

# The Provident FRIEND

*News from the Providence Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends*

October 17, 2017

## **First Day School Field Trip to Saylesville Meetinghouse**

*by Sarah Baily for the Religious Education Committee*

The First Day School had a rewarding visit to Saylesville Meeting on Sunday October 1st, with over 20 students and parents in attendance. The visit followed several weeks of studying the history of the meeting. The visit started with a treasure hunt that led students to an old-fashioned stepping stone, to the gravestone of a nephew of Stephen Hopkins, to the bat box built by first day school several years ago, and to the original section of the meetinghouse built in 1703. We concluded in the main section of the meetinghouse, where we participated in meeting for worship. Thank you, Saylesville Meeting, for hosting the First Day School!

We also extend a warm welcome to our two new FDS helpers, Addy Scheutz and Nadia Goldberg, both students at Brown University. They will assist the First Day School teachers each Sunday throughout the school year. They are both experienced working with children and very enthusiastic. We're glad to have them with us - please say hello to them and welcome them to the PMM community!

## **Providence Friends to Lobby with FCNL at Annual Meeting**

*by Betsy Cazden*

The annual General Meeting of Friends Committee on National Legislation (the Quaker lobby on Capitol Hill) will be held in Washington Nov. 2-5, 2017. The General Committee is made up of appointed representatives from yearly meetings of Friends across the US, and across the Quaker spectrum. Betsy Cazden from our meeting has just been named as one of five representatives from New England YM, and Nancy Houston and possibly others from our meeting will also attend. The General Meeting is open to all interested Friends, and will be preceded by a two-day workshop on how to lobby members of Congress. FCNL is eager to have more New England Friends and especially more Rhode Islanders engaged in its work, and is offering special financial assistance. For more information, go to:

[www.fcnl.org/https://www.fcnl.org/updates/annual-meeting-quaker-public-policy-institute-2017-27](http://www.fcnl.org/https://www.fcnl.org/updates/annual-meeting-quaker-public-policy-institute-2017-27), or email staff member Andrew Silva ([andrew@fcnl.org](mailto:andrew@fcnl.org)).

FCNL's next major opportunity is the [Young Adult Spring Lobby Weekend, March 17-20, 2018](#).

## CALENDAR

### **Saturday, October 21**

10 am-12:15, Saylesville Bookswap

11 am - 3 pm, [Moses Brown School Admissions Open House](#)  
Moses Brown Campus

### **Sunday, October 22**

Quarterly Meeting,  
Westerly Meeting, 57 Elm St,  
Westerly, RI 02891  
Worship at 10:30, followed by potluck  
and Meeting for Business

3-6 pm, Shape Note Singing  
Providence Meetinghouse

### **Friday, October 20**

1:30 pm, Fellowship with Muslim  
neighbors  
Masjid Al Kareem  
39 Haskins Ave., Providence  
Come if you can to share cookies,  
coffee and tea!

### **Wednesday, November 1,**

6-7:30 pm, [Interfaith Forum](#)  
Providence Career and Technical  
Academy  
41 Fricker St., Providence

### **November 2-5**

[FCNL Annual Meeting and Quaker  
Public Policy Institute](#)  
Washington, DC

### **Sunday, November 5**

(\*Daylight Saving Time ends!)  
11 am, PMM Monthly Potluck  
Providence Meetinghouse

### **Sunday, November 12**

12 pm, Providence Meetinghouse  
Meeting for Business

### **Friday, November 17- Sunday, November 19**

[Clerking: Serving the Community with  
Joy and Confidence](#)

Workshop with Arthur Larrabee  
Pendle Hill, Wallingford, PA

### **Tuesday Evenings**

7-8:30 pm, Book Discussion Group  
Providence Meetinghouse

Saturday, December 16  
Christmas Gathering, Providence  
Meetinghouse

**Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business  
8th of 10th Month – MINUTES**

1. We gathered at 12:07 pm at the Saylesville meetinghouse, with 13 present. To open a period of silent reflection, the clerk read the following queries from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's *Faith & Practice*:

**Stewardship of the Environment**

Is the Meeting concerned that human interaction with nature be responsible, guided by a reverence for life and a sense of the splendor of God's continuing creation?

Are the decisions of the Meeting and its committees relating to the uses of property, goods, services, and energy made with sensitivity toward the environmental impact of those choices?

How does our Meeting learn about environmental concerns and then act in the community on its concerns?

2. **Announcements.** RI-Smithfield Quarterly Meeting will be held at Westerly meetinghouse on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, with worship beginning at 10:30. Several Friends are planning to go with carpool possibilities.
3. **Membership.** For Ministry and Counsel, Ariana Steele brought a recommendation that Susan Brumbelow be accepted as a member of the meeting, and her minor children Dounya Bilal and Elias Bilal as junior members. We approve, and ask Ministry and Counsel to arrange an appropriate welcome.
4. **Latecomers.** Ministry and Counsel also brought a proposed change in our procedures for handling latecomers to meeting for worship at Providence meetinghouse. Some attenders have felt that separating latecomers is less than welcoming; others have been disturbed by noise in the vestibule as Friends arrive. Ministry and Counsel suggests that those who would prefer to enter the worship room immediately be invited to do so, mindful of the worship already in progress. They propose to make this change on a provisional basis for the next few months, and then evaluate it. They plan to prepare a brief sign reminding people that silence has begun, and will depend on greeters to reinforce this message. We are reminded that those who arrive early have a ministry of helping others to settle, and that all can help by leaving back and end seats accessible for latecomers and others with particular needs. We are also reminded that for our young children, the first fifteen minutes is their entire experience of worship. We approve this change on an experimental basis, recognizing that it will likely not please everyone, and ask Ministry and Counsel to evaluate it and report back at our first meeting for business in 2018.
5. **Financial Review.** Bruce Carlsten reported on the financial review that he and Mike Hirtle conducted of the Treasurer's books for the two fiscal years ending May 31, 2016 and May 31, 2017. With the exception of a discrepancy of \$0.88 (which is being zeroed out), they found the books in good order and matching bank account records. The reviewers brought a recommendation to change the Treasurer's authority to exceed budgeted line items, as follows (change is underlined):  
The Treasurer is authorized to exceed any budgeted item by 5% or \$100, whichever is more, without any additional approval. With the approval of the clerk of the Finance Committee, the Treasurer is authorized to exceed any budgeted item by more than 5% but less than or equal to 10%, or \$200, whichever is more. To exceed any budget item by more than 10% or \$200,

whichever is more, requires the approval of the business meeting.

We approve this change.

6. **Faith & Practice Revision process.** The clerk asks for guidance on our meeting's process for responding to the revised section on membership, and a new section on personal spiritual practice, sent by the NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee. The committee has requested that meetings discern a sense of the monthly meeting, not simply send in a compilation of individual comments. Our sense is that a worship sharing session, supplemented by ways to contribute for those who cannot attend such a session, would be best, with a draft minute then brought to meeting for business before 1 February 2018. We ask the clerk together with Ministry and Counsel to shepherd this process, including multiple ways for people to access the texts.
7. **Religious Education Committee report.** For the Religious Education Committee, Eugenia Marks presented a committee report. The fall curriculum has focused on early Quaker history, including a visit to the Saylesville meetinghouse. The committee continues to struggle to find enough adults to assist volunteers in this work. To assist with the youngest children, the committee has hired two students, who have been an excellent help.  
The committee proposes (and has begun to advertise for) a part-time stipended position for a First Day School coordinator, to help with administrative duties for our vibrant Sunday school. The coordinator would work with the committee to oversee the activities, such as scheduling teachers, communicating with parents and teachers, overseeing our Christmas Pageant, and attending monthly meetings of our Religious Education committee. The position is for 6 to 8 hours a month, paying \$25 per hour. The funding for this has already been included in the committee's budget. We were reminded that we need to be careful about establishing positions as independent contractors rather than employees. We ask the Finance Committee to investigate this question and give guidance to the Religious Education committee as quickly as possible.  
We thank the Religious Education committee for their diligent work to ensure that the meeting's children continue to thrive as part of our meeting community. We concur with their efforts to supplement the committee's efforts with paid assistance.
8. **Saylesville meetinghouse committee.** Dan Lederer presented a status report on the work of the ad hoc committee to consider the future of the Saylesville meetinghouse (see minute 8, 04/2017). The committee has met three times over the summer, and has considered a wide variety of options. The current sense of the committee has been that we should continue to maintain the meetinghouse but should explore forming some kind of partnership with one or more historical societies. The committee has a meeting scheduled with two staff from the RI State Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, and hopes to set up additional meetings with representatives from Historic New England, Hearthside, the Town of Lincoln, and possibly the Blackstone Valley Historical Society and the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park. Friends with ideas and concerns are encouraged to speak with members of the Ad Hoc committee.
9. **Building Expansion.** For the Building Expansion Committee for the Providence meetinghouse, Bruce Carlsten gave an update. There is ongoing communications with our architect. Plans continue to be refined, with no major changes since the last report to business meeting. There have been several meetings and site visits with our mechanical, electrical, & plumbing contractor as well as with the civil engineer and the general contractor. Actual cost figures are expected in the next several weeks. These meetings include consideration of what type of heating system will best meet our goals of reducing the meeting's carbon footprint. A request to the NEYM Legacy Gift Fund was submitted on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, and the committee intends to apply to the Obadiah Brown Benevolent Fund. The RI Foundation did not approve our request to them for funding. The committee intends to present a more detailed report in 11<sup>th</sup> month, with a request for authorization to proceed with construction.  
The requests for funds sent to members and attenders have resulted in gifts and pledges of

approximately \$72,000, although the number of respondents has been somewhat small. People are reminded that the clerk’s emails are intended to determine the interest of the meeting for the project and are not solely focused on the money. Even without a pledge, a simple expression from meeting members for or against the expansion would be most welcome.

We encourage the committee and the ad hoc committee working on funding the expansion to make a visual display of fund-raising goals and progress and (when applicable) construction progress, to help with transparency and generate enthusiasm for the project in the meeting community.

- 10. We closed in grateful silence, intending to meet next on the 12<sup>th</sup> of 11<sup>th</sup> month at the Providence meetinghouse.

Mike Hirtle, clerk  
Elizabeth Cazden, recording clerk

**Local Symbolic Action: Moses Brown Soccer Coach Takes a Knee for Racial Justice**  
**FDS Seeks a First Day School Coordinator (Paid Position)**  
*Jen McFadden*

It has been over a year since former San Francisco 49er Colin Kaepernick took his protest over the systemic oppression of Americans of color to the football field by refusing to stand during the playing of the national anthem. At the time Kaepernick said, “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color.” The consequences of that choice continue to ripple outward as more athletes decide to “take a knee,” as the President calls for protesting players to be fired, and as Americans reckon with their individual responses to the discomfort that protest necessarily engenders.

This month, the controversy moved to the Moses Brown School, bringing a national debate to a new level of local relevance for Providence Friends. On October 1, MB science teacher and award-winning boys’ soccer coach Eric Aaronian informed MB parents that he felt called to join the quiet protest. Aaronian spoke extensively with his players before his decision, giving an account of his reasons and making clear that his choice was a personal, individual one—he did not ask or expect his players to participate, and he explicitly stated that this was a moral, not a political, protest. That evening, [Aaronian’s letter to parents](#) was picked up and published by the website “GoLocal Providence,” where it quickly drew criticism from readers. A few days later, as the controversy grew, MB Head of School, Matt Glendinning, released a letter to the MB community to make the school’s position clear. In it, he wrote,

“Statements that uphold the dignity and worth of fellow students, teachers, families, and citizens are welcome in our school; overt statements for or against politicians or political parties are not. In the case of our coach, I believe that he met these standards by making his intent clear, and moving ahead, we will apply this same test in assessing this or similar forms of protest. At Moses Brown, our goal is to help students develop their passions and identity, to form their own understanding of the world, and to have the courage to stand up for what they feel is right. Part of the way we do that is by modeling and engaging students in meaningful dialogue about difficult subjects. Last week, for example, eighth-graders had a wide-ranging debate about kneeling during the anthem, and this week many advisors and classes in the Upper School are doing the same.

I believe there is important learning and healing to be discovered in that kind of dialogue, if we can be patient and courageous enough to listen to each other. It's only through open and honest exchange of ideas that we can maintain a community where people feel valued and respected." ([For the full text of Glendinning's letter to parents, please visit this link.](#))

Just as in the national controversy embroiling the NFL, critics have focused more on the form of Aaronian's protest than on the difficult issues it's intended to address—the systemic racism that permeates our society and institutions. But the impulse to respond to form rather than function shows the downside of symbolic action. The American flag, the national anthem, the doffing of hats, the laying of hand over heart—these are symbols of a concept dearly held but hard to define. Indeed, this is one reason why symbols are so useful, so prevalent, and so powerful. They offer an emotional shortcut, a diversion around the difficulties of semantics and analysis: we *feel* for our symbols deeply, passionately, utterly. Symbols exist so that we don't have to *think* about the universe of meanings that they represent—they are a necessary part of effective human communication and efficient social organization.

Our relationship to symbols should not be what divides us. As our weighty Friend Rufus Jones reminded us, the need for symbols is differently felt: "Some persons feel the need for symbols much more than others do. It turns largely upon the type of imagination which one possesses whether they are needed or not. Some feel hindered in their spiritual life by symbolism, and others can make almost no progress without it. It is impossible in these matters to lay down fixed and general rules. There are patriots who care little or nothing for the help of symbols, such as the flag or the national hymn; they have their ideal of the country, and for that they live and sacrifice. There are other patriots, however, who are swept by a powerful emotion at the sight of the national colours, or at the sound of the well-known words which glorify the land they love, and they have their deepest affection stirred only through these symbols. It is the same way in the sphere of religion. It seems impossible to many persons to worship without some visible, or tangible, or auditory stimulus—what Robert Browning calls 'mid-way helps.' This is a psychological situation, and it would seem to be a mistake to try to have only one type and method of worship for all mankind. The different types need not be ranked as higher or lower. They only need to be recognized as psychologically and characteristically different. There will be good persons, spiritual persons, personal depth and insight among the symbolizers, and equally so among the non-symbolizers, and there will be some who are at home in both types" (Jones, R. 1949, *The Faith and Practice of the Quakers*, n.p.).

Symbolic (dis)comfort is real, and the pain of those wounded by symbolic action is legitimate. But beyond the symbols—flags, songs, postures—there is also a deeper reality that Friends are obliged to examine, one in which the wounds are not symbolic but literal and grievous. This is the reality that these protests are asking us to confront: In our American society, the "inalienable rights" to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are *not* equally available to all (wo)men. Until these conditions are changed, peaceful protest must continue—no matter how uncomfortable, inconvenient, or symbolically offensive the means of protest may be.

Matt Glendinning reports that the feedback from the MB community has been overwhelmingly positive. He estimates that messages of support outnumber those of disappointment by a margin of about 20 to 1. If you would like to express support for Eric Aaronian's witness, or for Moses Brown's endeavors to promote dialogue and learning, please contact [Matt Glendinning](#), Head of School; or contact [Eric Aaronian](#) directly.

## **FDS Seeks a First Day School Coordinator (Paid Position)**

Providence Friends Meeting is looking for a First Day School Coordinator to help with administrative duties for our vibrant Sunday school. The coordinator will work with our Religious Education Committee to oversee weekly First Day School activities, including scheduling teachers, communicating with parents and teachers, overseeing our Christmas Pageant, and attending monthly meetings of our Religious Education committee. The position is for 6-8 hours a month and pays \$25/hour. Please contact Sarah Baily if interested at [bailysp@hotmail.com](mailto:bailysp@hotmail.com).

## **Interfaith Forum on November 1**

Dorcas International Institute, Mayor Elorza's Muslim-American Advisory Board, and the Rhode Island Council of Churches announce a forum to promote inter-religious dialogue and diversity education. Fourteen organizations will be on hand to discuss a variety of topics, including prejudice and hate crimes, community safety, municipal IDs; and more. This event had originally been scheduled for Oct. 3, but had to be postponed due to a venue conflict. It has been rescheduled at a venue that can accommodate a larger audience. It will now be held at the Providence Career and Technical Academy, 41 Fricker St. in Providence **on Wednesday, November 1, 6 to 7:30 p.m.** For more information, contact Jordan Van Leesten, 401-421-2489, ext. 5379.

## **Clerking Workshop with Arthur Larrabee**

from John Meyer, Communications and Outreach Coordinator, Pendle Hill

Pendle Hill's annual Clerking Workshop with Arthur Larrabee is just around the corner, November 17-19. The title says it all: Clerking: Serving the Community with Joy and Confidence. For many years, Arthur has led incoming and seasoned clerks of monthly meetings and Quaker organizations in the art of clerking -- listening and guiding Quaker meetings for worship with attention to business towards a sense of the meeting. In addition to Arthur's excellent modeling of clerking skills, participants will gain insights from each other in this nuts-and-bolts workshop, as well as walk away with a volume of Arthur's accumulated written work on clerking.

Please share this opportunity with Friends in your meeting and encourage them to register. Space is still available. We encourage meetings to invest in their leadership, and we can help with some financial assistance, too. If Friends require financial help to participate, please ask them to complete our online application. (A flyer is attached, and one can be downloaded here.) Thank you.

We look forward to seeing Friends from your meeting in November!



(Above: First Day School Friends on their field trip to Saylesville on October 1 – a beautiful day!)

## Providence Monthly Meeting Contact List

Presiding Clerk: **Mike Hirtle** clerk@providencefriends.org  
Assistant Presiding Clerk: **Rebecca Leuchak** assistclerk@providencefriends.org  
Recording Clerk: **Betsy Cazden** recordingclerk@providencefriends.org  
Treasurer: **Peter Swaszek** treasurer@providencefriends.org  
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Finance: **Dan Lederer** finance@providencefriends.org  
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Religious Education: **Betsy Zimmerman** religious@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  
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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

### 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

**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 are welcome):

**Monday** - 12:30pm - Moses Brown Upper School

**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

**Wednesday** - 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



Elizabeth Bonner Zimmerman