas. A fen, somewhat dried, has mostly ground water, rich in minerals, running from a slope, while a bog results from rain. A swamp supports shrubs and even trees, but is still layers of peat below. Sphagnum moss, the base of it all, is fascinating as it arose early in plant evolution. It has two types of cells, one holding water to distribute when needed, and the other the normal chlorophyll.

When we appreciate the wonder of all this, we must resolve to pay attention and save it wherever we can.

Proulx, A. *Fen, Bog and Swamp: A Short History of Peatland Destruction and Its Role in the Climate Crisis*. London: Allen Lane, 1982. Originally published in Great Britain in two volumes. First Vintage Books Edition, May 1989, is quoted here.



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