

# The Provident FRIEND

Providence Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

September 2016

## Yearly Meeting: A Young Friend's Perspective

By Charlie Grenier

Yearly Meeting is a happy time of year to gather with Friends from all over New England; this includes the youth who attend Yearly as a part of Young Friends. Young Friends is a program for high schoolers in New England to gather at various meetinghouses every other month. During the summer, Young Friends gather just once, which happens during Yearly Meeting.

This year, we focused on the theme of Sessions, which was "Being the Hands of God: A Call to Radical Faithfulness." We attended business meeting, as well as a panel run by Friends who had stories to tell about their own radical faithfulness, so we got to experience a decent amount of the larger Meeting. Over the course of the week, we had multiple discussions that included art, writing, skits, and special guests who weren't a part of the Young Friends community. Racial discrimination and the Black Lives Matter movement were prominent topics in the whole Meeting, as well as in Young Friends. We held our own business meetings in Young Friends to figure out committees and retreats for the upcoming school year.

Overall, it was an incredible learning experience for me and for many other kids in the group with me. We had fun, too - every minute wasn't spent learning. We went to the lake and the pool, and we even organized "Coffee Shed" (a talent show in honor of the retirement of Friends Camp director Nat Shed) as well as our own dance. I can't say for sure that we had more fun than everyone else—but it was certainly a blast.

*Charlie Grenier is a tenth-grader at the Greene School in West Greenwich, RI. Charlie is an active participant in, and contributor to, Young Friends, enjoys writing and drawing, and is passionate about birds of all sorts. For more on YF, see [Retreats](#), p. 6.*

## Announcing PMM Young Families' Potluck

Saturday, Sept. 17 4-7 pm

For many of our youngest attenders, Sunday afternoons are too short! For many of our parents, grown-up conversations are too rare! Help solve both problems at once. Bring your brood and something edible to the Providence Meetinghouse for a young families' potluck, carefully scheduled in hopes that naptimes and bedtimes might be accommodated. To RSVP or ask what to bring, please contact Ruffin Powell at [ruffinpowell@yahoo.com](mailto:ruffinpowell@yahoo.com)

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## CALENDAR

### Wednesday, September 14

**6:30 pm**, Saylesville Meetinghouse, Lecture "No Braver Men: African Americans and Native Americans in the American Revolution"

### Saturday, September 17

**10am-12:15**, Saylesville Meetinghouse Bookswap

**4-7pm**, Providence Meetinghouse Young Families Potluck

### Saturday, September 24

**11 am-5 pm**, Saylesville Meetinghouse open for tours (part of Great Road Day)

### Sunday, September 25

**3 pm**, Providence Meetinghouse Sacred Harp Singing (rudiments singing school with Becky Wright)

### Sunday, October 2 (World Quaker Day)

**11 am**, Providence Meetinghouse Monthly Potluck

### Sunday, October 9

**12 pm**, Saylesville Meetinghouse Meeting for Business

**Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business  
Minutes – 11<sup>th</sup> Ninth Month, 2016**

1. We gathered at the Saylesville MH at 12:00 pm with twenty present. In the opening worship, the clerk read the following queries on outreach, from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice*:

What are we doing as a Meeting to communicate our presence and our principles to the community around us? Does our Meeting's ministry of outreach lead Friends to share their spiritual experiences with others?

What are we doing to invite persons not in membership to attend our meetings for worship and to encourage their continued attendance? How does the Meeting welcome visitors? Are we sensitive to the needs and hesitations of each visitor?

Are we tender to the needs of isolated Friends and Meetings, and to nearby Meetings seeking support?

2. **Announcements:**

On September 14, 6:30 p.m., there will be a lecture at the Saylesville meetinghouse entitled "No Braver Men: African-Americans and Native Americans in the American Revolution," sponsored by Arnold House.

On Saturday, September 24, the Saylesville meetinghouse will be open for tours from 11 am to 5 pm, as part of the annual Great Road Day. Arnold House (1693, built by and owned by a prominent Quaker family) and a number of other historic buildings in the area will also be open.

3. Correspondence: We have received letters of thanks for donations from Quaker House (Fayetteville, NC), Rhode Island State Council of Churches, and New England Yearly Meeting Equalization Fund. We also received a letter from the RI Tufts Alumni Chapter, for their use of the Providence meetinghouse to assemble gift bags for children in homeless shelters.
4. Religious Education Committee: The Religious Education Committee has requested an increase in their budget to provide for two paid positions to support the religious education teachers. It has been a struggle to find sufficient teachers to provide for our growing number of children. As of today, we have seven 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders meeting separately, about six in grades 1-3, and about fifteen 4-5 year olds, plus the nursery. This means three concurrent classes, each staffed with two adults per our policy. The new positions could include assisting in classes and helping with scheduling. The committee estimates that \$3,500-\$4,000 would cover this cost. The committee has gone ahead with advertising, and has found some candidates who will be interviewed this week.

The treasurer prefers that the change be recorded as permission to override, rather than as a budget revision.

We approve this override up to \$4,000, and ask the Finance Committee to work out the details with the Religious Education Committee. We entrust the Religious Education Committee with conducting appropriate vetting and background checks, using the guidance provided by New England Yearly Meeting.

5. Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Peter Swaszek presented an interim report on the meeting's finances for the first quarter of the fiscal year, June 1 – Aug. 31, 2016. Income has been higher than in past years for the first quarter, both in general donations and in summer use of the meetinghouse, primarily by the "Music for Children" program.

The Treasurer proposed that the balance in the David Smith fund, which was designated by the business meeting (2007) for "enhancements" to the Providence meetinghouse, be allocated to cover part of the cost of installing air conditioning in the Providence meeting room. The total cost was \$12,471; the balance in the David Smith Fund is \$3,231.77. The fund would then be discontinued. We approve the Treasurer's recommendation.

6. Adult Religious Education: For the committee, Cindy Fanning reported that not enough participants were interested in a fall session of Quakerism 101, so that will be put on hold. The committee has made plans for a training course on "Friendly Conflict Transformation." Saylesville preparative meeting had already committed to holding such a course, and it will now be offered to the whole meeting. Sessions will be held on Sundays at the Saylesville meetinghouse during October and November, the exact schedule to be announced after consulting prospective participants through the listserv.
7. Conanicut Worship Group: It was reported that the worship group has had good attendance of 10 to 12 people through the year. It plans to meet weekly through the winter.
8. Saylesville: Bruce Downing reported that attendance at worship has been spotty during the summer, but business meetings were held frequently. The preparative business meeting has continued discussion of the fence in front of the meetinghouse and will bring a formal proposal at a later time. The meeting has continued its involvement with the community through lectures and events. The preparative meeting sees the south face of the meetinghouse as the top priority for further renovations, and has asked the contractor who worked on the east wall to prepare an estimate for investigating what work needs to be done and what it would cost. Plans are moving ahead for new kitchen cabinetry; a new refrigerator has been donated. There is also consideration of a maintenance contract for the heating system. The details of all of these projects will be brought to the Property Committee for discernment.
9. We closed at 1:20 pm with a period of worship, intending to meet next on the 9<sup>th</sup> of 10<sup>th</sup> month at the Saylesville meetinghouse.

Mike Hirtle, clerk

Elizabeth Cazden, recording clerk

## Around the Meeting

Renata Robles has recently moved to the area and would love to resume working with small children. She's available to babysit for Meeting families in Providence, and can provide evening and overnight care. If you're ready for a date night, please contact her at 925-330-1953, or at RenataLRobles@gmail.com

Claire Conaty, born in August to parents Ryan and Megan, and to big sister Alice. If you have housewares or other donations that could be useful to Syrian refugee families starting a new life in Providence, please drop them off in the box on the bench near the meeting room door.

We have a new **youngest attender!** Welcome to

Our Meeting has acquired some **new books for young readers** and their families. Thanks to Ariana Steele for bringing back these souvenirs from Yearly Meeting. The new books can be found in the cupboard to the left of the "tea station" downstairs. Take one home to read and share (and write a Book Note, if you're so inclined).

Our **First Day School curriculum** for this school

year will be focused on Integrity. Because of the growth in our families attending Meeting, we expect to have enough FDS kids to run **two concurrent FDS classes each week**. We'll also have two new helpers from Brown University joining us in the FDS classrooms. Please say hello to Jake Kuhn and Anna Guo, who will be joining us for the first time on September 25!

## The Friendly Way to Conflict Transformation

*Cindy Fanning*

As Quakers, we learn that not all conflict is dysfunctional or problematic. We understand that diverse opinions and voices help us to grow and meet the challenges before us. Quaker worship requires interaction between all members as we wait upon the Spirit, and our process depends upon group discernment to ensure the Spirit's message is brought forth. As long-term Spiritual seekers, our goals—peace, integrity, community, equality, stewardship, and simplicity—require continual engagement with one another and with the world, and an openness to multiple solutions and perspectives. When conflict arises, so does an opportunity to discern the relationships, goals, and needs within our Meeting community, as well as those that link us to the wider world.

Keeping negotiations constructive and peaceful is an essential part of Quaker discernment. In conflicts that do not involve long-term relationships or sustained and ongoing interaction, a "quick fix" may be sufficient or even necessary, and in those cases it makes sense to work for conflict resolution. But many conflicts involve long-term commitments and relationships where "resolution" is simplistic and unrealistic, and for these complex situations, *conflict transformation* can be revolutionary.

I learned these lessons at a workshop sponsored by NEYM called "The Friendly Way to Conflict Transformation," and I discovered how effectively this approach can work when everyone involved in an issue engages in it together. I will be sharing these lessons with Saylesville Preparative Meeting this fall in another session of the same course, and I would like to extend an invitation to everyone in PMM who might like to join us. The 10-hour workshop will take place at the Saylesville Meeting House on consecutive First Days in October and/or November. The schedule has not yet been finalized, and will be set up to suit the needs of the participants (in several two- or three-hour segments).

If you are willing to let go of some old habits to make way for transformation, or if you are just curious, please contact me at 401.533.0479, or by email at cindyfanning@gmail.com with any questions. Please include your name, email, your availability on Sundays between October and November, and whether you'd prefer longer or shorter sessions.

**Book Notes: Elie Wiesel's *Night****Submitted by Dan Lederer*

Elie Wiesel's death on July 2, at age 87, prompted me to re-read his first book, *Night*, originally published in French in 1955. The book details how, at age 15, he and his family were deported from their home in Romania to Auschwitz (in Poland), where his mother and sister died, and then to Buchenwald (in Germany), where he lost his father. As is well known, he survived and went on to become a renowned author and teacher. Among many other awards, he received the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize for his advocacy, without regard to race or locale, on behalf of oppressed and persecuted people worldwide.

In *Night*, Wiesel describes the horrors of life and death in the concentration camps. The narrative provides vivid examples of our ability as humans to be resilient under the most horrendous circumstances. However, at the same time it explores the depths of man's capacity for inhumanity and unspeakable cruelty toward his fellow man. As a youth, Elie was devout, with a keen interest in Jewish mysticism, but in the camps he lost his faith, in part because he couldn't reconcile the concept of a loving God with what he witnessed there. His experience challenges all of us to consider how events such as these affect our own faith and our own concept of God.

If your background is Jewish, as is mine, the book is considered required reading. But why should it be of interest to Friends? The answer I see is that there are parallels between what happened in Germany during the 1930's and what is happening politically in our country now. Certainly circumstances are different, but people still have the same capacity for fear, anger, hate, and violence. Again, there is a call to see "the other" as dangerous, as responsible for many of our problems, and as perhaps less than human or at least less worthy of the kinds of consideration we would usually practice. And various draconian measures, such as expulsion, are being proposed to reduce the perceived threat. As I see it, our concern needs to go beyond any particular candidate and instead focus on the reasons why so many citizens respond to this kind of message. How can we Quakers lead our lives in a way that counters these political currents and promotes a message of kindness and inclusiveness?

*If you've read something recently that might be of interest to the Meeting community, or that touched you personally or spiritually in some way, please consider submitting a Book Note! Contributors of all ages and interests are welcome. Contact editor Jen McFadden at [jenniferlamm@gmail.com](mailto:jenniferlamm@gmail.com).*

**Meet the Author of *Stubborn Hope***

September 22, 7-8:15 pm, Barrington Public Library

Meet local writer and educator Carole Marshall, author of *Stubborn Hope: Memoir of an Urban Teacher*, published in 2014 by CreateSpace. The book offers a unique portrait of two decades of teaching in an urban high school, and an inside look at the effects of the new reforms on urban education.

Carole Marshall taught high school English in Providence, Rhode Island for two decades. Prior to that, she worked for a number of leading newspapers in the United States and Europe and co-wrote two books on women's health. She has a Masters in Teaching from Brown University and a Masters in Communication from the City University of New York. She retired in 2012 and since then has been advocating for bringing a sane approach back to public school education. The lecture is free and open to all, and books will be available for sale and signing. For more information, contact Jessica at: [jessicad@barringtonlibrary.org](mailto:jessicad@barringtonlibrary.org)  
Phone Number: 401.247.1920 x312

## Retreats for Quaker Youth, Grades 2 and Up

New England Yearly Meeting has released its schedule for this school year's youth retreats, which are open to kids ages 7 and up. Grades 2-6 make up Junior Yearly Meeting, and Young Friends is open to high schoolers. There's also a group just for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Each group holds regular weekend retreats (Friday and Saturday nights) at locations throughout New England; each is focused on a particular theme or topic (see schedule below). For information on Junior Yearly Meeting events, email Gretchen Baker-Smith at [hellogretchen@gmail.com](mailto:hellogretchen@gmail.com) or call (508) 997-0940. To learn more about Young Friends, contact Nia Thomas at [nia@neym.org](mailto:nia@neym.org) or at (978) 886-7179. You can learn more about the retreats at <http://neym.org/organization/youth-programs--or-debrief> with Amy Steele and Ada McFadden, who will be attending this month's JYM retreat at Woolman Hill.

### *Junior Yearly Meeting Retreats*

Sept 16- 18 **How Can I Help?** Woolman Hill, Deerfield, MA

Nov 18-20 **That Friend Speaks My Mind!** Westport, MA

Jan 27-29 **Instruments of Peace** Wellesley, MA

Mar 31-Apr 2 **What's Going On? A Retreat Just for 6th & 7th Graders** Storrs, CT

**There's a Light in You, There's a Light in Me** Woolman Hill, Deerfield, MA

### *Young Friends Retreats*

Sept. 30-Oct. 2 **Climate Conscious** Mt. Toby Meeting, Leverett, MA

Nov. 18-20 **What's Justice?!** Portland Meeting, ME

Dec. 27-30 **Who are Quakers?** Friendly Crossways, Harvard, MA

Feb. 10-12 **Mind, Body, Soul** Wellesley Meeting, MA

Mar. 17-19 **Sexuality, Gender & Relationships** Hartford Meeting, CT

May 12-14 **Creativity into Action** Westport Meeting, MA

### **Stirring Up Interest in Seeking**

*by Cindy Fanning and Zona Douthit*

Have an interest to know more about Quakerism and deepen your faith? Adult Religious Education committee is seeking input about how to address your desire for more seeking. What mode of seeking interests you? Book group, Bible study, query discussions? Please let us know. If you hunger for further understanding of our faith, please contact the Adult Religious Education committee through Cindy Fanning at (401)533-0479 or email at [cindyfanning@gmail.com](mailto:cindyfanning@gmail.com). Your input about and interests in learning are our concerns. Thank you for helping us in our ministry.

## Loving Working

“We clean to give space for Art.”

Micaela Miranda, Freedom Theatre, Palestine

Work was a shining refuge when wind sank its tooth into my mind. Everything we love is going away, drifting – but you could sweep this stretch of floor, this patio or porch, gather white stones in a bucket, rake the patch for future planting, mop the counter with a rag. Lovely wet gray rag, squeeze it hard it does so much. Clear the yard of blowing bits of plastic. The glory in the doing. The breath of the doing. Sometimes the simplest move kept fear from fragmenting into no energy at all, or sorrow from multiplying, or sorrow from being the only person living in the house.

---Naomi Shihab Nye (b. 1952)

Reprinted from *poets.org*



(Above) Good work, good food. Eugenia Marks' Labor Day centerpiece

## 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 (James town 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](mailto:yaf@providencefriends.org))

Wednesday - 8:25am - Moses Brown Lower School

Wednesday - 9:40am - Moses Brown Middle School

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

Thursday - Noon-12:45 pm Brown University in

Fri - 7:00am - 7:15am - 411

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