

THE GAZETTE

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

Sandwich Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends *JANUARY 2025*



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Upcoming Events

New England Yearly Meeting

End of Life Drop-in Reflection Group -- Join other New England Friends as they explore the spiritual, emotional, and practical aspects of facing our final days. Last session **January 9, 2025**, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. via Zoom. Learn more and register at <https://neym.org/events-calendar/2024/10/end-life-drop-reflection-group>.

Earthcare Ministry Committee -- online book discussion of *Church of the Wild: How Nature Invites Us into the Sacred* by Victoria Loorz. Thursdays **February 13, 20, 27** and **March 6 and 13**, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. Chapters 1 and 2 will be discussed at the first session. The link will remain open from 1:00 – 1:30 for those who would like to continue sharing. Learn more and register (by February 4, please) at <https://neym.org/events-calendar/2025/02/book-discussion-church-wild>.

Plenary and Bible Half Hours from the 364th Annual Sessions – Recordings are now available at <https://neym.org/2024-sessions-recordings>.

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

Sandwich Quarterly Meeting for Business – Saturday, **January 25** at West Falmouth. Greetings at 9:30 a.m. and meeting at 10:00 a.m. The meeting will be hybrid.

New Bedford – Work party after worship followed by lunch – Sunday, **January 1** and **February 9** and every second Sunday.

Sandwich Monthly Meeting

Sandwich Monthly Meeting for Business will be Sunday, **February 2** at East Sandwich.

West Falmouth – The next 2nd Sunday Forum, hosted by West Falmouth's Peace and Social Order Committee, will be on Sunday, **January 12** from 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. Andrew Gottlieb, Executive Director of the Association to Preserve Cape Cod will speak on Environmental Challenges for Cape Cod in 2025. See the next page for further information and link to register.

American Friends Service Committee – See <https://afsc.org/>.

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Peace in Palestine and Israel every **Thursday** 5:30 p.m. See <https://afsc.org/events/meeting-worship-attention-peace-palestine-israel>.

Action Hour for a Ceasefire Now -- Join ASFC staff every **Friday** at 12:00 p.m. to hear updates from Gaza. Then, take action with us as we contact our elected officials and call for an immediate cease-fire and humanitarian access to Gaza. Our elected officials need to keep hearing from us. See <https://afsc.org/events/action-hour-cease-fire-now>.

APCC's View of Cape Cod's Environmental Challenges in 2025



ANDREW GOTTLIEB

Executive Director of the Association to Preserve Cape Cod/APCC.

Cape Cod faces ongoing challenges to its environmental quality.

Water quality continues to be impacted by excess septic nutrient loading, stormwater & fertilizers.

Critical habitat areas are threatened by development pressures including the need to increase affordable housing stock.

Rapid and intense changes to the climate are changing how our environment functions.

Addressing these & other challenges require aggressive, thoughtful action.

APCC Executive Director Andrew Gottlieb will address APCC's approach to protecting the environment in 2025 and beyond.

ZOOM TALK: SUNDAY January 12, 2025 at 12:30 -1:30 pm ET

Question + Answer period follows.

LINK to Register: <https://bit.ly/APCCChallenges2025>

BIO: Andrew Gottlieb has a BA from Harvard University and an MBA from Boston University. Andrew has more than 35 years of environmental protection experience in government and 5 elected terms as a member of the Mashpee Select Board. Andrew is currently the Executive Director of the Association to Preserve Cape Cod. Andrew was the Executive Director of the Cape Cod Water Protection Collaboration from 2007 until January 2017. Prior to that, as Chief of the Office of Commonwealth Development, he coordinated Massachusetts's energy, housing, environmental and transportation policies.



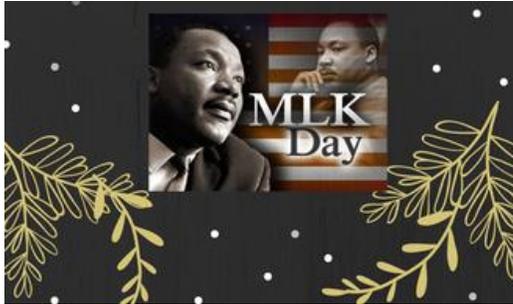
2nd Sunday Zoom Forum – a Quaker Series

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



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.



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

January 20, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. at the Coonamessett Inn.

James Morton, former CEO of YMCA Boston, will speak on *Dr. King's Work and the Power of Mentorship*. Register and purchase tickets at <https://capecodfoundation.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/list/event>.

Grandmothers Against Gun Violence will gather

Saturday, **January 14** (and the 14th of every month) at the airport rotary in Hyannis. Join us!

Add Your Quaker Meeting to the QuakerEarth Action Map!

Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW), in partnership with Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), is thrilled to announce the launch of the *QuakerEarth Action Map*! This dynamic tool highlights Quaker-led climate action efforts worldwide—connecting, amplifying, and supporting our shared commitment to Earthcare and climate justice.

We invite you to add your Monthly Meeting, project, or organization to the map. Help build a powerful database and visualization tool to foster collaboration, share resources, and inspire one another in addressing today's urgent environmental challenges. Add your Quaker Meeting or Project to the map

here: quakerearthcare.org/mapform. View the beta version of the map here: quakerearthcare.org/map.

The QuakerEarth Action Map will soon integrate with FWCC's advanced ArcGIS platform, providing even greater opportunities for connection and collaboration. Together, we can strengthen our global response to the climate crisis. For more information, contact Keith Runyan, General Secretary of Quaker Earthcare Witness, at keith@quakerearthcare.org or visit quakerearthcare.org.

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

Pendle Hill's Reading Group –Tuesday, **January 14** from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. Worship sharing on Pamela Haines's "Money and Soul" (PHP #450). Register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/pendle-hills-reading-group-january-2025/>.

Pendle Hill's Reading Group –Tuesday, **February 18** from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. Worship sharing on Mary Watkins's "Hypocrisy, Racism, and Self-Interest on the Path to Reparations: Quaker Complicity with Slavery (1657–1776) and White Supremacy" (PHP #489). Register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/pendle-hills-reading-group-february-2025/>.

First Monday Lecture with **Patti Nesbitt** and **Kristin Camitta Zimet** – *Be Not Afraid: Living into Love at the End of Life*, **January 6**, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. Learn more and register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/be-not-afraid-living-into-love-at-the-end-of-life/>.

First Monday Lecture with **Dr. Harold D. (Hal) Weaver, Jr.** and **Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge** -- Further details about this Black History Month program will be shared soon. **February 3**, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. Register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/first-monday-lecture-with-dr-harold-d-hal-weaver-jr-and-nozizwe-madlala-routledge/>.

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

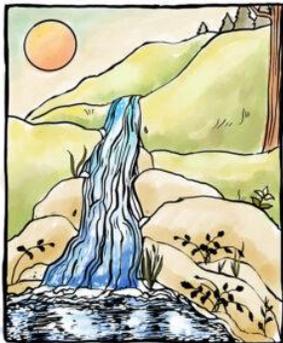
Quaker Earthcare Witness: <https://quakerearthcare.org/>

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

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

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

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



A Spring Whose Waters Never Fail

2025 Online Gathering of Friends

February 1-9



Join Friends for a wide variety of programs and events throughout the week, including workshops, daily worship, speakers, Bible Half Hour. Learn more and register at <https://www.fgcquaker.org/event/2025-online-gathering/>.

***Sunday Morning Discussions at East Sandwich Meeting
Community Building***

January 12 – Nothing planned at this time.

January 19 – Discussion of Barry Morley’s Pendle Hill Pamphlet *Beyond Consensus: Salvaging Sense of the Meeting*. Copies are available in the Community Building. Please read one before the discussion. Led by Lee Hamilton. Please note that this discussion will start at **11:45 a.m.**

Special Gathering at Yarmouth Meetinghouse

2024 was a tumultuous year. As we step forward into 2025, South Yarmouth Friends Meeting is sponsoring a gathering on Saturday, **January 11**, from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. to hold ourselves, our country, and the world in the Light. We hope you will be able to join us at the meetinghouse for this special worship but, if you can’t, here is the refrain from a Leonard Cohen song about the Light to contemplate while holding your own, private vigil.

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in

Dialogue Across Differences at Yarmouth Meeting Schoolhouse -- Saturday, **January 18** from 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. The upcoming discussion will focus on the Practice of Dialogue (tools, methods, application) and What can we do locally? (discernment and action). Led by Tom Bidga-Peyton.



Kelp and seagulls on Yarmouth’s Seagull Beach, December 18, 2024.

Photos of Friends



Composters at Friendship Garden in West Falmouth. October 25, 2024.

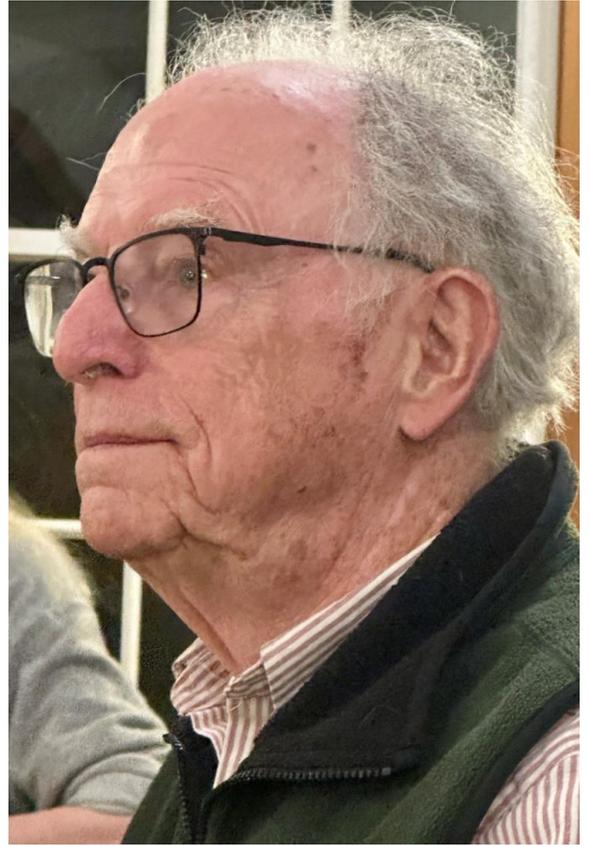


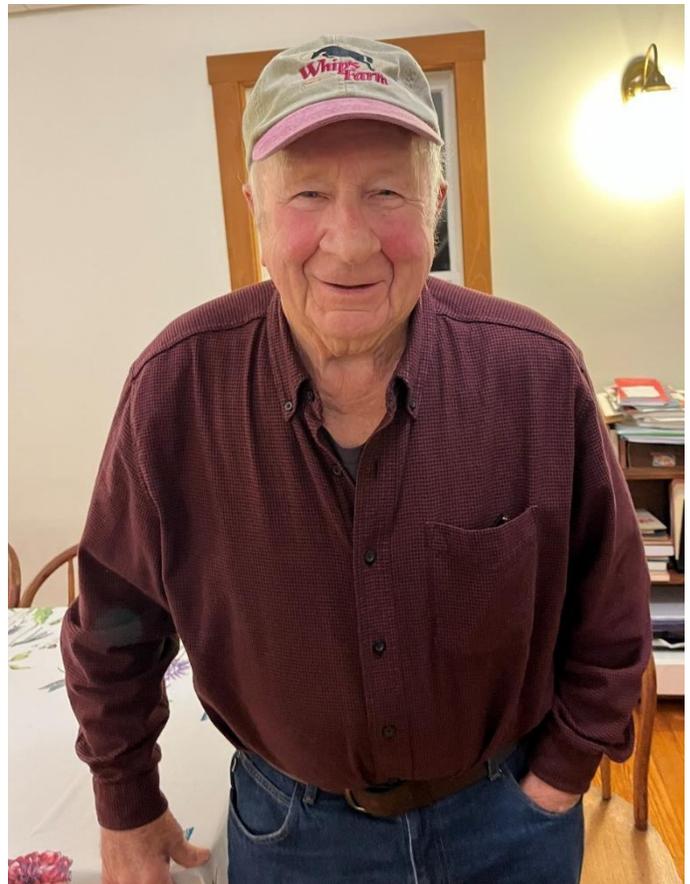
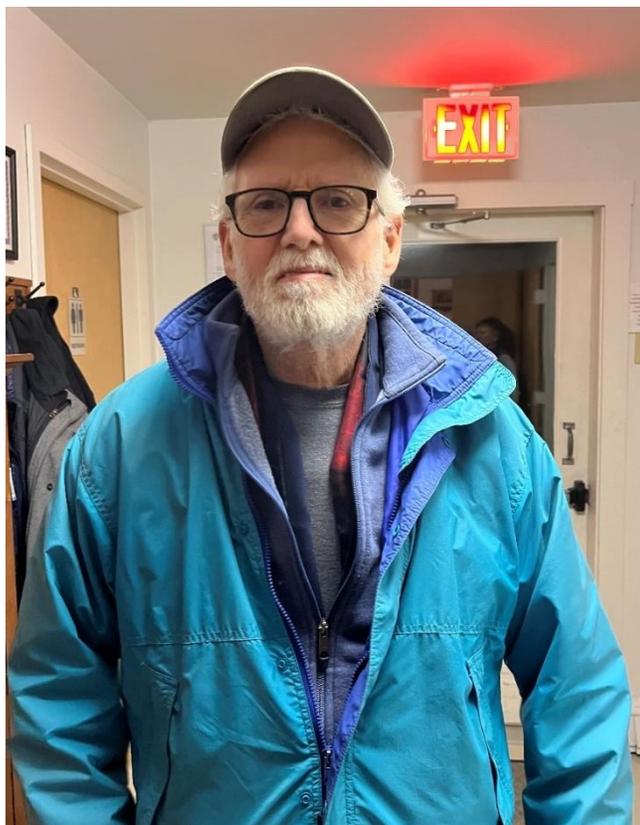
Dialogue Across Differences at Yarmouth Meeting, November 16, 2024.

New Year's Eve 2024 in East Sandwich

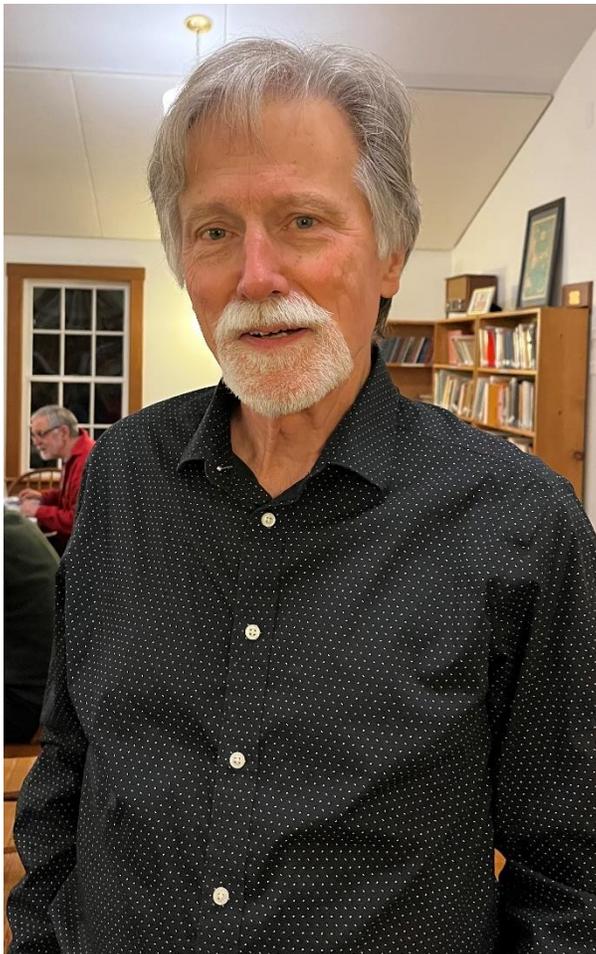
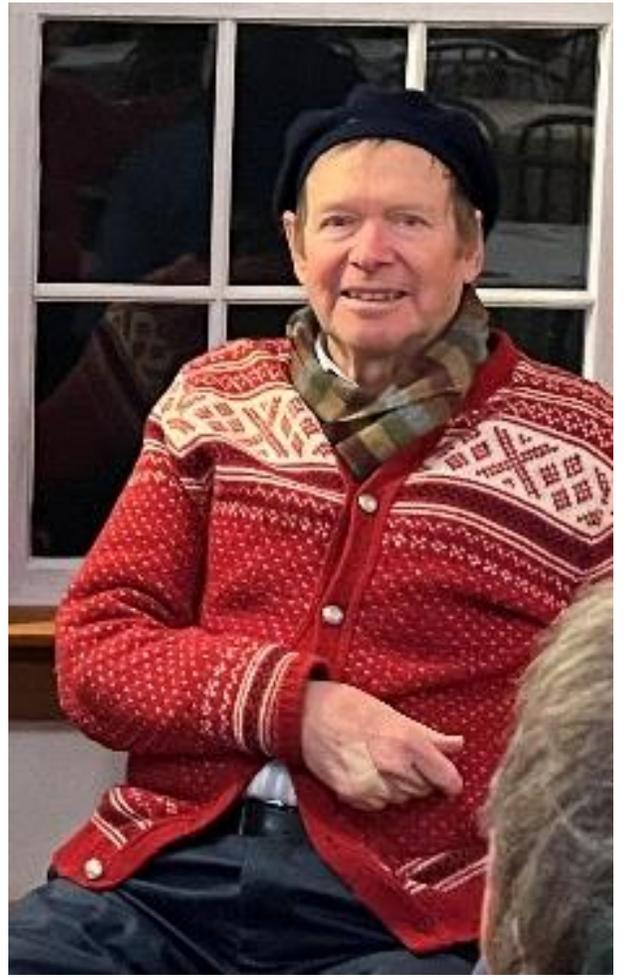


















Special Section on Homelessness

Introduction

Rita O'Donnell

On Saturday, December 21, the longest night of the year, twenty-one F/friends gathered at the West Falmouth Meetinghouse to mark National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day. Alan Burt hosted the evening. Following a sumptuous potluck dinner, we had the opportunity to meet Robyn Sweeting of Robyn's Resources, whom Alan had invited to speak. She described her work on behalf of those who need help, many, but not all, of whom are Wampanoag tribe members. Robyn's broad background, experience, and training support her wide service to those who need help dealing with issues such as government bureaucracies, housing, paperwork, getting connected to various services, and appealing denials for government services. She also serves as manager of a Mashpee housing complex recently purchased by the Wampanoag for recently-homeless tribe members.

Robyn describes herself as someone who doesn't like to take "no" for an answer. Alan describes Robyn as a one-woman force for good. She is clearly that, and she also brought a delicious pot of kale soup that was very much appreciated!



Friends joined Robyn Sweeting (standing, left) of Robyn's Resources for a potluck dinner on November 21, National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day.

Worship followed during which we remembered twenty-one Cape Codders who died homeless in the past year. The names of the twenty-one were read aloud, each marked by the ringing of a Tibetan meditation bell that had been used by Thich Nhat Hanh in a previous Peace Abbey ceremony. Various Friends spoke about how we have been blessed both individually and as a religious community. The enormous disparities in living conditions and access to justice in our country were spoken of as was the difficult night ahead for the three Friends who would be sleeping outside. The meetinghouse was to be kept open during the night so the campers could warm up if they wished and a Friend would spend the night there in case the campers needed anything.

Following worship, I set out some things for breakfast, wished the campers well, and headed home around 8:30 p.m. The temperature was 21° outside and it was windy.

Some of My Reflections about Last Night

Alan Burt

This was my twenty-second annual memorial service and sleep out. It was also the coldest. So I'll start with, "thank God it's over." Wow oh wow, do I now know that my all-too-open tent is not for temperatures in the teens. No matter how hard and often I shifted things around, the arctic breeze found its way to every inch of my shivering body.

There was little sleep for me last night as I continued to worry about the cold while making endless efforts to find warmth again. Nor was there redemption as the cold found its way back again and again, through the most narrow and unguarded passages in my tent, sleeping bag, and clothes. It continued to infiltrate and attack me as a trained assassin. I could not hide from it, could not escape from it. And then came the realization that I was deeply afraid and desperate.

And though I knew I had a safe haven nearby, I could not escape the depth of my fear, my fear of not making it, my fear of death. And I thought of you, Paul, as you must have felt this a few times on the trail and how, unlike myself, you did not have a warm building nearby. And it was then that I surrendered to my hopeless condition and went into the meetinghouse where I was welcomed by Steve who said he was glad I'd come in out of the cold.

Even after I returned home, I remained cold for the rest of the day. My son Jordan said, "Dad, you've asked me three times today if the heat was on in the house." My hands remained cold and when I touched the registers, I couldn't feel any heat coming through. So I turned the thermostat up, but when Jordan checked it, he said "Dad you turned the heat off." I said, "that's impossible," but as I reflected on this, it was possible as it did happen. But I cannot fathom the cause and implications of this and perhaps I never will. What I do know, is it has a depth of meaning as did all of last night.

And today, there were a couple of times when I thought about going somewhere, but I decided not to as I was still afraid of the cold. And I know I'm continuing to protect my fragile self, which includes not yet being able to fully feel what it's like for the homeless who don't have or didn't have the safety and resources I have.

Now, I realize that I've much more to unpack about last night. As I spoke out of the silence of the memorial service last night, I felt the voices of those we were there for, speaking through me. Perhaps this was unsettling for others to hear, as it was for me?

I'm still in a bit of a haze about last night, but remember with clarity in my appreciation for the three of you who accompanied me last night, Lewis and Paul in tents and Steve in the meetinghouse. And as I write this now, I feel such sadness for the many out there who continue to remain alone, suffering in the cold without the loving care of others or a place of refuge.



Alan inside his tent at West Falmouth Meetinghouse, December 21, 2024. Photo: M. Cornell.

This morning, I felt an urgent need to check in with each of you, as I was worried about you, and I was so relieved to hear that you were okay. I deeply needed to know this before giving myself permission to drive home.

Driving home I remembered a talk I once had with my recently-deceased dear friend Billy Bishop who had suffered in the state of homelessness for ten years. He'd shared a bitter cold morning experience from years ago when he'd woken up to find his friend, dead and frozen to a tree next to him. "You don't forget this, Alan. You don't forget this ever, and it continues to make you cry."

Reflections on a Frigid Night in Falmouth

Paul Denoncourt

It was a long night; literally because, being the winter solstice, it was the longest night of the year and figuratively because, with the intense cold and brutal winds, there was little sleep to be had. At 6 a.m. it was still dark. As it had been all night, my tent was violently flapping in the wind like a luffing mainsail. Will it hold up? I wondered. I looked at the weather app on my phone for maybe the dozenth time: 15°, wind chill 3 below zero. Will this night ever end? Although I had slept a little overnight, it had not been much. There had been, therefore, a lot of time for contemplation.

I was grateful for my experience as a wilderness guide in Maine and for my Appalachian and John Muir Trail through-hikes where I learned cold weather camping techniques and because of which I had decent gear with me. I worried about my two colleagues, Alan and Lewis, who were less experienced and less well outfitted. They were undoubtedly suffering much worse than I. Then I thought about the people on the Cape who actually are homeless. Tonight, they risked hypothermia and frostbite: life- and limb-threatening conditions. We were sleeping outside in solidarity with them on this Homeless Awareness Day, but we had the option of going into the warmth of the West Falmouth Friends Meetinghouse if needed. Where could they go? I recalled the very moving memorial service held earlier that evening where we remembered twenty-one homeless souls who had died on Cape Cod this year. How tragic!

I gratefully remembered the delicious and plentiful potluck supper we enjoyed before the memorial service, where Friends made sure we had hot, nourishing food in our bellies before we ventured into the cold. It was my first time inside that historic building, and I had the pleasure of meeting many wonderful Friends. One Friend, Steve, was staying in the meeting house overnight in case we needed to come in to get warm. Thank you to all who made this possible.

This was the fifth year that I slept out for homelessness awareness on the solstice, but it was the most memorable and moving. I plan to be there again next year, and I invite others to join us. What do you have to lose, other than a good night's sleep?



The spot at the side of the meetinghouse where Paul had pitched his tent. December 22, 2024. Photo: M. Cornell.

A National Homeless Memorial Day Prayer

Lewis Randa

Gracious Creator,

As I reflect on the privilege of having a place to call home, I come before You in humility and gratitude for it is within You that I dwell. For the past decade, I have honored National Homeless Memorial Day by spending a cold night in a tent, seeking to understand, even if just for a moment, the challenges faced by those without shelter.

On that frigid night outside the West Falmouth Friends Meetinghouse, wrapped in my sleeping bag, I felt the biting cold and struggled to find warmth and sleep. Through this discomfort, I glimpsed the daily struggles—sleep deprivation and harsh realities—that countless individuals endure. May this experience open my heart to their suffering and deepen my compassion.

We gathered first in joy, sharing a nourishing potluck dinner and lively conversation, only to shift into solemn reflection as we honored those who faced homelessness on Cape Cod and have passed away in the past year. With each name read by Alan Burt, may we remember the lives lost, their journey etched in our hearts. The sound of the Tibetan Meditation Bell, rung by Gail Melix after each name, echoes their significance and reminds us of the fragility of life.

On this longest night, as we observe National Homeless Persons Memorial Day, may we embrace the lessons of empathy, understanding, and action. Inspire us to recognize the struggles of those who seek to create a sense of home, even in the most difficult circumstances.

As I join Alan, Paul, and Steve, I am reminded of the resilience required to endure the discomfort and cold. In that reflection, may my heart grow heavy with gratitude for the home I have. May I be inspired to serve and advocate for the homeless, bringing awareness to their plight. Let my actions embody love and compassion, guiding me to stand in solidarity with those who suffer, for I live with the awareness that our existence lies in your essence, for there is that of God in all that is.

Amen.

Some Thoughts and Some Questions

Steve Gates

After several years of just showing up with food at the East Sandwich meetinghouse for the December 21 observance of National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day, it occurred to me that I really could do more this year to support Alan, Lewis and Paul in their efforts to raise our consciousness of the plight of the homeless on Cape Cod. So when Alan brought the remembrance to the West Falmouth meeting, it seemed like the ideal opportunity. It did occur to me to sleep outside with the others, but I decided that I would instead sleep on a cot inside the meetinghouse and be there to offer support to the “three stalwarts” as Rita called them.

With the potluck supper and the wonderful presentation by Robyn Sweeting finished and the deeply moving worship closed, it was still too early to go to sleep, so the four of us sat and just talked together for an hour or so. This was a special opportunity to get to know them a bit better. But finally, the time came for them to

venture out into the bitter cold. I climbed into my sleeping bag on a camp cot, with the lights turned low, and...couldn't fall asleep. I lay there worrying about my friends in the snow and cold. And I then started thinking about a simple question – why would anyone live in the woods during the winter, if they could be in a shelter? I realized I really don't know the answer to that question, but I did have some inkling from my time on the cot. I thought about being in a shelter (not available during the high tourist season, of course), on a cot in a room full of cots. With lots of men snoring, loudly. And with my meager possessions stored under my cot, but perhaps not entirely safe. And of the things I didn't know, but might imagine to be true, about the other men. Would I be able to fall asleep under such circumstances? Would I feel safe?

I did fall asleep eventually, in the quiet, warm, empty, safe meetinghouse. But it was hard for me not to worry about my friends outdoors – and by extension, about my homeless neighbors who were also sleeping outside in this bitter weather. I so admire my friends' efforts to encourage us to think about the homeless, and Alan's decades-long calling to serve them. But what kind of society do we have that we don't even ensure that the basic human needs of food and shelter are met for *every* individual? What can I do about this?

Further Reflections

Brenda Nolan --

The warmth of the meetinghouse, welcoming Friends, and the beauty of warm, nutritious food against the beautiful but bitter cold night filled my exhausted body. I was deeply touched hearing Robyn talk about the efforts she makes for those without housing/shelter to have a warm, secure, and stable place to rest and access the basic resources to meet their needs.

I was reminded of those I've known who have been affected by violence including poverty, mental illnesses, PTSD, the lack of stable shelter, and the disrespect they experienced every day. I thought of the love, kindness, and care they held for others. During worship, as Alan read the names of twenty-one of the forty or more individuals who have died homeless on the Cape this year, I remembered the many faces and spirits of those I've known who could have been in the shoes of any of those whose names were read. My heart was filled with gratitude for their gifts to life and the world; and sadness that the systems of the world hold such little regard and love for the whole of humanity and make it so hard for those without resources to get their basic needs met. The space to be present with and say thank you to each human soul named was a gift to our collective humanity.

I long for a world where everyone is welcomed and fed. I have deep appreciation for everyone who does this. To everyone who made this evening happen, thank you. It was a beautiful and heart-filling gathering.

Ruth Zwirner --

The gathering in honor of some who died while homeless was gently inspiring. It helped me to remember that all lives are special and unique, regardless of their living situation. I also reflected on the challenge of the three members who experienced sleeping out in the frigid temperatures of that night. Last year I read the book *Rough Sleepers* by Tracy Kidder which followed a doctor, Jim O'Connell, as he also touched many lives and circumstances of those living unhoused in Boston, especially with respect to healthcare.

I appreciated hearing Robyn Sweeting speak about the nonprofit she established, Robyn's Resources, and her vital work with the Wampanoag tribal members.

Erica H. Adams –

The longest night, December 21st, was also the coldest in record but provided warmth and unity, peace and purpose among Cape Cod's Quakers attending West Falmouth Meetinghouse's event for National Homeless Persons' Memorial Service. What a gift to us all was Alan Burt's request that West Falmouth host this annual event. A generous, well-attended potluck followed by talks was concluded by our triad of overnight outdoor 'campers' in empathy with the homeless from Sandwich Meeting: Alan, Lewis, and Paul.

The first talk was upbeat. Mashpee Wampanoag Robyn Sweeting described a new tribal homeless shelter now being renovated on land the tribe bought in 2022 on the site of the former 19-room motel La Plaza Del Sol on Route 130, Mashpee. Cape Cod Times wrote in 2022 "The tribe turned to an infusion of federal cash -- funds from United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Indian Community Development Block Grant program and the American Rescue Plan Act --to make the purchase." (<https://www.capecodtimes.com/story/news/2022/12/15/mashpee-wampanoag-tribe-buys-la-plaza-del-sol-motor-lodge-homelessness-housing-solution/69720152007/>).

Next, Alan led our reading out loud the first names of homeless who'd died in 2024. Then, Alan gave an emotional accounting of his work with the homeless over the decades, as he's elaborated in his book *Blessings of the Burden* and on film for 2nd Sunday Forum on ZOOM (2023). (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUhMkRLLfOY>).

Robyn Tobey Sweeting –

Thank you to all of you for allowing me to present Robyn's Resources and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe's Transitional Housing and Shelter Program at the West Falmouth Meeting house on December 21, 2024.

It was an honor to break bread with another "family" whose mission is tough, yet tender.

The food was great, I'm not going to bring my grandson again lol, smoke and prayers up to the three guests who slept outside in honor of the homeless, past and present.

I pray everyone embraces the new year with the same giving heart that closes out tomorrow at midnight



In Peace and love

Aho

Robyn Tobey Sweeting -- "Just another person trying"

Molly Cornell –

West Falmouth Meeting was honored to host one of this year's memorials for the homeless people on Cape Cod. Meeting prepared its meetinghouse and grounds to welcome Friends, and their friends, to come inside. The meetinghouse offered a place where we could gather, creating a space to give recognition of the lives of those who suffered from a lack of adequate shelter.

On the longest night of the year, the bitter cold was a stark reminder of the basic human need for shelter. We were touched when we heard the transformative experiences shared by Robyn and Alan, whose lives are dedicated to helping people in need.

On behalf of Meeting, I give gratitude to the many individuals who, each in their own way, helped to make the memorial recognition possible.

Readers Write

A Child's Christmas in a Quaker Meeting

Ann Prentice

I grew up in a very active Friend's Meeting in central Pennsylvania in the 1950s. The First Day school staged a Christmas pageant every December. When I was about 4 or 5, I was cast as one of the angels. I considered that a great honor and put serious thought into making my costume. Since angels didn't figure into our First-day school teachings I had a very hazy idea of what an angel was. I did know that they had wings and brought messages from the heavens. So obviously angels were birds. They have wings and their singing is a message to us from the sky. My angel was to be a bluebird. My parents must have been amused by my unique interpretation of a religious figure. Still, they helped me with my costume. My father made wings from blue cardboard and my mother made a paper bird bill and glued it onto a blue baseball hat. A pair of blue long underwear completed the outfit.

The pageant was presented after worship. There were all the customary characters -- the prettiest girl was Mary, the tallest boy was Joseph, boys in their father's bathrobes were shepherds, and girls draped in sheets with wings and pipe cleaner halos were angels. And there was also a scrawny, scruffy bluebird. I'm sure there was some snickering, but all I remember is pride in being the best bluebird in the Nativity scene.

Of course, I later realized my misunderstanding of a word, and was also amused. I also realized the acceptance of the Friend's Meeting to my bluebird is a very important part of our faith. I was never corrected or told to change my costume to conform to the other angels. We all interpret words and messages differently but we all search for the truth. Perhaps we should listen carefully to the songs of birds.

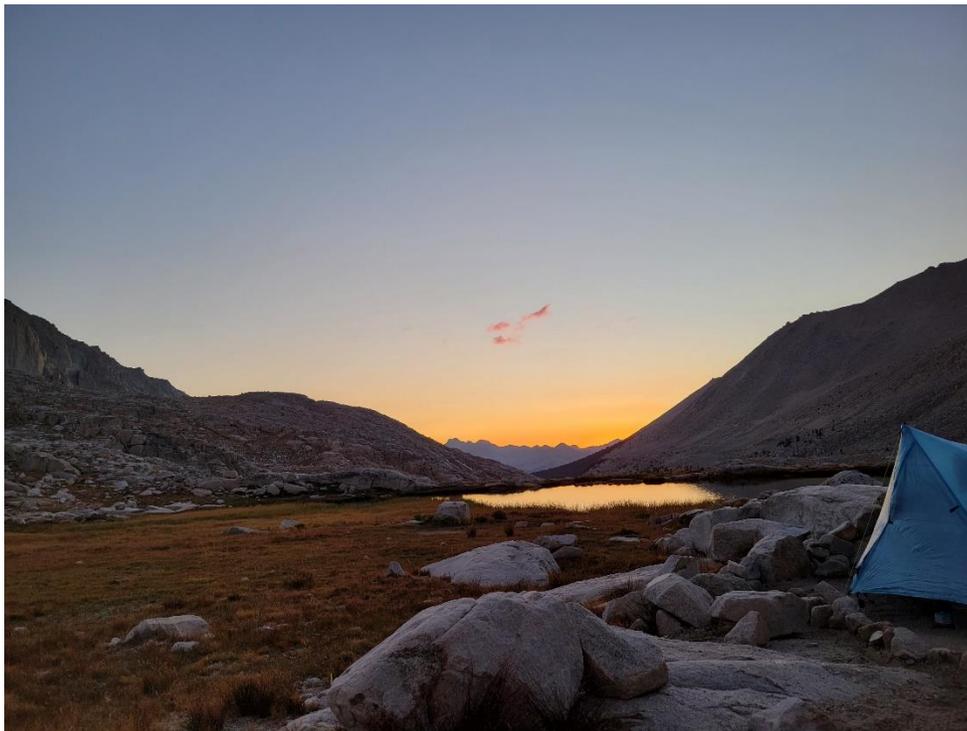
There *was* an occasion in the First-day school preparations for Christmas that a misunderstanding *was* corrected by an adult. The Meeting clerk was a short, portly man named John Ferguson. The teacher stopped us while we were singing 'Silent Night' to correct the words we were singing. "The words are, 'Round yon Virgin Mother and Child,' NOT 'Round John Ferguson, Mother and Child.'"



Quaker Hiker on the John Muir Trail – Part 3*

Paul Denoncourt

Pozzy and I had hiked 201 miles thus far and were about to spend night 17 of our trek camping at Hemlock Tarn (a tarn is a small steep-banked alpine lake or pond), high above the tree line at 11,900 feet of elevation, with nary a hemlock for miles. As the sun slipped behind the western ridgeline, it was soon followed by the waxing crescent moon; it would be a dark night. We were four miles and 2,600 feet below the summit of Mount Whitney which, at 14,500 feet, is the tallest mountain in California as well in the contiguous U.S. Pozzy dove into the ice-cold tarn to rinse off many days' worth of sweat and grime. I hate polar plunges (call me a wimp), so I waded up to my knees and splashed water over my arms and thighs. We each cooked and ate supper; mine was a Knorr Rice Side to which I added Spam and Sriracha sauce for additional calories and flavor. We both had to force ourselves to eat because we were still nauseated from altitude sickness. Little did I know that that would be the last solid food I would stomach for the next 24 hours.



Sunset at Hemlock Tarn campsite. This, and the first photo on the next page by the author.

We discussed our plan for summiting the next day. Pozzy was still having paroxysms of coughing due to the cold dry air irritating the lining of his airways but was showing no signs of High-Altitude Pulmonary Edema. He was also having trouble falling asleep so was very tired. I had no cough and, thanks to Spirit (read Part 2), was now sleeping again, although I still felt weak and exhausted. These symptoms were also due to the altitude, but I considered them to be moderate in severity. They had not worsened over the last few days, and once we summited then descended a few thousand feet, we could expect symptom improvement. We agreed to make the final push.

The tradition on the JMT is to ascend Mt. Whitney at night, by headlamp, to welcome the sunrise of a new day. Pozzy and I disagreed on when we should start. He calculated, based on our most recent climbs of mountain passes, that it would take us three hours to summit. Sunrise would be at 6:20 AM so he didn't

want to start before 3 a.m. I pointed out that we would be climbing at elevations more than 1,000 feet higher than we had yet experienced, in air thinner than we had yet breathed. The oxygen in the air near the summit would only be 57% of what we are used to at sea level. I predicted we would need at least four hours to summit and should start by 2 a.m. He was adamant; so was I. We decided to climb separately.



My alarm went off at 1 a.m. Too nauseated to eat breakfast, I broke camp and was on trail by 2 a.m. With no moonlight, it was very dark. Even with a headlamp, I lost the trail once for about 20 minutes, only to find it again when another hiker came along and searched with me. As I climbed higher and peered into the valley from whence I came, I could see what looked like a string of white Christmas lights which were the headlamps of fellow hikers who similarly aspired to experience sunrise on the top of the nation. Some of these hikers eventually caught up and passed me because my hiking pace had slowed to nearly a crawl— I felt like I was hiking in slow motion—due to breathlessness and worsening nausea. It was a good thing I had not eaten breakfast as I would have lost it by now.

Although it seemed to take forever, I reached the summit at 6:05 AM. It was cold: 33 degrees and windy! Fifteen minutes later a group of about 20 of us were treated to a beautiful sunrise (see back page of this issue). The experience was enhanced by the fact that we had all just completed the John Muir Trail as the Mt. Whitney summit is the southern terminus. I gratefully thanked Spirit for getting me there, at my age, despite the hardships.

Pozzy arrived at 6:40. We celebrated with some hot tea. The tea stayed down but I was still unable to eat. We remained for about an hour, at which point I turned and said to Pozzy, "I want to go home now."

We had an 11-mile descent off the mountain and out of the Sierra Nevada to the nearest road. We did 8 of those miles that day and camped at Lone Pine Lake at 10,000 feet. Only then was I able to eat a solid meal, having gone 24 hours and climbed the tallest mountain in the continental U.S. without solid food. The next morning we finished the last 3 miles, then hitch-hiked into the town of Lone Pine, CA —elevation 4,000



feet— with our AMS symptoms resolved! The next day, on a red-eye flight home, Nature treated us to a dazzling display of Northern Lights— my best sighting ever. A gift from Spirit, perhaps? (Photo left, by Pozzy.)

We had achieved our goal of hiking 216 miles of very difficult terrain and summiting Mt. Whitney. We had experienced what hikers consider to be the most beautiful hiking trail in the country. But I had the additional goal of emptying my mind so as to commune with Spirit again as I had on the Appalachian Trail two years previously. That did not happen because my mind was unable to shift its focus away from how uncomfortable (nauseated, sore, tired, and short of breath) I was. I realized however, and was grateful that, Spirit was with me the entire

journey. When the odds of getting our permit application drawn in the lottery were only 3%, I turned the problem over to Spirit and he/she/it came through. When I felt it necessary to abort the trek because of High Altitude Sleep Apnea, I turned the issue over to Spirit and the problem disappeared. In hindsight, I realize that Spirit chose for us the ideal weeks to hike; by starting in late August, we avoided bears, bugs, the worst of the summer heat, thunderstorms, and significant snowfall. When the airline problems cost us the three days we were supposed to acclimatize and jeopardized an on-time pick up our backcountry permit, Spirit got us to the ranger station just in time. This all reinforced my belief that Spirit is always with me — with all of us— throughout life, not just on a hiking trail. A hiking trail is only a metaphor for the life journey. You do not have to hear Spirit’s voice to know it has your back. You can see it in life experiences. Have you had such experiences?

We got home safely, although, like on our way out, our return flight was cancelled, and we were rerouted. Furthermore, the airline lost our backpacks; thank you, Spirit, that it happened on our way home instead of our way out. The bags were delivered a day later. By the end of the hike I had lost 12 pounds over 19 days and Pozzy had lost 22. It has been great fun putting them back on (with lots of ice cream!).

It was not a fun trip, but I am glad I did it although I have no desire to do it again. The scenery was indeed spectacular! It was a great gift to bear witness to some of God’s most magnificent handiwork. To me, creation is a visible, comprehensible manifestation of God’s invisible, incomprehensible essence. Thank you, Spirit.

Nature is God's living, visible garment.
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe/ Faust Part 1

*Note: Parts 1 and 2 of this article appeared in the November, 2024 issue of *The Gazette*.



Paladin (author, l) and Pozzy (r) at the summit of Mt. Whitney, Sunrise, September 9, 2024.
Photo credit: J. Gookinberger.)

One Quaker's Thoughts on American Foreign Policy in the Coming Years

Opinion by John Davidson

Although many of us were surprised by the results of our recent presidential election, we should not become excessively pessimistic or give up on America. As Quakers, we are committed to promoting a world free of violence, inequality, and oppression. Most of us question the assumptions that have guided decades of the U.S. approach to the world—in particular, the idea that an international order backed by American military hegemony is self-evidently worth maintaining, no matter the cost. Although Trump cynically presented himself as the pro-peace candidate during the recent election campaign, we can expect him to decide questions based on “America first,” meaning American self-interest as perceived by him without reference to allies or the rest of the world. But his “America first” approach is not a viable alternative for the long run. Despite often being mislabeled as isolationism, what Trump really offers is in fact aggressive unilateralism, a vision of the United States unbound by rules and unashamedly self-interested, no longer getting ripped off by a self-dealing and entrenched Washington political establishment and free-riding international allies and clients.

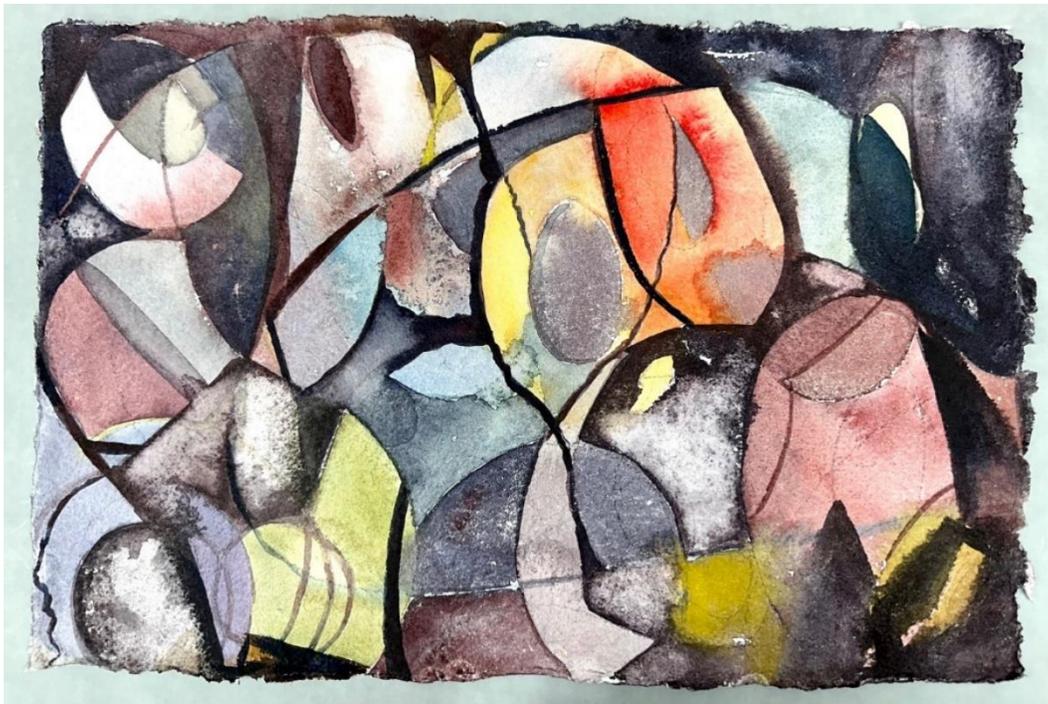
In the Middle East, we cannot expect the situation of the Palestinians to improve under the incoming administration, but we should still make arguments on behalf of their legal rights under international law and make contributions to assist them. I am in agreement with the American Friends Service Committee, which last October called on the international community to take immediate action to stop the Israeli legal assault on the operations of UNRWA on Israeli territory from moving forward, and have been calling on the U.S. to institute an immediate arms embargo on Israel. Whatever Trump says, and whatever Benjamin Netanyahu does, the Palestinians have many allies around the world as evidenced by recent UN votes, and the Palestinian people will not disappear or be removed from their land. Efforts by Netanyahu's far right allies to expel the Palestinians from the West Bank are certain to fail. The United States backed a catastrophic war waged by Israel on the captive people of Gaza in response to Hamas's October 2023 attack. Rather than embrace a shift from bad policy and use its considerable leverage to rein in Israel's assault, the United States spent the past year mainly trying (and failing) to contain the spread of the conflict beyond Gaza, hemorrhaging resources and international credibility while abetting a humanitarian catastrophe.

The conflict in Ukraine could actually be resolved by the Trump administration if, along with European allies, his negotiating team successfully manages to pressure Putin into ending Russian assaults on that country, and agreeing to a compromise peace which allows for Ukrainian sovereignty in the eighty percent of the country not conquered by Russia. The personal chemistry between Putin and Trump is apparently good. Assuming that Putin is well-informed about Russia's massive losses on the battlefield as well as its economic weaknesses, he will conclude that Trump's offer to let him have the land which he has conquered will be the best deal he can get, and sign a compromise agreement to end all attacks. Although he would prefer to permanently cripple Ukraine by sharply reducing the size of its armed forces, I do not believe that the European allies, Ukraine and General Kellog (whom Trump has appointed to lead the American negotiating team and who previously helped train the Ukrainian army) would allow that to happen. France and the Britain will probably insist that a buffer zone be set up with NATO European troops between the two armies, and it is unlikely that Putin would attack across that line, because the last thing he wants is a war with NATO. Trump's advisors will be divided between soft-liners such as J.D. Vance and Donald Trump Jr. who do not care about Ukraine, and hard-liners or realists such as General Kellog who will argue that NATO cannot allow Ukraine to be dismembered or destroyed. Probably a compromise proposal will be reached between the two camps, and this proposal would be accepted by Putin. Assuming he can get over his obsession with destroying Ukraine, Putin can call the conquest of some cities in the Donbas along with Crimea a victory. He hopefully will be brought to understand that having killed or severely injured more than 600,000 Russians, he

will not be able to find more competent and trained soldiers willing to die in Ukraine. It may be six months or nearly a year of negotiations before the Russians will sign a deal, but it will happen.

We can conclude from the events of the past year that Americans need a new approach to international relations which would be an alternative to the choice between “America first” unilateralism or “America is back” nostalgia presented in the last election. Putting a new coat of paint on the old liberal internationalism will not do—neither for Americans nor for most of the world’s countries and peoples, who understandably see U.S. leaders’ appeals to a “rules-based” order as a thin varnish for an order ruled, and often bent or broken, with impunity by the United States and its friends. The goal of any country’s foreign policy is to promote the security and prosperity of its people. In today’s deeply interconnected world, however, where key challenges such as climate change and pandemics are shared, the United States’ global approach needs to include another priority: the common good. This will require a United States that acts in solidarity with others, considers the effects of American foreign policy on people around the world, and seeks to promote U.S. security and prosperity while not exporting insecurity and economic desperation onto them. We progressives and Quakers have an opportunity—and an obligation—to map a better way forward.

LATE BREAKING NEWS -- Erica H. Adams’s watercolor *Bioaccumulations* has been selected for the exhibit “Why Cape Cod?” at the Cape Cod Museum of Art. Exhibit runs Thursday, **January 16** through Sunday, **March 30**, 2025. Gallery Talk and Opening Reception on Thursday, **February 6**, 4:00 - 6:30 p.m. Free admission on the 1st Thursday of the month. Learn more at <https://www.ccmoa.org/>.



Bioaccumulations ©2024, Watercolor and Carbon on Paper: 12 x 18 inches.

Other photo credits in this issue: New Years Eve gathering – photos of Barry Simon, p. 8 and meetinghouse p. 16 by E.H. Adams; photo of Steve Gates, p. 15 by J. Gates; all others by R. O’Donnell and S. Gates. Photo of Cardinal, next page by G. Melix, Winter 2023.

Clerks*

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West Falmouth Preparative Meeting
Molly Cornell

Yarmouth Preparative Meeting
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**Contact information can be found in the Sandwich Monthly Meeting Directory.*



Photo credits -- Front cover:
Winter sunset in the backyard. S.
Gates, March 10, 2024. Back
cover: Sunrise on Mt. Whitney. P.
Denoncourt, September 9, 2024.

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