

The Provident FRIEND

Providence Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

December 2016

Resisting Hate in RI by Jen McFadden

In the ten days following Donald Trump's election victory, the Southern Poverty Law Center counted 867 acts of harassment and intimidation. This is not just a national trend—it's also happening right here in Rhode Island. In one recent instance, a shopper used her grocery carriage to strike a Muslim woman wearing hijab. A week ago, Providence Youth Social Movement (PrYSM), a nonprofit dedicated to mobilizing Southeast Asian youth and queer youth of color in working for social justice, held a public event to celebrate its 15th anniversary. A day later its office was vandalized in a clear attempt to intimidate and frighten its community. Masjid Al Kareem, a mosque in downtown Providence, received a handwritten letter whose message conveyed pure spite and hatred for all Muslims—a letter that has been sent to mosques in states across the country.

But in Providence and throughout New England, events of this kind are pushing concerned people to act. Some progress is coming from local and national leaders. RI Rep. David Cicilline and MA Reps. Michael Capuano, Seth Moulton, James McGovern, Katherine Clark, and William Keating signed on as co-sponsors for a bill prohibiting the U.S. government from creating a religious registry or database (H.R. 6382). MA Rep. Katherine Clark has introduced a bill to extend conflict of interest provisions to the President and Vice President (H.R. 6340, "Presidential Accountability Act"). In early December, Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza launched a hotline for anyone who has experienced bias, violence, or discrimination (though many oppose the de facto involvement of law enforcement, since police brutality is also an issue of concern for many). And community members continue to work for the passage of the Providence Community Safety Act.

The coalition that has become known as Resist Hate RI (resisthateri.com) is pulling together people from all over the state to organize against the threats posed by the incoming administration. On December 5, many from that coalition braved terrible weather to hand-deliver a petition to Senators Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse, asking them to resist the Trump-Pence agenda: "Be fierce in your opposition to any and all proposals that will divide, attack, or endanger our communities and our most vulnerable." (The full petition can be accessed through rifuture.org and is still collecting signatures.) In response, Senator Whitehouse released a statement: "Getting organized and involved in the political process is more important than ever, and I thank everyone who signed this petition. I'm listening closely to what Rhode Islanders have to say during this transition. The day after the election, I pledged to do everything in my power to protect the dignity of all people in a Trump presidency, and that commitment will guide my work in the months and years ahead."

(continued on Page 5)

Published Dec. 16, 2016

CALENDAR

Saturday, December 17
10 am-12:15, Saylesville
Meetinghouse Bookswap

Saturday, December 17
5 pm, Providence
Meetinghouse
Christmas Gathering and
Potluck (Children rehearse
at **3 pm**)

Saturday, December 17
5 pm, Providence State
House (south side)
Interfaith Prayer Vigil for
Syria

Sunday, December 18
11:30, Providence
Meetinghouse
Presentation from Annie
Voss-Altman of Sisters of
Salaam Shalom on a
volunteer opportunity to
accompany Muslim
women in public

Saturday, December 24
4:30 pm, Saylesville
Meetinghouse
Christmas Eve Candlelight
Meeting

Sunday, January 1
11 am, Providence
Meetinghouse
Monthly Potluck

Sunday, February 5
11 am, Providence
Meetinghouse
Potluck welcoming new
member Ruffin Powell

Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business Minutes, 11th Twelfth Month, 2016

1. We gathered at the Providence meetinghouse at 12:00 noon, with eighteen present. In the opening worship, we considered the following queries from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice* (2012):

What does our Meeting understand to be the meaning and implication of our testimonies on simplicity and integrity?

How do our Meeting's actions demonstrate this understanding?

As a Meeting, what are we doing to encourage members to embody integrity and simplicity in their everyday lives?

2. Announcements:

The meeting's Christmas program will be held on the 17th day of 12th month at the Providence meetinghouse, at 5:00, followed by a festive potluck meal.

The annual Christmas Eve candlelight meeting for worship will be held at 4:30 pm on the 24th day of 12th month at the Saylesville meetinghouse. Bring candles, candleholders, and light snacks.

Friends at Saylesville invite all to join them on their Wednesday evening meetings. A light potluck dinner and music from 6:00 to 7:00 followed by a half hour of worship. This is planned for every Wednesday going forward.

3. **Correspondence:** We have received a letter from the daughter of our member Robert L Yeager to inform us that Robert passed away in Bradenton, Florida, in 10th month 2015, aged 92. Although he had lived out of this area for many years, he always responded to correspondence from the meeting and contributed financially to its support. We extend our condolences to his family.
4. **Membership:** For Ministry and Counsel, David Bourns brought forward the name of Ruffin Powell for membership in the meeting, following the usual clearness procedure. We are pleased to accept her into membership. We ask the Hospitality Committee to arrange an appropriate welcome for her.
5. **Pastoral Care:** For Ministry and Counsel, David Bourns has recommended that Victoria Ekk and Megan Smith be added to the Pastoral Care Committee. We approve. It was reported that Adele Bourne is now serving as clerk of the Pastoral Care Committee.
6. **AFSC-SENE:** The Nominating Committee has brought the names of Morgan Lord, Jen McFadden and David Bourns to serve as the meeting's representatives to the AFSC-SENE Support Committee, replacing Adele Bourne and Penny Jackim who are no longer able to serve in that capacity. We approve these appointments.
7. **NEYM *Faith and Practice* section on Membership:** New England Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice Revision Committee has asked meetings to provide feedback on the committee's preliminary work on membership, not word-by-word editing but content feedback to guide future drafts. Copies have been made available on paper and electronically.

We have been particularly drawn to the proposed shift in the concept of dual membership, that is, whether someone can become a member of the meeting while retaining their membership in or affiliation with another religious body or tradition. (There is a somewhat different issue of people with two long-term residences, such as a summer home and a winter home, who have strong ties with two different Quaker meetings in different regions.) The 1985 *Faith and Practice* strongly implies that such dual affiliation is not appropriate. The proposed revision, on the other hand, implies that this question is up to the discernment of Ministry and Counsel and the clearness process. Our meeting's practice has not routinely included addressing this question, and we cherish those individuals in our community whose personal spiritual practice and/or family connections draw from diverse religious traditions. On the other hand, there is a sense that those joining the meeting should have a whole-hearted commitment to our practice. We find the proposed language helpful in permitting and encouraging individualized discernment. We find it helpful to have the conversations raised by the proposed queries, in a somewhat more rigorous clearness process than the more casual conversation our clearness committees sometimes engage in.

Ministry and Counsel will formulate a response to the yearly meeting committee.

8. **Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Peter Swaszek presented a report for the second quarter of the current fiscal year, ending 11/30/2016. Both contributions from members and attenders and income from use of the meetinghouse are running ahead of last year. Expenses are within budget expectations.

The Finance Committee is beginning work on the next fiscal year budget; committee clerks are encouraged to communicate clearly and early with the Finance Committee concerning their needs for the coming year.

9. **Saylesville:** Bruce Downing reported that after consultation with the Property Committee, new kitchen base cabinets have been installed. The midweek evening meetings have enabled participation by people who are unable to attend at Saylesville on First-Days. The furnace will likely need replacing before next winter; consideration is being given to heat pumps that would use less fossil-fuel than a new natural gas burner.
10. **Library Committee:** Rebecca Smith reported that the committee meets about once a month. They have made progress comparing the theoretical catalog with the actual books on shelves, and encourage Friends to check their personal libraries for strays. The children's collection has been relocated to the downstairs room. Their ongoing tasks include filling gaps, removing some of the less-useful titles from the active shelves, and cataloguing the collection of books in storage upstairs at the Providence meetinghouse and at the Saylesville meetinghouse.
11. We closed with a period of grateful silence, intending to meet next on the 8th of 1st month 2017, God willing.

Mike Hirtle, presiding clerk
Elizabeth Cazden, recording clerk

Around the Meeting

On December 1, a group of Interfaith Friends met again at the Meetinghouse for fellowship and discussion of opportunities to build interfaith relationships in Rhode Island. Representatives of the Rhode Island Council for Muslim Advancement and A HOPE were present, as well as interested folks from our Meeting, Moses Brown School, and Brown University. If you'd like an emailed summary of the discussion from that meeting, please contact Jen McFadden at jenniferlamm@gmail.com

Some good news for families in our community with young children: we have now secured childcare during Meeting for Business! Fatoumata Sidibe, **(Fatou)** an 11th grader at Moses Brown School, will be helping to cover the nursery so that parents can be present for Business Meeting the first Sunday of each month. Thanks to Bruce Carlsten and Ministry and Counsel for making this happen!

It's not too late to make a donation to Meeting and have it be tax deductible for the current calendar year. Contributions can always be placed in

the contribution box in the foyer of the Meetinghouse or mailed to the Meeting treasurer **Peter Swaszek, 57 Brayton Street, East Greenwich, RI 02818**. Make your check out to **Providence Friends Meeting**. If you do banking by mail, you can set the Meeting up as a payee, using your own name as the account number.

Welcome to Ruffin Powell, whose membership in the Providence Meeting was approved at the December Business Meeting. Come celebrate this event at potluck on Feb. 5.

Making the Most of Email Groups

Communications Committee maintains two email groups. One is for visitors and new attenders; this group receives only the Meeting newsletter. The second group, called the Meeting Email List or "the listserve", also sends out the newsletter but in addition is a place for notices of upcoming events as well as information from other Quaker organizations such as NEYM, AFSC, and FCNL, and members may post messages of interest to Friends. Being part of this latter group is important for anyone wanting to participate fully in the life of the Meeting, and the same can be said for the Meeting Directory. The Email List provides a way to communicate with the group while the Directory facilitates contact between individuals; both of these are for members and attenders. If you are not represented on one or both of these, and you want to be, contact committee clerk Dan Lederer (dlederer1@verizon.net).

Library Update

Submitted by Rebecca Smith, Library clerk (library@providencefriends.org)

The Meeting Library is open to all members and attenders for browsing and borrowing books. Since the library also serves as a committee meeting room and the chairs tend to get pushed right up against the shelves, getting at the books may take some persistence, but do give it a try. Children's books are located on the shelves downstairs and may also be borrowed, as may the pamphlets on the rack in the meeting room. To borrow a book or pamphlet, first take out the card located in a pocket at the back of the book. On the card, write your NAME, your TELEPHONE NUMBER, and the DATE of borrowing. Put the card in the basket on the shelf in the library. When you return a book, put it in the other basket on the shelf (the one marked "return books here") and the library volunteers will check it back in and re-shelve it. We find that there is a rather large number of books that were checked out in years past and not checked back in. We hope that Friends will check their bookshelves for strays. The Library Committee would be happy to receive suggestions from Friends regarding books that might be of interest to the Meeting community.

Resisting Hate in RI *(continued from Page 1)*

Other communities are engaged in acts of support and faith that connect at a more local level, but are no less significant. In a letter published in the November 24 issue of *The Needham Times*, the Wellesley Friends Meeting joined eight other Needham faith communities in committing to serving as a sanctuary for those needing support. At the close of Friday prayers a few days after receiving the vitriolic letter, worshippers at Masjid Al Kareem were greeted by members of the Rhode Island State Council of Churches and residents from Providence and elsewhere who came bearing signs and smiles and voiced messages of support and love. The organization Sisters of Salaam Shalom is creating a program to pair Muslim women and others worried for their safety in public with volunteers who are willing to accompany them on errands and outings. (See the article on Page 6 for more.) The Providence art space AS220 hosted a recent workshop for allies of Muslims, anticipating a handful of attendees. Over a hundred turned out for the program. And the nonprofit PrYSM has responded to the vandalism of its space in a way that calls attention to its attempts to work for transformative justice: “Rather than close down the space as we regroup from this traumatic violation, we are committed to keeping our space as open as possible. In the spirit and belief in community, we would love to convene an open meeting with community members.”*

This response to trauma may be an example for all of us who feel hurt and fearful in the aftermath of November’s election results. Like PrYSM, we cannot afford to close down our space. We have an opportunity—indeed, perhaps an obligation—to open our hearts, listen closely, love our neighbors, and continue to work for the change our world so desperately needs.

Vigil for Syria

The fall of Aleppo has brought immeasurable anguish, suffering, and death to Syria. The thousands still trapped in the city have broadcast last messages and parting images on the Internet, forcing people all over the world to confront their pain, their desperate fear, and their sense of utter abandonment as they prepare for likely death at the hands of pro-government forces. Many of us feel impotent, angry, and helpless to help, paralyzed by outrage. In our grief, one thing we can do is reach out to one another as human beings joined in prayer and reverence.

On **Saturday, December 17 at 5 pm**, an interfaith prayer vigil for Syria will be held on the south side of the State House. From the announcement released by the organizers: “We invite and welcome people of all faiths and backgrounds. Let us come together and honor in prayer the great loss of human life, and find solace in scriptures with intentions for peace and ease for the suffering throughout the world. [This] is an invitation to the larger community to gather in a spiritual way to pray for those who have died, and to pray for our leadership around the world to not turn a blind eye on this atrocious violence.”

The vigil takes place at the same time as our Christmas gathering, so many of us will be unable to attend in person. But many of our Muslim friends and neighbors have families in and around Aleppo, and our prayers and support are gravely needed. Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, whatever your commitments, please hold the people of Syria in the Light.

* The meeting is Friday, January 6th, from 6-8 PM at PrYSM, 669 Elmwood Avenue, Suite B7, Providence.

Year-End Opportunities at AFSC SENE

The American Friends Service Committee's Southeast New England program office has had a full slate this year. Here are just a few local highlights from Program Coordinator Martha Yager's many projects:

An independent evaluation of SENE's work and programs. AFSC has introduced a three-year evaluation schedule for all local program offices to monitor and assess the important work being done. The SENE office's 2016 evaluation was an excellent experience, and evaluators expressed their approval of the work being done here and the real-world results arising from it.

Work for the Community Safety Act in Providence. The Providence Community Safety Act, a model ordinance addressing a range of policing issues, nears City Council vote. After several years of work, the STEP UP network, of which AFSC SENE is a core member, is in final language negotiations with the members of City Council. They expect that there will be an Ordinance Committee vote in early January followed by two Council votes. Turnout for those votes is really important. Please watch for further information on the timeline on the Listserve.

The presentation of numerous Bystander Intervention Trainings throughout New England. Many communities have contacted Martha Yager to request organizational trainings on nonviolent ways to intervene in situations where individuals are targeted in acts of hate, discrimination, or bullying. The demand outpaces capacity right now, and **AFSC SENE needs additional trainers!** This could be an excellent way for members of the PMM community to offer broad and much-needed support to other organizations, workplaces, faith communities, and schools. **Anyone interested in the possibility of our Meeting hosting an AFSC-led training, including a "train-the-trainer" component, should contact one of our AFSC-SENE representatives: Jen McFadden, Morgan Lord, or David Bourns.** If there is sufficient interest, we can bring this idea to Peace and Social Concerns.

Facilitation of Racial Justice Working Group for Resist Hate RI. (See the story on Page 1 for more on Resist Hate RI.)

Working with the Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom (SOSS) to create a volunteer accompaniment program. This month, AFSC is bringing Annie Voss-Altman to our Meeting to speak about opportunities for volunteers to be safe companions for people worried about intimidation when they go out in public alone. **Join her at coffee hour, Sunday, Dec. 18, for a brief presentation** on the program and ways you can help.

In a few short weeks, we'll be able to turn the page on the calendar and look forward to a new year of challenges. If you're one of those relieved to see 2016 end, or if you'd like to launch 2017 with forward momentum, please consider making a donation to the American Friends Service Committee's local Southeast New England chapter. This important work cannot take place without community backing. By making a donation to AFSC SENE, you can make a clear statement of your support for AFSC's commitment to social justice in our region.

At this time of year, as budgets are tallied and future plans made, it's especially important that donations recognize LOCAL work and make their support clear to the national office. **To that end, please make sure your donations go to SENE.** If you navigate to the SENE website at <https://www.afsc.org/office/providence-ri>, **please use the red rectangular button that says "Donate Now"** and feel free to use the "special gift instructions" box to comment on particular programs or issues that you support. (If you instead click on the link at the top of the page that says "Donate" in red on a white background, you'll be sending your donation instead to the national office, and the local office will not receive the funds.)

Sunbeams (from *The Sun*, December 2016, Issue 492)

It's no longer enough to be a decent person. It's no longer enough to shake our heads and make concerned grimaces at the news.—Joss Whedon

If I were to remain silent, I'd be guilty of complicity. —Albert Einstein

As my sufferings mounted I soon realized that there were two ways that I could respond to my situation: either to react with bitterness or seek to transform the suffering into a creative force. I decided to follow the latter course. —Martin Luther King, Jr.

Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced. —James Baldwin

Those who make us believe that anything is possible and fire our imagination over the long haul, are often the ones who have survived the bleakest of circumstances themselves. They have every reason to despair, but don't, so may have the most to teach us. —Paul Rogat Loeb

The individual—stupendous and beautiful paradox—is at once infinitesimal dust and the cause of all things. —C.V. Wedgwood

When people made up their minds that they wanted to be free and took action, then there was a change. But they cannot rest on just that action. It has to continue. —Rosa Parks

We are beginning to understand that the world is always being made and never finished; that activism can be the journey rather than the arrival; that struggle doesn't always have to be confrontational but can take the form of reaching out to find common ground.—Grace Lee Boggs

It's the action, not the fruit of the action, that's important. You have to do the right thing. It may not be in your power, may not be in your time, that there'll be any fruit. But that doesn't mean you stop doing the right thing. You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result. —Mohandas K. Gandhi

Providence Monthly Meeting

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

Presiding Clerk: **Mike Hirtle** clerk@providencefriends.org

Assistant Presiding Clerk: **Dan Lederer** 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: **Dan Lederer** finance@providencefriends.org

Peace & Social Concerns: **Steve Schwartz** 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 and Nina Berry** 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: **Betsy Zimmerman** liaison@providencefriends.org

Young Adult Friends: (To Be Named) yaf@providencefriends.org

To schedule the Meetinghouse: **Bruce Shaw** scheduling@providencefriends.org

AFSC SENE: **Martha Yager** (508) 399-6699 or myager@afsc.org or
www.afsc.org/sene



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 (Norman Bird Sanctuary, Middletown)

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
J. Walter Wilson room 411

Potluck, Providence - each First Sunday

Sing-along, Saylesville - 11:30 am each First Sunday

Meeting for Business

Providence: Second Sunday of each month at 12:00pm

Saylesville: Second Sunday of each month at 9:30am

AFSC SENE Support Committee - Second Tuesday, 6:30-9:00 pm
Volunteers needed and welcome.

Call (508) 399-6699

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Newsletter of

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Religious Society of Friends

99 Morris Avenue

Providence, RI 02906