

The Provident FRIEND

Providence Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

March 2016

Spring Session of Quakerism 101 Begins March 20

If you missed the first session of Quakerism 101 in the fall, you're in luck! Our 8-week series will be repeated this spring, meeting in the Meetinghouse Library on Sundays from 11:45 to 1:00 p.m., beginning March 20 (or from 12:00-1:30 on potluck days). Each session will be led by a member or two of Providence Friends Meeting who will structure the lesson and discussion. Most sessions will have some suggested readings to be studied beforehand. Childcare will be provided if needed.

This is a wonderful opportunity for those who wish to know more about Quakerism, to initiate or deepen personal inquiry, and to share insights with others. The class is open to all members and attenders, newcomers and old-timers. A blend of participants with varied backgrounds will make this an enriching experience for all. We hope that those who decide to participate will commit to attending all of the sessions.

To register, please email Zona Douthit at zdouthit@cox.net. See below for a schedule of topics. (* begins at noon following potluck)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic (Facilitator)</i>
March 20	The Inward Light (Zona Douthit)
April 3*	Quaker Roots and Faith (Rebecca Smith)
April 10	Participants are encouraged to attend Meeting for Business (MfB). There will be a brief Q101 class session just prior to the start of MfB.
April 17	Quaker Worship and Ministry (Hans-Dieter Gomes)
April 24	Meeting for Business & Beyond (Betsy Cazden)
May 1*	The Meaning of Community (David Bourns)
May 8	Participants are encouraged to attend Meeting for Business (MfB).
May 15	Living in the Light: Quaker Witness (Betsy Zimmerman and Adele Bourne)

Threshing Session Regarding Saylesville – April 24, 11:45

As many of you know, there have been concerns about the functioning of the preparative meeting at Saylesville. Ministry and Counsel appointed an ad hoc committee to explore options for addressing the situation, and, after considerable thought and effort, that committee has offered a proposal that the preparative meeting be laid down and that a worship group take its place. In order to discern whether this is the best course for Providence Meeting as a whole, we will hold a threshing session at noon on Sunday, April 24, after Meeting for Worship. The threshing session will be held downstairs at the Providence Meetinghouse and will include a full description of the proposal and the reasoning behind it, and then an opportunity for Friends to express how they are led in regard to it. However, we will not be deciding whether to approve the proposal at that time. Rather, this will be decided if and when the proposal comes to Meeting for Business. This is an issue that affects all of Meeting, not just the Friends who worship at Saylesville, so it's important that as many of us as possible address it thoughtfully and carefully. The purpose of the threshing session will be to provide an opportunity to do that. If you have any questions about threshing sessions in general or about this one in particular, contact Dan Lederer.

(Published March 17)

Calendar (also see p. 4 Events)

Mar 19 (Sat): 10am-12pm
Saylesville Bookswap

Mar 20 (Sun): 11:45am
Quakerism 101 (Library)

Mar 20 (Sun) – Quarterly Meeting, Smithfield (following Meeting for Worship at 10:30; Betsy Cazden speaks on FWCC meeting in Peru)

Mar 27 (Sun): 3-6pm Sacred Harp Sing at Providence Meetinghouse

April 3 (Sun): 11am Potluck

11:30am
Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza speaks about Sustainability and the City, Providence Meetinghouse

Apr 10 (Sun): 11:45am
Meeting for Business, Providence Meetinghouse

Apr 16 (Sat): 10am-12pm
Saylesville Bookswap

Apr 24(Sun) 9:30 – 10:15am
Intergenerational Worship, Providence Meetinghouse

12pm
Threshing session RE Saylesville Meeting, Providence Meetinghouse

May 1 (Sun): 11am Potluck

12pm – Dr Umer Akbar speaks on “Understanding Differences, Building Bridges: Islamic Faith and Practice” (Open to the public)

Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business Minutes – 13th Third Month, 2016

1. We gathered at 11:45 am at the Providence meetinghouse, with 26 present. After reminding Friends about conducting business in a spirit of worship, the clerk read the following query from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice*:

In what ways do we support each other in order to seek God's will and act upon our understanding of truth? Is there opportunity in our Meeting to share the excitement of religious discovery and the possibility of religious transformation?

2. Announcements:

Smithfield Friends Meeting will host Quarterly Meeting on Sunday March 20, one week from today. Worship there starts at 10:30 am and will be followed by potluck, a program about the recent FWCC meeting in Peru, and business meeting. Anyone may attend.

Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza will speak at the Providence Meetinghouse around 11:30 am on Sunday April 3 about the City of Providence and sustainability.

On April 24 at noon at the Providence Meetinghouse a threshing session will address a proposal regarding Saylesville Preparative Meeting.

3. Correspondence: Beth Collea and Melinda Wenner Bradley will be conducting a First Day School Workshop from March 18-20 at Woolman Hill, the Quaker retreat center in Deerfield, MA. We have received a thank-you note from Woolman Hill appreciating our meeting donation and the participation of Providence Friends in their programs.

4. Membership: David Bourns brought a recommendation from Ministry and Counsel that Jennifer McFadden be accepted into membership in the meeting, following the usual clearness process. We approve.

5. Travel Minute: David Bourns also brought a recommendation from Ministry and Counsel that the meeting endorse a travel minute that has been prepared for our member Elizabeth Cazden, who proposes to travel to Cuba under the NEYM license to teach a course on Quaker diversity at Cuba Yearly Meeting's Institute for Peace and Quaker Studies. We approve, and are grateful for this opportunity to strengthen our connections with Friends who are far in distance but close in spirit. We forward this minute to Quarterly Meeting for its endorsement before sending it on to NEYM Permanent Board.

6. Assistant Presiding Clerk Nomination: On behalf of Ministry and Counsel, David Bourns brought a recommendation that Michael Hirtle be named as Assistant Presiding Clerk, beginning immediately, in place of Abigail Mansfield Marcaccio. We thank Abigail for her faithful service. The Nominating Committee expects to propose that in June Mike would succeed Daniel Lederer as Presiding Clerk and Dan would serve as assistant clerk for one additional year. It was felt that naming Mike as assistant clerk now would provide a more orderly transition at the clerks' table. We approve.

7. State of the Society Report: David Bourns presented a draft of the State of Society Report, which drew from the worship-sharing held last month and has been through substantial editing. Several suggestions were brought forward for minor editing. A proposal was brought to add language describing the meeting's advocacy on peace and social justice issues, which met with general approval. We approve this text, with permission to Ministry and Counsel to edit and add the proposed insert.

8. Finance Committee: On recommendation of the Finance Committee, we have considered a proposed minute authorizing the meeting clerk to execute documents, whenever needed, modifying and clarifying our arrangements with Friends Fiduciary Corporation. We hereby authorize the Presiding Clerk of Providence Monthly Meeting to execute, upon recommendation of the Finance Committee, any required documents, including the Custody and Investment Agreements, with Friends Fiduciary Corporation of Philadelphia, with respect to monthly meeting funds held by FFC either for the use of Conanicut Meetinghouse or otherwise.

(Minutes: Continued)

9. Ad Hoc Meetinghouse Expansion Committee: The Treasurer reminded us that some years ago, the meeting considered an expansion of the Providence meetinghouse, and considerable funds were collected restricted for this purpose (currently totaling over \$170,000). The ad hoc group set up to revisit this project is now seeking formal approval that will enable it to move forward with planning, as follows:

1. To convert the ad hoc committee into a standing monthly meeting committee, whose task is to explore how the "PMH Addition/Renovation Fund" could be expended toward improvements to the Providence meetinghouse;
2. To name the following individuals to the committee: Nina Berry, David Bourns, Bruce Carlsten, Bob Elliott, Mike Hirtle, and Betsy Zimmerman, plus Dan Lederer (clerk) and Peter Swaszek (treasurer) ex officio;
3. To instruct the committee to take the first steps of programmatic and schematic design and bring the result back to Business Meeting. Programmatic design is the creation of a clear statement of the needs to be satisfied by the construction. This includes the number of rooms, how they would be used, their square footages, etc. and identifies any special infrastructural needs. Once the program is clear, schematic design maps those needs into a plan. This includes building massing, floor plans, envelope facades, etc. It does not include construction documents.
4. To authorize the committee to expend up to \$10,000 from said Fund toward programmatic and schematic design – specifically, to be able to enter into a contractual agreement with an architect to achieve item 3.

In the discussion that followed, we were reminded that there was a previous professional planning process some years ago, that should be incorporated into the new planning. The earlier efforts got stuck because the overall cost was prohibitive. A concern was raised to make sure that everyone in the community is aware of and has a voice in the decision-making. A concern was also raised about the make-up of the committee; there is an opportunity to engage newer members of the community with relevant skills and interests, such as parents of young children. We ask the Nominating Committee to invite and discern possible additional names to add to those appointed today.

We approve the recommendation as presented.

10. Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer presented his quarterly report for the third quarter ending 2/29/16. He highlighted increased contributions from members and increased income from use of the Providence meetinghouse. Expenses are running about as expected; we hope that the below-budget electricity payments may reflect energy savings from measures such as switching to LED light bulbs. We accept the report, with gratitude for our faithful Treasurer.

11. Finance Committee (Preliminary Budget): Michael Hirtle, clerk of the Finance Committee, presented the committee's preliminary budget for the coming fiscal year. There are only minor changes from the current year in most items. The property committee had a professional assessment of the future maintenance needs for both meetinghouses; based on that, the finance committee has recommended an increase in our contribution to the property maintenance fund for Providence, and a slight decrease for Saylesville. The finance committee welcomes comments and will bring a refined proposal next month.

12. Saylesville: Bruce Downing reported that work is continuing to address both the damaged fence and the heating system. The prep

arative meeting has discussed possible additional uses of the meetinghouse.

13. We closed at about 2:00 pm following a period of silent worship, intending to meet next on April 10 at the Providence meetinghouse.

Daniel Lederer, Clerk

Elizabeth Cazden, Recording Clerk

Around the Meeting

<p>Beloved musician Bill Harley will be performing at Stone Soup Coffeehouse on March 19 at 7 pm (67 Roosevelt Ave, Pawtucket, in the historic Slater Mill). He'll be</p>	<p>accompanied by by Marty Ballou on bass and Rachel Panitch on fiddle. Tickets can be purchased online at stonesoupcoffeehouse.com or at the door (\$18 Adults,</p>	<p>\$9 Children). Singer-songwriter Caroline Cotter will be giving a charity concert at the Lincoln School on April 30 at 7:30 pm. Proceeds will benefit the Peace Flag Project.</p>	<p>See the website www.thepeaceflagproject.org for more on this wonderful program and to purchase tickets (\$25 per person).</p>
--	--	---	---

Providence Recycling Needs Your Help by Krystal Noiseux

In advance of Mayor Elorza's talk on April 3 about the city's sustainability efforts, I encourage Friends to read the cover story from March's edition of *Providence Monthly*. "Providence, We Have a Recycling Problem." (<http://providenceonline.com/stories/Providence-recycling-problem-providence-monthly-john-taraborelli,17904>).

I admit, I'm biased on this issue. I work in education and outreach at the RI Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC), where all municipal waste winds up. Three years ago, the city switched to automated recycling collection with carts, a move that normally results in increased recycling and savings. But in Providence's case, successful recycling has plummeted. Many recycling carts are essentially being used as trash carts, contaminated with yard waste, food waste, medical waste, diapers, construction waste, and hazardous waste. As a result, a substantial amount of the city's recycling ends up in the landfill.

RIRRC is working hard to address the problem. In 2015, we launched a major bilingual advertising campaign to bring attention to the issue and educate the public. We also gave the city matching funds for a Sustainability Ambassador Program that included door-to-door outreach in neighborhoods where the problem is most prevalent. This year, RIRRC's aim is getting more people to just be *good* recyclers, so we're planning to roll out a set of basic, clear recycling guidelines that are more easily translated into different languages. We will also be introducing standardized recycling bin labels and a new, more resident-friendly website.

We are now seeing a slight dip in the number of rejected recycling loads, but Providence still has a long way to go, and better education alone will not be enough. Enforcement of recycling at the curb is absolutely critical, and though there are a million excuses for why that level of enforcement is too costly or too difficult, something has got to give. The city is losing money, dangerous items are putting our workers at risk, and finite landfill space is being used for otherwise good recycling that is ruined by contamination. We can all do better. For more information about what you can do, please visit www.recycletogetherri.org.

Future Events – Events that recur and/or happen beyond the next month

[2016 unless noted, month in brackets indicates a recent issue that has an article about this event]

February – June (First Wednesdays) Beacon Hill Friends House Speaker Series on Refugee Voices [Feb p5]

April 10 & 24 Conanicut Friends at Mabel's Studio – last two of the season [Oct p5]

April 15-17 Young Adult Friends Retreats: at Wellesley Meeting (MA) [Oct p5]

May 13-15 Young Friends Retreats: Community Service, Westport Meeting, MA [Oct p5]

June-July 2016 Paid part time FCNL Summer Internship Program (Washington DC) [Dec p4]

July 3-9 2016 FGC's Annual Gathering in St. Joseph, MN [Feb p6]

Aug 2016 – July 2017 – Paid part- and full-time FCNL Advocacy and Young Fellows Programs (Washington DC) [Dec p4]

CLERK'S CORNER by Dan Lederer

Thinking About God

Our Quaker practice is based on the premise that there is that of God in each of us, but, at least in our liberal brand of Quakerism, it seems that there's often a reluctance to talk about God. Is this perhaps because it's left up to us to figure out the nature of the divine presence within us, which can be a daunting task? We want to know God, but our usual methods of inquiry fail us. We've been taught to study whatever it is we want to learn about by defining its boundaries and then comparing it to other things we already know. This becomes a problem if we consider God to be omnipresent and therefore without defined boundaries, which is why, it seems to me, that God is inaccessible to scientific inquiry. But this doesn't stop us from trying to conceptualize God.

Thomas Gates, in his Pendle Hill Pamphlet "Reclaiming the Transcendent: God in Process" (2013), reviews some of the ways people think about God, including deism (God created the world and the laws of nature, then left), theism (God created the world and continues to intervene from a distance by selectively suspending the laws of nature), pantheism (God is in everything), and panentheism (God is in the world and the world is in God). In the last of these, God is immanent (near, present, indwelling) as well as transcendent (existing beyond human experience).

Gates quotes the mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, who said, "Ultimate reality consists of events rather than things." Along these lines, he envisions God as participating in the process that brings everything into being, allowing choice, offering possibilities, and acting in the world "by persuasion and invitation, never by coercion." In his view, this process is not confined to humans; it exists throughout the universe. He then goes on to declare that there is a "moral nature built into the fabric of the universe" and that God's aim is to increase our "capacity to experience goodness and beauty, but this necessarily involves an increased capacity to experience suffering and to choose either good or evil actions." He proposes that "God is constantly offering 'little leadings' ...an impulse toward our own and the world's wellbeing."

I expect that some or all of this may resonate with you as it does with me. However, I can't get away from the notion that much of what Gates says about God is speculation, and he admits that "in the end, we cannot really comprehend, much less control or manipulate, the divine Mystery." So we're left with our own individual experiences of God, discovered alone or in corporate worship. What I've found in my own search is the importance of quieting the protective part of my mind that responds to perceived threats to my wellbeing. Doing so allows me the space to experience peace, gratitude, and joy, and this leads to compassion for others. I like to think that it's at those times that I'm most aware of God's presence.

Join PMM's Discussion of FCNL Priorities: March 20 following Coffee Hour

Friends Committee on National Legislation is seeking input into the development of its policy priorities for the upcoming legislative session. Providence Friends who wish to participate in a discussion of this important topic are encouraged to join Nancy Houston and Dede Carlston after Meeting on March 20 following a brief coffee hour.

Are You Called to Serve the Rhode Island Environment? Volunteers Needed *by Eugenia Marks*

Watershed Watch, part of the Cooperative Extension at URI, has been monitoring the health of RI waters for 25 years. I work as a volunteer sampling the Woonasquatucket at Rising Sun dam in Olneyville section of Providence, using a defined protocol to test for dissolved oxygen and temperature, two measures of the water's suitability for fish and aquatic life. Watershed Watch is in need of new volunteers to test the same parameters at Waterplace Park. Done by two volunteers working together, the sampling takes place biweekly (every other week) in the early morning (before 8) to capture data when the water is cool and holds the most oxygen. Watershed Watch provides training and equipment, and someone else takes the samples to Kingston campus of URI each alternate Saturday. I am happy to coach and to provide transportation to the training site in South Kingstown for anyone interested. Talk to me or check out the website <http://web.uri.edu/watershedwatch/>.

This position requires real commitment, but it's an opportunity to create a better environment for life that live and rely in the river-- fish, birds, turtles, and myriad invertebrates, as well as the humans that enjoy the wonder of that ecosystem.

From Communications Committee: The Provident Friend

Meeting's newsletter, The Provident Friend, enjoys a circulation of more than 400 readers, about 85% of whom receive it electronically, the rest by regular mail. It's a valuable asset for our Meeting because:

- It effectively publicizes upcoming events in the life of the Meeting.
- It allows us to report on events that have already occurred, including our monthly Meeting for Business.
- It provides a forum for Friends to share ideas.
- It serves, for historical reference, as a record of Meeting's activities.
- It functions as a goodwill ambassador to the wider community, especially for those who request information about our Meeting.

Thanks to its diligent editors - Penny Jackim, Nina Berry, Steve Schwartz, and now Jen McFadden - our newsletter has performed all these functions well over the years, following Joseph Pulitzer's exhortation to "put it before them briefly so they will read it, clearly so they will appreciate it, picturesquely so they will remember it and, above all, accurately so they will be guided by its light." However, the newsletter could be even better with more contributions from members and attenders. It would be of interest to Friends to hear from our various committees in regard to what they're doing, which may inspire some readers to join a particular committee's activities. How about a description of an experience you've had, or an especially good book you've read? Or you might want to comment on something you saw in a previous issue via a letter to the editor. Photos, art work, or your original poetry may find a place in the newsletter.

Communications Committee doesn't have a staff of reporters; instead, perhaps you, the readers, will consider yourselves to be our newsletter's reporters. Let's make The Provident Friend a Meeting-wide enterprise that reflects the diversity, skills, and talents of our members and attenders. It can be a way for us to get to know each other better and thereby strengthen our community. Send your submissions to providentfriend@providencefriends.org and see your byline in print!

Building Interfaith Connections: Islam 101 Talk and Other Upcoming Events

Last month, twenty-two Friends from PMM, Brown University, Moses Brown faculty and staff, and elsewhere joined in a productive discussion about Islamophobia and its effects on our Muslim neighbors. The conversation yielded several concrete ideas for interfaith projects and events: (1) Hosting an informative talk for the public on the basics of Islamic beliefs, customs, and practices. (2) Creating opportunities for individuals and families of different faiths to share food and conversation, perhaps through periodic potlucks or through something akin to our Friendly 8s. (3) Working to involve youth from our Meeting, Moses Brown, the Islamic School of RI, and other faith communities in a service or volunteer project. Many of these ideas will be evolving in coming weeks and months.

With the support of Ministry & Counsel, we have extended an invitation to Dr. Umer Akbar to give a half-hour talk offering an overview of Islam for non-Muslims on **Sunday, May 1** in the meeting room following potluck (please note the new date). The talk is free and open to the public, so please feel free to invite anyone you know who might be interested!

The first discussion was heartfelt, insightful, and wide-ranging, and we expect further meaningful conversations to continue. If you'd like to receive a summary of the meeting or be added to the group's mailing list, please contact Jen McFadden at jenniferlamm@gmail.com or by phone at 970-456-5642.

Providence Monthly Meeting - Contacts

Providence Meeting (401) 331-4218 <http://providencefriends.org>
99 Morris Avenue, Providence, RI 02906

Presiding Clerk: Dan Lederer clerk@providencefriends.org
Assistant Presiding Clerk: Mike Hirtle assistclerk@providencefriends.org
Recording Clerk: Betsy Cazden recordingclerk@providencefriends.org
Treasurer: Peter Swaszek treasurer@providencefriends.org
Ministry & Counsel: David Bourns ministryandcounsel@providencefriends.org
Pastoral Care Committee: Phebe Howland pastoralcare@providencefriends.org
Finance: Mike Hirtle finance@providencefriends.org
Peace & Social Concerns: Mark Conley peaceandsocial@providencefriends.org
Social & Hospitality: Dede Carlsten and Kim Wiegand
socialandhospitality@providencefriends.org
Religious Education: Betsy Zimmerman
religioused@providencefriends.org
Communications: Dan Lederer communications@providencefriends.org
Program Committee: Nina Berry program@providencefriends.org
Marriage Clearness: Erin Hazlett marriage@providencefriends.org
Library: Rebecca Smith library@providencefriends.org
Archive: archivist@providencefriends.org
Property: Bob Elliott property@providencefriends.org
Funeral & Burial: Matt Hackman funeralandburial@providencefriends.org
Newsletter: Jen McFadden providentfriend@providencefriends.org
Email list moderator: Dan Lederer list@providencefriends.org
Website: webclerk@providencefriends.org
Moses Brown School Liaison: Mike Hirtle liaison@providencefriends.org
Young Adult Friends: (To Be Named) yaf@providencefriends.org



Elizabeth Bonner Zimmerman

Newsletter of

Providence Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
(401) 331-4218 or <http://providencefriends.org>

Meeting for Worship each Sunday

Providence: 10:00 am Saylesville: 10:30 am

Conanicut (Middletown) 10:30 am (NBS/Mabel's Studio)

Feb 28 Mar 13, 27

First Day School, Providence - Sunday. Children join Meeting for Worship from 10:00-10:15 am and then proceed to First Day School from 10:15-11:00 am.

Other Meetings for Worship (All welcome):

Monday - 12:30pm - Moses Brown Upper School

Tuesday - 7pm - Young Adult Friends

. (yaf@providencefriends.org)

Wednesday - 8:25am - Moses Brown Lower School

Wednesday - 9:40am - Moses Brown Middle School

The Provident FRIEND

Newsletter of
Providence Monthly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends
99 Morris Avenue
Providence, RI 02906