

# Toronto Friends

## *Welcome and Information Sheet*

### *Welcome*

If you are new to our Meeting we hope you have found spiritual nurturing here and will join us again. We are a big Meeting. We aim to make newcomers welcome, but even those of us who have been attending for years are not always sure who the newcomers are each week! If you would like to speak to a Friend (Quaker) who has been part of Meeting for some time please talk to the person who read the announcements or the person in the Library. There is a "welcome to worship after the manner of Friends" for those attending the Meeting for Worship for the first time. This sheet gives information about the Toronto Meeting and how it works.

### *Information*

There is a great deal of activity in a Meeting of this size, and we are trying to keep the notices read after Meeting for Worship down to a manageable number. You will find more information in the newsletter. A copy of the newsletter should be in the lobby and on the website. See also the notice boards outside the Meeting room, the passage leading to the lobby and the website [www.quaker.ca/toronto](http://www.quaker.ca/toronto).

### *Monthly Meeting for Business*

This is the Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business for Toronto Quakers. Usually it meets once a month, on the third Sunday, at 12.45 p.m. Business Meetings are conducted by a Clerk who keeps the meeting in order, and are assisted by a Recording Clerk. Copies of the minutes of the business meeting are in the Library.

### *Organization - Toronto Meeting*

The Toronto Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (to give the full title) had its beginning in 1880; the Meeting was in other locations before moving to Friends House (60 Lowther Avenue) in 1949. The Meeting is an independent church body. There are about 150 active adults (of whom about 90 are members). We have no designated clergy. The work of the Meeting (Social Testimonies, administration, and giving witness to concerns) is carried out by participation in Meeting committees. A list of Meeting committees (and their terms of reference) is in the Library, in the file that contains minutes of the Monthly Meeting. Two Friends reside in the House and provide a Quaker presence; a part-time office person cares for the secretarial and bookkeeping work; there is a refugee and resettlement worker and one person minds the upkeep of the House. These five are employees of the Meeting. Financial support for the Meeting comes from trust funds, as well as donations. TMM is a registered charitable organization. Confusing though it may be, the word Meeting refers to: the Meeting for Worship, the Monthly Meeting for Business, and the scheduled meeting of a committee. Sometimes it means the usual "gathering", as in "they are meeting in the lobby".

### *Organization - Canadian Yearly Meeting*

There are about 1100 Friends in Canada; all are members of Monthly Meetings spread across the country. The meetings are members of a voluntary body called the Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM), whose office is in Ottawa. In addition to organizing a yearly Meeting, CYM also oversees

the publication of a journal (*The Canadian Friend*). It has also put together a book called *Organization and Procedure of the CYM*; the contents of this book provide a framework for the Monthly Meetings to adopt and adapt. It includes chapters about Friends' marriages, burials, as well as about Spiritual Welfare and Pastoral Care (see below about Ministry and Counsel). Canadian Friends use the *Quaker Faith and Practice of Britain Yearly Meeting* as a spiritual resource. A committee of the CYM is compiling a *Faith and Practice of Canadian Friends*.

## *Local groups*

There are smaller local groups which meet for worship and sharing. All the groups welcome newcomers. (If a group also involves shared food they will tell you.) All lead to good conversations and fellowship. At the present time the groups are the West-end Group, the Esplanade Group, and the Community Worship Group. Information about them can be found in the Newsletter.

## *Social Testimonies*

Testimony is the term used to describe the expression of the collective experience of Quaker faith, the experience of the group as it tries to remain faithful. Often it may be a convenient shorthand to talk of four or five testimonies, e.g. peace, simplicity, equality, integrity, community, but it is misleading and to see only certain Quaker actions as 'testimonies' when the very nature of Quaker worship and Quaker business are equally testimonies. In addition to worship and business (which have not changed over 350 years) the witness of Friends has led to a number of testimonies which have changed with the times. Toronto Friends are active in many issues including jail visitation, earth care, helping refugees, assisting war-resisters, arranging workshops on non-violence and bearing witness to bringing about a just and compassionate society.

## *Meeting of Ministry and Counsel*

As Quakers we do not have designated priests or ministers, since we believe in the ability of all to have direct access to the Divine. However nurturing the spiritual life of the group as a whole and of its individual members needs attending to. Right holding of meetings for worship also needs care. The outward aspects of pastoral care, with building a community in which all members find acceptance, loving care and opportunities for service is also of concern. These are done by members of the Meeting of Ministry and Counsel.

## *Meeting for Children and Young People*

There is a First Day School which usually takes place at the same time as the Meeting for Worship (between 11 a.m. and 12 noon.)

## *Gay and Lesbian Concerns*

There are contact persons for Gay and Lesbian Concerns who are appointed by the Monthly Meeting. Please ask the person who made the announcements (after Meeting for Worship) for the names of the people currently responsible for this.

(May 2007) Raja