

The Provident FRIEND

Providence Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

June 2016

Response to Orlando: A Statement from AFSC (*from afsc.org*)

The killing of 50 people and wounding of 53 more at Pulse, an LGBT club in Orlando, Florida, shakes us and breaks our hearts. The American Friends Service Committee joins with all who are grieving this tragic act of mass violence. Our thoughts, prayers, and sympathy are with the families and loved ones of those who lost their lives, all the neighbors in the Orlando area whose community was disrupted, and with the entire LGBT and Latino communities.

Already, we see politicians and news media stoking fear and hatred by generalizing the acts of one individual to all those of Muslim faith. Yet we know that this fear is misplaced. Intolerance and violence toward gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people is a culture-wide problem, evidenced by a wave of anti-LGBT legislation across the country, venomous rhetoric in the wake of recent victories for equality, and a shocking series of attacks on trans women of color. We fear the backlash following this mass shooting will land on immigrant communities who are repeatedly singled out for unmerited blame as threats. We stand with LGBT people, Muslims, immigrants living in the U.S., and all who are vulnerable in the wake of this attack and the hateful, xenophobic rhetoric that is already on display.

The American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization that addresses the root causes of violence and oppression in communities worldwide, knows that violent responses to violence make us all less secure. We must stop the cycle of hateful violence that lands disproportionately on marginalized people, including LGBT people of color. There is no place for xenophobic responses to this attack, which will only make the targeted communities more vulnerable. We must instead bridge differences and work together to reject hate. We pray that all communities will stand up against bigotry and work to ensure the rights of each and every person. Please join us in true partnership, working for a world in which love drives out hate, and in which all of us are safe from violence.

Community at Work

After Meeting for Worship one day in April, Elaine Meyer made an unusual request. She'd heard from an elder-care organization that was looking for an accordion for one of its hospice patients to use. Steve Schwartz replied that he might have one to lend, and as he was speaking with Elaine, Mark Tague joined them to say he had one that had sat untouched for many years, but was in good shape. About a half-hour later, Mark returned to the Meetinghouse with the instrument. Steve took it home, effected some minor repairs, and contacted Audrey Eisenstein, the Volunteer Coordinator at Hope Hospice who had made the request on behalf of the patient.

A few days later, Steve received an enthusiastic thank-you call from the patient, who was overjoyed to have the instrument and had heard of Steve's role from Audrey. Soon after that, a card showed up in Steve's mailbox, with heartfelt notes of appreciation from Audrey and several other workers at Hope Hospice. The note was sent to Steve, but it also belongs to Elaine, and Mark, and everyone involved in this little chain of goodwill. It belongs to our community, and to all communities that encourage and participate in this kind of activity, so we are putting it here for all to see. (See the card on page 5.)

Published June 18, 2016

CALENDAR

Saturday, June 18

12-6 pm, Water Street
PMM Hosts Booth at
Providence Pride

8-9 pm, Downtown
Providence: RI Pride
Illuminated Night Parade

Saturday, June 18

10 am-12:15 pm,
Saylesville Meetinghouse
Bookswap

Sunday, June 26

3-6 pm, Providence
Meetinghouse
Sacred Harp Singing

Sunday, July 3

11 am, Providence
Meetinghouse
Monthly Potluck

August 6-11

Castleton, VT
NEYM Annual Sessions

Saturday, August 13

3 pm, Providence
Meetinghouse
Wedding of Mike Hirtle
and Judith Coffey

Sunday, September 11

12 pm, Saylesville
Meetinghouse
Meeting for Business

*(Meeting for Business and
the Provident Friend will
both resume again in
September!)*

Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business Minutes – 12th Sixth Month, 2016

1. Opening. The meeting gathered at 12:10 pm at the Saylesville meetinghouse, with a total of 12 attending. In the opening silence the clerk read the following Query from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's *Faith & Practice*:

Is our meeting for business held in the spirit of a meeting for worship in which we seek divine guidance? Are we careful to keep in the spirit of worship each of the concerns that emerge, whether of nurture, of Spirit, of social concerns, of property, or of finance?

2. Announcements

The meeting will be sponsoring a booth at PrideFest on Saturday June 18. See the RI Pride website for details or see Morgan Lord or Steve Schwartz.

NEYM Annual Sessions will be at Castleton University, Castleton, VT, from August 6 – 12. Online registration is available. Rebecca Leuchak has offered to coordinate transportation for anyone who needs a ride.

RI-Smithfield Quarterly Meeting will be held on Sunday, June 19, at 10:30 am at the Westerly meetinghouse. All are invited.

The wedding of Michael Hirtle and Judith Coffey will be held under the care of the meeting at the Providence meetinghouse at 3 pm on August 13. All are invited.

3. Correspondence. We have received letters from the African Great Lakes Initiative of Friends Peace Teams and from the American Friends Service Committee, thanking us for our contributions to their work.

4. Treasurer's Report. Michael Hirtle, the outgoing Clerk of the Finance Committee, presented the Treasurer's final report for the fiscal year ended May 31, 2016. The operating budget showed a surplus of \$2,541.95, which was returned to the general fund reserves. Because of changes in market value, the value of our General Fund reserves was reduced by about \$24,000; this does not concern the Finance Committee. Mike highlighted some of the detail in the report and responded to questions. We accept this report, with gratitude.

5. Providence Meetinghouse Expansion Committee. Bruce Carlsten reported that the committee has moved forward with engaging an architect, as authorized by meeting for business in March. The planned changes include adding one or more rooms to accommodate committee meetings and First Day School; adding additional bathroom facilities (one fully accessible); additional work and storage space; and remodeling the nursery layout with special attention to access to the third floor. Concerns were raised about sound baffling in the hallway, an elevator for better access, and using non-toxic finishes and materials. Friends with these and other concerns were encouraged to speak to members of the committee. The committee hopes to have a further report early in the fall.

6. Saylesville. Joanne Griffin reported that the preparative meeting expects to hold business meetings during the summer to continue consideration of a number of items.

7. Travel minute. Elizabeth Cazden reported back on her recent trip to visit Friends in Cuba, under the travel minute approved by this meeting in March, and by quarterly meeting and NEYM Permanent Board. She brought greetings from Cuban Friends and thanked this meeting for its support of her travel. A fuller report has been sent to the NEYM Puente de Amigos committee and a photo journal will be in this month's meeting newsletter. A copy of the minute with endorsements will be kept with the record copy of these minutes.

8. Adjournment. No further business appearing, following a closing period of silent worship, we adjourned at about 1:10, intending to meet next the 11th of 9th month at the Saylesville meetinghouse.

Michael Hirtle, Presiding Clerk

Elizabeth Cazden, Recording Clerk

Notes from a Travelling Friend *by Betsy Cazden*

I visited Quakers in eastern Cuba for ten days in May, primarily to teach a course on "Quaker Diversity" at the Cuban Quaker Institute for Peace. I have visited these friends at least six times since 1993, and it's always interesting to see the changes in the community, the toddlers who are now teenagers and the teenagers now mature parents.



My course was a combination of history, especially the splits in North American Quakerism during the 19th century and issues of race relations from Paul Cuffe (b. 1759) to Bayard Rustin (d. 1987). I taught the class twice, once in the city of Holguin [note: accent on the "i"] on three successive weekday evenings, and then in the coastal town of Puerto Padre on Friday afternoon and evening and Saturday morning. The students had a large packet of reading ahead of time, and have an essay exam to write and send me. (Cuba has universal K-12 education, so a very high level of literacy.) After they complete a three-year cycle of courses like this, they get a certificate in Quaker Studies. Many of the

students are leaders in their meetings. There is also a second three-year cycle focussed on non-violence and conflict-resolution in the community. AFSC collaborated with Cuba Yearly Meeting to set up the Institute.

[Photo above left: the class in Puerto Padre; below right, Betsy with the class in Holguin]

On the two weekends I was in Gibara, another port town that is the site of the original Quaker mission in 1900 and the center for the Yearly Meeting. The meetinghouse complex has a large dormitory, dining room, and conference room, and is used (rented) by many other church groups throughout the year. Six to eight Friends work for the center, cooking, cleaning, organizing, and maintaining the buildings. They will be hosting the General Board of Friends United Meeting later this month, and were putting a fresh coat of paint on everything in advance. (continued next page)



[Below: The pastor's sermon during Meeting for Worship in Gibara]



(cont'd from Page 3) The meetings in Cuba all use programmed worship, with Bible reading, hymns, and a prepared sermon. The person leading the service was a (female) meeting member (a different person for the two weeks), and the pastor preached the prepared sermon. Before the main service, there was an hour (or more) of Sunday School, the first half with everyone together and the second half divided between children and adults. They focus on Bible study, which was led by the monthly meeting clerk, not the pastor. People are encouraged to discuss, challenge, talk about parts of the reading that are difficult or especially meaningful; it's not at all rote learning. There was a quiz to fill in blanks in a Bible

verse, to see who knew their Bible. The children learn Bible verses and songs that reinforce the messages, many with hand motions. My favorite song this time:

El amor de Dios es maravilloso (x3)
O, cuan grande es el amor de Dios!
Es tan alto que no puede ser arriba de el,
Es tan ancho que no puede ser afuera de el,
Es tan bajo que no puede ser abajo de el
O, cuan grande es el amor de Dios.

[The love of God is marvelous (x3)
How great / large is the love of God
So high, you can't get over it,
So wide, you can't get outside it,
So low you can't get under it,
Oh, how great is the love of God.]



[Above: Children singing during Sunday School in Gibara]

Around the Meeting

PMM joyfully welcomes the newest (and smallest) member of our community. On May 26th at 6:24am, Molly and Steve Thomas (and big sister Samantha and big brother Ben) welcomed **Madeline Elizabeth Thomas** to the world, 8 lbs, 2 oz.



On June 11, Friends from PMM met at the Providence Meetinghouse to do some spring cleaning. Many thanks to all who made time to help out!

Our First Day School continues to need willing volunteers to help through the summer, which is a good low-stress

time to help out! No planning is necessary; you can accompany kids to the MB park, bake cookies, do crafts, work in the garden, take a walk—whatever strikes your fancy! Please sign up for a fun Sunday this summer. Contact Betsy Zimmerman at erbzim@gmail.com

CLERK'S CORNER by Dan Lederer

Stepping Down

The role of Presiding Clerk has passed into the capable hands of Mike Hirtle, so this will be my last Clerk's Corner. I first want to say that it's been a privilege to serve you as Clerk, and I wish to thank all who have supported me in the various tasks that are part of the job. I know that without your efforts I wouldn't have been able to accomplish much of anything. Also, I hope never to forget the many acts of kindness and words of encouragement I received from Friends when I was facing some serious health issues during my time as Clerk.

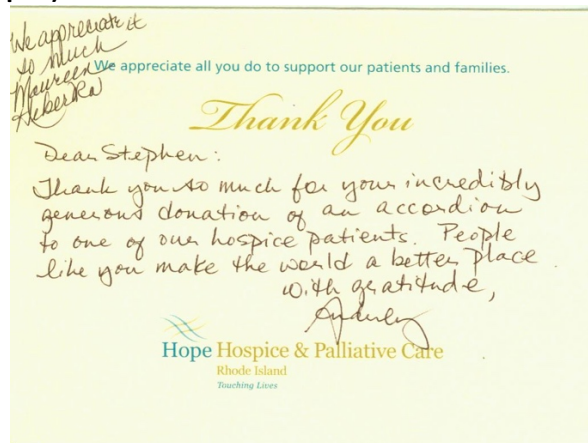
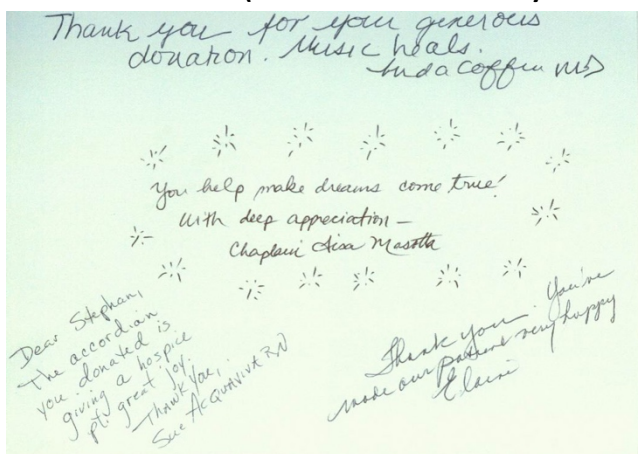
The life of our Meeting is not static, and the last four years have been no exception. I think the biggest challenge during this time has been to ensure that our Meeting community is a place where all of us, children and adults, can feel safe. Part of this process requires that each of us makes a commitment to try to get along well with our fellow Friends, and we still have more work to do in this regard.

Another challenge, which is nothing new, is getting Friends more engaged in Meeting activities. An essential part of this process is being sure everyone is aware of what's going on at Meeting, and for this purpose we've set up mechanisms to augment announcements at the rise of Meeting for Worship, these being the email list (the "listserve"), the newsletter, and the website. I'm hoping that all in our community take advantage of these sources of information.

My experience as Clerk has convinced me that more people should have a chance to be in that position in order to bring valuable new perspectives to the role, and so that more Friends become aware of the kind of support the Clerk needs to carry out his or her duties. For these reasons I favor instituting a limit on any one Clerk's tenure, perhaps three or four years, and I have asked Ministry and Counsel to consider this proposal.

Finally, from time to time I've reflected on words Mark Conley wrote when he handed the reins over to me back in 2012: "Absolute trust in divine corporate guidance has helped me immeasurably, especially at those times when I was not sure I was properly discerning that guidance. And in that trust, I ask you to hold our new Clerk in the Light, that he may feel as buoyed by your tender care on the infinite Ocean of Light and Love as have I." I won't attempt to match Mark's eloquence, but I too ask you to support Mike in all ways possible as he begins his service as Presiding Clerk.

A Note of Thanks (cont'd from Community At Work, p. 1)



What Good Silence? (Ruminations from the Editor)

Today, on the morning of June 18, the fledgling editor of this newsletter finds herself with a page and a half to fill, a heart full of sorrow, a headful of half-cogent thoughts, and an odd sort of compulsion to *say* or *do* or *be*. I write a word and erase it. I make a sentence, and then unmake it. The blinking cursor seems to be mocking me, as if to say: really? After the week we've had, the news we've heard, the pressure of umpteen issues that lie right smack-dab at the middle of what Quakers are supposed to care about? You've got *nothing*?

As the news from Pulse in Orlando rippled out across the country, we took in familiar sound bites of statistics, superlatives, and statements of sorrow. Once again we heard our pain measured in the most bitter and blasé terms: the "toll" of lives lost, wounds inflicted, bullets sprayed. The blood shed this time belonged to members of Orlando's close-knit LGBTQ community, who were mowed down by the dozen in the place where they felt most safe, most free, most at home. On Monday, June 13, the day after the "worst mass shooting in US history," Congressional leaders led their houses in paying the kind of tribute we've grown so accustomed to in our public institutions. Speaker of the House Paul Ryan asked members of Congress to "rise for the purpose of a moment of silence...in memory of the victims of the Orlando shooting." As the rest of the House Representatives stood, hands clasped, heads bowed, three members of Congress walked quietly out of the room in protest, led by CT Rep. Jim Himes. The fifteen seconds of silence was just enough time for them to make their exit.

Then Speaker Ryan's gavel rang out, the silence degenerated into procedural arguments and noisy chaos as the Speaker tried to turn the House's attention back to the matter at hand: a vote on (HR5312), "a bill to amend the high-performance computing act of 1991 to authorize activities for support of networking and information technology research and for other purposes." "It's a five-minute vote," Ryan insisted, over the protests of Rep. Jim Clyburn (D-SC) and others who pressed for a bill addressing gun violence. Procedural concerns carried the day, business returned to the agenda at hand, and the IT bill passed with 89% support. No discussion of assault weapons was held on the floor, then or since.

One year ago we heard of the shooting at a Bible study at the AME church in Charleston. Three and a half years ago, we heard of the nightmare at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown. An Aurora movie theater. An IHOP in Carson City, NV. San Bernadino. Fort Hood. Blacksburg. Each of these was presumably met with the same response: a moment of pained silence for the lost and suffering, and then we get back to work—whether it's the nation's IT infrastructure or a client deadline or supper for tonight. We go back to our daily responsibilities until the next moment of silence is called for.

But then there was Senator Chris Murphy's fifteen-hour filibuster on the floor of the Senate, which ended with a heartwrenching memorial tribute to little Dylan Hockley, a 6-year-old with autism who was found on the floor of his first-grade classroom at Sandy Hook, wrapped in the arms of his special education teacher, Anne Marie Murphy. "It takes courage to look into the eye of a shooter, and instead of running, wrapping your arms around a 6-year-old boy and accepting death as a trade for just a tiny little itty piece of increased peace of mind for a little boy under your charge. And so this has been a day of questions. And so I ask you all this question, 'If Anne Marie Murphy could do that, then ask yourself, what can you do to make sure Orlando or Sandy Hook never, ever happens again?' With deep gratitude to all those who have endured this very, very late night, I yield the floor."

All of this has got me thinking about silence: what is its use? What is its power? A moment of silence is of little use if it does nothing to transform the context in which it arises. What good does silence do for those who have been silenced so brutally, so completely? What good does silence do for our LGBTQ brothers and sisters, whose trials are already beyond counting? What good does silence do for our Muslim neighbors, whose beliefs are maligned once again by one individual's violence and hatred? What good does silence do for all those who mourn and grieve and pray for a better world? What good does silence do for this mother of two, who hopes to see her children grow up in a world where love is valued above all other things, and where the laws of man are drawn to serve dignity and light?

(continued next page)

(continued from page 7)

But then it occurred to me that silence is not the point. The point is what we do with that silence—what we *make* of it. It's not silence that Rep. Jim Himes and Senator Chris Murphy were protesting. It's inactivity, and our repeated decision to do nothing. Silence need not mean standing with hands clasped and heads bowed, only to return to life as usual. Silence can be time to plan; time to dream; time to find the Light when its brilliance is not so obvious. Silence can be time to create, to love, to build, to listen. In actor and poet Lin Manuel Miranda's acceptance speech for his Tony award for the show *Hamilton*, he recited a sonnet to his wife, to Orlando, and to love. It's the sort of good thing that might come from a moment of silence—an individual epiphany that can shake every listener to his core:

When senseless acts of tragedy remind us
That nothing here is promised, not one day
This show is proof that history remembers
We live through times when hate and fear seem stronger
We rise and fall and light from dying embers
Remembrances that hope and love lasts long
And love is love is love is love is love is love is love is love is love
Cannot be killed or swept aside,
I sing Vanessa's symphony, Eliza tells her story
Now fill the world with music love and pride

So maybe I don't have *nothing*, after all. Maybe I have everything I need to save the world. Maybe we all do. Love Thy Neighbor, Friends—no matter the source of the darkness, love will always be the candle we need.

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: 10:30 am (Jamestown Meetinghouse)

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

Thursday - Noon-12:45 pm Brown University in

Some live by *love thy neighbor as thyself*,
others by *first do no harm* or *take no more*
than you need. What if the mightiest word is love?

Love beyond marital, filial, national,
love that casts a widening pool of light,
love with no need to pre-empt grievance.

In today's sharp sparkle, this winter air,
any thing can be made, any sentence begun.
On the brink, on the brim, on the cusp,

praise song for walking forward in that light.

--from Elizabeth Alexander's poem
"Praise Song For the Day"

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