

The Provident FRIEND

Providence Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

April 2016

Share Your Talents with First Day School!

from Eugenia Marks and the Religious Ed Committee

The Religious Education Committee and the youth of our Meeting need your help. As our most recent membership roster shows, the population of Providence Monthly Meeting is growing. Our First Day School attendance has increased over the past year, too, with more children who will be graduating out of nursery for 2017. We have a broad range of ages, from 4 to 12, and we are delighted to see how well the older and younger kids can cooperate and support each other in our large FDS classes. But what appeals to or is appropriate for a four-year-old child is sometimes very different from what works for a middle schooler. The older and younger kids benefit from some time each month when they can work on different projects. The older kids have expressed an interest in pursuing practical, hands-on, or socially productive projects. The FDS committee is now working to provide personnel for two separate First Day classes on the first week of each month. That means we're looking for community support.

We are seeking from you a one-First-Day-a-year donation to be a lead teacher for our older kids, or to be the 2nd adult in the class. Our kids have identified interests like putting together care packages for a Meeting- or Quaker-associated groups, making crafts, or cooking. What skill or craft could you teach? Can you think of any interesting topics for discussion? What's it like getting older? How do you make choices about technology or food or consumption? Why did you become Quaker and how it manifests in your life? What's simple living? What is it like to use consensus in the workplace or home? What does it mean to be socially/politically active? What else could you talk with 9 - 12 years-old about?

Please consider what life experiences, skills, stories, ideas, or thoughts on Quaker living you might have to offer our older First Day kids. We want to keep all age groups connected to the meeting, and we think this could be a great way to do it. We hope you'll help. Please call, email, or talk to Eugenia Marks.

PMM Friends Discuss FCNL Priorities

A group of interested Friends from our Meeting gathered in March to discuss the legislative priorities that Friends Committee on National Legislation should pursue during the next session of Congress. Providence Friends felt strongly about a number of topics, including the following: addressing gun violence and countering the gun lobby; reducing the militarization of police; dealing with our aging and unstable nuclear arsenal; educating the public on the actual cost of our weapons systems; preventing fracking near missile sites; pushing forward legislation on water and air quality with a focus on pollution penalties and mitigation; promoting mass transit; ending solitary confinement; revising drug laws to reduce the criminalization of addiction and mental illness; assisting refugees fleeing violence or war; funding international organizations that are rebuilding war-torn areas; ending criminalization of immigrants and separation of families. These topics will be forwarded to FCNL to aid in the discernment of its national goals for 2017.

(Published April 14)

Calendar (also see p. 4 Events)

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

10am-3 pm
Shape Note Singing
Providence Meetinghouse

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)

May 7 (Sat): 9:30-3:00
NEYM Ministry & Counsel
"DayTreat"
Smithfield Meeting

May 8 (Sun): 11:45
Meeting for Business

Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business Minutes – 10th Fourth Month, 2016

1. We gathered at 11:50 am at the Providence meetinghouse, with fifteen Friends present. After the usual reminders about our process, the clerk read the following Queries from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice*:

Do all adults and children in our Meeting receive our loving care and encouragement to share in the life of our Meeting, and to live as Friends? Do we truly welcome newcomers and include them in our Meeting community?

2. Announcements

At 11:00 AM on Saturday April 23 a memorial meeting for worship at the Providence meetinghouse will celebrate the life of Dawn Badger, wife of our member Ron Dass.

At noon on Sunday April 24 a threshing session at the Providence meetinghouse will address a proposal regarding Saylesville Preparative Meeting. Background information has already gone out on the Meeting email list. For any questions, contact Dan Lederer or Abigail Mansfield Marcaccio.

At noon on May 1 Dr. Umer Akbar will speak about Islam at the Providence meetinghouse.

3. Budget: For the Finance Committee, Treasurer Peter Swaszek presented a proposed budget for the fiscal year beginning June 1, 2016. It has one minor adjustment since last month's preliminary presentation. It reflects about a 3.5% increase over the current year, which the committee believes is prudent and realistic. We approve this budget, with thanks to the Finance Committee and the Treasurer.

4. Nominations: For the Nominating Committee, Ruth Bourns presented proposed officers and committee members for the year beginning June 1, 2016. Everyone on the meeting list was contacted to discern where they were called to serve. Ruth thanked the members of the Nominating Committee who did this work. She also clarified that the number of people appointed varies depending on the Nominating Committee's discernment of that committee's needs. We approve these appointments, noting that Rosanne Cedroni's appointment to Ministry & Counsel is contingent on her pending application for membership in the meeting. Committees are reminded that they need to meet in June to select their own clerks and promptly notify the meeting clerk. It was suggested that each committee be asked to report to the business meeting at least annually.

5. Membership Recorder: Anne DiMase gave her annual recorder's report. After consultation with the NEYM office, she has simplified the report to combine Providence, Saylesville, and Conanicut. We have a net increase of 13 members this year, including children. A complete copy of her report will be attached to the record copy of these minutes.

6. Marriage Oversight Committee: Rebecca Leuchak reported that Ruth and David Bourns, Bruce and Dede Carlsten, and Rebecca Leuchak and Bill Monroe have agreed to serve as the Oversight Committee

(Minutes – Continued)

A Friend asked if there would be a meeting presence at the upcoming Gay Pride event; Peace & Social Concerns Committee already has this on its agenda.

9. The meeting closed at about 1:00 pm following silent worship, intending to meet next on May 8, at noon, at the Saylesville meetinghouse.

Daniel Lederer, presiding clerk, and Elizabeth Cazden, recording clerk

April 24 Threshing Session Concerning Saylesville Preparative Meeting

At noon on Sunday April 24, our Meeting will hold a threshing session downstairs at the Providence meetinghouse to address issues related to Saylesville Preparative Meeting. In advance of that meeting, all concerned Friends are encouraged to read the related background materials Dan Lederer forwarded to the Friends Email List. (If you did not receive that information electronically and wish to, please contact Dan or Abigail Mansfield-Marcaccio.)

Several points about the threshing session:

- 1) It is not for the purpose of making any decisions; rather, it provides an opportunity for Friends to express how they are led regarding the issues being raised. The assumption is that the session will allow us to separate the chaff from the grain of truth.
- 2) Although Friends may speak more than once, may ask a question, or may respond to a point that has been made, it will be most helpful if we avoid debates or arguments.
- 3) It's the clerk's responsibility to be sure that everyone who wishes to speak has an opportunity to do so.
- 4) A recorder will take notes for later reference.

Good attendance is important because we need to hear the full spectrum of leadings on these issues. If you have any questions ahead of time, please contact Dan or Abigail.

NEYM Ministry & Counsel Committee Announces a “DayTreat”

Saturday, May 7, 9:30am – 3:00pm
Smithfield Friends Meeting

If you serve on your monthly meeting's Ministry & Counsel, Pastoral Care, Outreach, Adult Religious Ed, Clearness, Support, or Oversight Committees, you're invited to a “DayTreat” courtesy of NEYM's Ministry & Counsel Committee! Let us take care of you for a day. We'll bring the food and drink. We'll provide the childcare. We'll do the cleanup. We'll provide opportunities to learn from and support each other, and to recharge our spiritual batteries. Be our guests! No need to RSVP. If you have questions or ideas for discussion, please contact Sarah Spencer, 617-965-7042 (spencertaber@verizon.net). Reservations are not required for childcare, but it might help us to know the numbers and ages of children to expect. Contact Allison Randall, 603-654-2179 (allisonjoyful1@netzero.com).

Around the Meeting

The Providence Monthly Meeting Directory has just been updated for Spring 2016. Don't forget to download your copy of Who's Who in our meeting.

Final numbers are in for our membership in 2015. PMM gained an astonishing 17 new members last year—that's nearly 8% growth from 2014!

Also please note that committees for our new fiscal year go into effect June 1. Thanks to Nominating Committee for their hard work recruiting Friends to

new roles, and thanks to all who felt moved to share their time, energy, and talents with the Meeting.

What to See, Hear and Do in Providence This Month

Brown University Spring Chorus Concert

Saturday, April 30, 2016 8:00pm

Sayles Hall Auditorium (Main Green, on Brown St. between George and Waterman)

Presenting works for chorus and percussion, with Brian Calhoun

Steve Schwartz sings with the Brown Chorus, and describes this as a lot of quirky fun music, a bunch of short-ish pieces (many of them very new), including one in Latvian and one about Cicadas.

All-day Shape Note Singing

Saturday, April 16 10am-3pm (Potluck lunch! Bring a dish to share)

Providence Meeting House

If you've never been to a Sacred Harp Singing, you're in for a treat. This is a chance to appreciate the sound of our Meeting Room in a totally different way—filled with very, very big sound. No experience is necessary! Come learn about shape note singing and add your own voice to the mix.

Special School Vacation Week Programs at the Providence Children's Museum

Monday, April 18 11:30-2:30 Animal Experiences (encounter critters up close!)

Tuesday, April 19 10:00-3:00 Eco Explorers (learn about conservation, recycling, and crafts)

Wednesday, April 20 10:00-2:00 Wingmasters (meet birds of prey; shows every hour)

Thursday, April 21 10:00-4:00 Imagination Playground (create huge forts and sculptures)

Friday, April 22 1:00-3:00 Farm Friends (learn where yarn comes from)

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 24 Conanicut Friends at Mabel's Studio – last 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 6-12, 2016 New England Yearly Meeting 365th Annual Sessions [this issue]

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

Holding in the Light

Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.

—Isaac Penington, *Letters*

What does it mean to hold someone “in the Light”? Is this just a quaint expression, i.e., “Quaker-speak” for praying for someone, or is it something more? Does it do any good, and, if so, how does it work? I don’t presume to have the answer to questions which have challenged Quakers for centuries, but here are some thoughts: If holding in the Light really has an effect, there must be something connecting us beyond the fact that we all exist on the same planet and breathe the same air. If one considers the existence of a ubiquitous Spirit that gives rise to all things, wouldn’t it follow that we must be interconnected by such Spirit? If I am holding you in kind regard, that is, holding you in the Light, might this not deliver a benefit to you via the Spirit that connects us?

Let’s assume for a moment that there is such a connection. Then another question comes to mind: If it’s possible to send forth a positive sentiment, wouldn’t it be just as feasible to transmit a negative one, what might be called a curse? The answer, I think, depends on the nature of that which connects us. If this spiritual essence is entirely neutral, then I suppose one could send either a blessing or a curse. But if its characteristics bend toward peace, joy, and love, then these are what may be awakened when, out of love, we hold someone in the Light.

How actually to accomplish this is of course something each of us has to discover via our own experience, but I suggest that you try imagining the person you are holding in the Light as sitting or standing quietly, and then see that person flooded with a light that carries with it caring and love. Hold this image for a few moments and feel its power. Or maybe you've found some other practice that seems to be effective; if so, tell us about it!

I'm curious as to whether any of the above ideas resonate with you. The validity of all this is something each of us has to test for ourselves as we try, in Isaac Penington’s words, to help one another up with a tender hand.

On May 1, join us for a free lecture to build interfaith understanding:
“Understanding Differences, Building Bridges: Islamic Faith and Practices”

Dr. Umer Akbar will speak at noon following Potluck.

Please spread the word – all Friends and friend are welcome!

356th Annual Sessions of NEYM, August 6-12

This year’s Annual Sessions in Castleton, VT are just around the corner. The theme for this year’s Sessions, “Being the Hands of God: A Call to Radical Faithfulness,” builds on last year’s reflection on covenant community by exploring what it means to put our faith into action, both individually and corporately. Featured speakers and panelists include Douglas Gwyn of Durham, ME, Judy Goldberger of Beacon Hill, Angela Hopkins of Northampton, Jay O’Hara of Sandwich-West Falmouth, and Rachel Guaraldi of Beacon Hill. Sessions will once again take a “Pay-As-Led” approach to registration, which allows attendees to choose the amount best suited to their circumstances and relies on individuals and Meetings to help shoulder the burden to ensure that all who wish to participate can do so. Online registration for NEYM Sessions begins June 1 at www.neym.org/sessions and closes July 24.

**A Book Note
(from Rebecca Smith)**

Friends new and old often come into the Meeting library looking for works that will help them better understand the Society of Friends. One that I would like to recommend is Pendle Hill Pamphlet # 277, *What is Quakerism? A Primer*, by George T. Peck. An unthreatening forty-eight pages long, it may be all you want right now, or it may whet your appetite for further reading. Noting that "[p]robably most Quakers think of themselves as beginners and seekers" (p.5), Peck begins with information about the beginnings of the Quaker movement and about our worship and ministry, illuminated by quotations from early Friends. He notes that "although founded on individual experience, Quakerism ... is nourished in community" (p. 15), and he briefly describes some of the structures of contemporary American Quakerism and some ways in which Friends' faith finds active expression in the wider world. Providence Meeting has recently acquired several additional copies of this pamphlet, which are available for borrowing in the library.

Have you read anything good lately? Have you discovered a treasure in the Meetinghouse library? If so, tell us about it! Book notes are welcome from Friends of all ages. Please email them to jenniferlamm@gmail.com or drop them in the library circulation basket.

Couples Enrichment Retreat at Friends Camp, Maine

When's the last time you took some time out to focus on fellowship with your partner? Jacob and Gretta Stone and Debbie and John Humphries will be leading a Couples Enrichment Workshop at Friends Camp in South China, ME the weekend of May 6 to May 8.

This workshop offers an opportunity for a couple to focus on their relationship, enhance communication skills, and deepen their appreciation of each other. All couples in a committed relationship are welcome, regardless of sexual orientation, marital status, or religious affiliation. The program emphasizes creating a safe and comfortable community, learning concepts and skills, and giving couples the time and space to focus on each other. Some sharing is expected, but much of the couples' work is done in private. In addition to our time together in large and small groups, there will be ample time to relax with your partner, walk the Friends Camp nature trail, explore the shore of China Lake, and enjoy the fellowship of other couples. We will share excellent food, socialize, sing and worship together.

The cost for the weekend is on a sliding scale, and couples can choose among three options: Full (\$430), Medium (\$380), Basic (\$330) (rates are per couple). This includes the program, two nights of private accommodations in one of our rustic cabins, and six meals. Please plan to attend all meals and sessions; a \$100 deposit will hold your place. Please email questions to Jacob and Gretta at jdsfrombucks@gmail.com and/or Nat Shed at director@friendscamp.com

Song of the Builders

On a summer morning
I sat down
on a hillside
to think about God –

a worthy pastime.
Near me, I saw
a single cricket;
it was moving the grains of the hillside

this way and that way.
How great was its energy,
how humble its effort.
Let us hope

it will always be like this,
each of us going on
in our inexplicable ways
building the universe.

—Mary Oliver, 2004 (from *Why I Wake Early*)

Providence Monthly Meeting - Contacts

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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)

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

Wednesday - 10-11:30am 2nd & 4th Wed's - Saylesville

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