

# The Provident FRIEND

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

April 19, 2018

## **FCNL Local Advocacy Team Update: Your Support is Needed**

from Dede Carlsten for the Providence FCNL Advocacy Team

Providence Friends Meeting has entered into a very active role with FCNL (Friends Committee on National Legislation) this past year. Some of our members and attenders have formed one of FCNL's many Advocacy Teams, which work to achieve legislative priorities on a local level in communities throughout the country. We have been lobbying our Senators and Congressional Representatives in Washington and at their offices in Rhode Island, with a special focus on preventing nuclear war and reducing the tensions that might contribute to it. This is important work. In order for us to be an effective presence at our legislators' offices, we need the help and support of additional meeting participants willing to make phone calls, write post cards and letters, and make visits. Those interested in taking part in these activities should contact [Dede Carlsten](#).

PMM members and attenders were active participants in helping to select FCNL's top priorities for the next congressional session. (A report on those selections appears below.) Our youngest Friends also considered the issues, often discussing them with their families before choosing where to place their three dots. This feedback has been forwarded to FCNL for consideration. Next November, FCNL will meet in Washington, DC to determine its legislative priorities based on input from our meeting, as well as from meetings across the country. Friends are invited to attend this event.

Once the legislative priorities are chosen, FCNL's Advocacy Teams all over the country lobby their particular state's Congressmen and Senators, both at their state offices and in Washington. We need adults and children to participate in any manner that you are able: for example, writing postcards, writing letters to the editor, visiting our Congressional delegates when they are in RI, or, if you should happen to go on a trip to Washington, plan a visit to RI's Congressional offices there. We would be glad to help people with any of these activities (or planning for lobbying travel) after meeting or during coffee hour on any First Day.

## CALENDAR

### **Wednesday, April 18**

**7 pm**, Adult Religious Education Committee presents a talk by Sas Carey on her work to support and preserve traditional Mongolian nomadic traditions, Providence Meetinghouse

### **Friday, April 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!

### **Sunday, April 22**

PMM Expansion Groundbreaking Celebration  
Bring a salad or side to share

### **Sunday, May 6**

**11:15 am**, PMM Monthly Potluck, Providence Meetinghouse

### **Wednesday, May 10**

3:30-5:30 pm, Youth Climate Justice Conference  
University of Rhode Island  
80 Washington St., Providence  
[Click here to register](#)

### **Sunday, May 13**

12 pm, PMM Business Meeting, Providence Meetinghouse

\* community arts/general interest events

**Breaking Ground on April 22**

PMM will be marking an important new chapter this Sunday, April 22nd, as we break ground for our new building expansion. After the rise of meeting we'll set shovels in the ground, our First Day Schoolers will bury a time capsule, and we'll have a festive potluck to celebrate the occasion. Please bring a salad of some kind, a shovel if you've got one, and contributions for the children's time capsule if you've got some ideas for 2018 memorabilia.

**Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship  
with a Concern for Business  
8th of 4th Month, 2018  
Minutes**

1. We gathered at 12:00 noon at the Providence meetinghouse, with 26 present. To open the worship, the clerk read the following queries from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice*:

Care for the Meeting Community

Are love and unity maintained among us? When conflicts exist, are they faced with patience, forbearance, and openness to healing? Are avenues for exploring differences kept open? To what extent does our Meeting ignore differences in order to avoid possible conflicts?

Is the Meeting a safe, loving place? When we become aware of someone's need, do we offer assistance? Are the meetinghouse and the Meeting property physically accessible to all?

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

When a member's conduct or manner of living gives cause for concern, how does the Meeting respond?

How does our Meeting keep in touch with all its members?

**2. Announcements**

Groundbreaking for the Providence meetinghouse addition will be held at the rise of meeting for worship on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of this month.

At Saylesville meetinghouse on the 21<sup>st</sup> of this month, Hearthside in Lincoln (with our cooperation) is holding a Quaker-style marriage recommitment ceremony, open to the public. All are invited; an admission fee will be charged, to benefit the meeting.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of 7<sup>th</sup> month, we will be hosting at Saylesville a family reunion of the Meader family, who were owners of Hearthside during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and active members of the meeting. Some additional volunteers will be needed.

**3. Correspondence.** We have received a thank you note from Woolman Hill for our contributions

to their work, and an invitation to visit.

4. For the Peace and Social Action Committee, Dede Carlsten presented a proposal that Providence Monthly Meeting formally join the Rhode Island Coalition Against Gun Violence. It is a broad coalition aimed at common sense gun regulation in Rhode Island. Several meeting members have been active in the Coalition's work, and other faith communities including the RI Council of Churches are already members. We approve.

**5. Nominations.** The Nominating Committee presented a proposed list of committee service for the year beginning June 1, 2018. There are still several opportunities for service, including co-membership recorder, representative to RI Council of Churches, and representative to NEYM Nominating Committee, as well as on a number of committees. After some comments, the list was approved as presented.

**6. Saylesville meetinghouse.** Dan Lederer presented a report from the ad hoc Saylesville Meetinghouse Committee, summarizing its work over the past year (see 4<sup>th</sup> mo 2017, \_minute 8). The committee has consulted with a wide range of historical associations and other experts. It has considered a long list of options for use and oversight of the building. The committee has consulted with the town Fire Department and zoning officials, and has completed a number of safety tasks such as installing fire extinguishers and moving flammables. A new furnace, water heater, and stove have been installed, and the new fence has been completed.

The committee has explored the feasibility of a number of substantial changes, such as turning it over to a local historical society; none are interested in assuming that responsibility given the lack of a significant endowment. However, a number of opportunities have been identified for the meetinghouse to be included in historical events with partners in the area. The meeting's Program Committee is not willing to take oversight of these activities, but several Friends have come forward to work on some of them.

The ad hoc committee recommends the following:

Meeting will continue to maintain the building, which will require completing the suggestions by the fire marshal and carrying out needed repairs and maintenance to the building's exterior. The work will be supervised by Property Committee, which has access to sufficient funds for this purpose. Finance Committee will assume oversight of building usage and will maintain an accessible electronic calendar.

Any Friend wanting to use the building for Meeting for Worship or other events will first inform the clerk of Finance Committee of the intended use. The clerk of Finance Committee will base permission to use the building on guidelines to be developed by Finance Committee in consultation with Property Committee and Ministry and Counsel, these to be a modified version of guidelines already in place for use of the Providence meetinghouse. If there is any concern about the appropriateness of a request, Finance Committee will refer the matter to Ministry and Counsel. Regardless of whether there is collaboration with an outside group, the person coordinating a specific event will take full responsibility for opening and closing the building, will ensure that the building is in good condition before, during, and after the event, will be present during the event, and afterwards will report details of the event to Finance Committee including duration, staffing, attendance, and any proceeds.

After six months, Property Committee will report the condition of the building, and Finance Committee will report how the building has been used. At that time, based on the information

gathered over the previous six months, Finance Committee, in consultation with Property Committee, will make a further recommendation, which may be to continue the current practice detailed above for another specified period of time or may be to take some different action, including possibly closing, leasing, or selling the property.

Should this entire proposal be approved, the ad hoc committee considers its work completed and asks to be laid down.

The clerk expressed an awareness that a few Friends would prefer to deaccession the building immediately, and asked them to set that aside for now, because there clearly is not unity to proceed in that direction. The concern about both the condition of the building and the size and quality of worship there have been part of this meeting's life for many decades. He also noted that this recommendation does not envision discontinuing worship at Saylesville. It was noted that oversight over meeting for worship is under the care of Ministry and Counsel, which is looking at ways to improve that care. A concern was raised that six months may not be enough time for word to get out of the availability of the building for events; a year might be preferable. Handicapped accessibility could be improved. We were reminded that maintaining the status quo is a decision; "making a decision" does not necessarily mean making any particular decision. We are encouraged to look for ways to incorporate the Saylesville meetinghouse and its worship community in the life of the meeting.

With a change from six months to twelve months for the trial period, we approve the recommendations. We thank the ad hoc committee for its diligent work over the last year and lay it down.

**7. Budget.** For the Finance Committee, Dan Lederer presented a revised budget proposal for the fiscal year beginning June 1, 2018. As in the proposal presented last month, operating expenses including the expanded meetinghouse are expected to increase about 9%, while income from reserve funds is expected to shrink by about \$12,000 due to money being expended on the building expansion. The committee did not feel comfortable simply adding the resulting deficit to the expected contributions from members, but instead limited that increase to under 20%. The deficit has been addressed by reducing (hopefully temporarily) our donations to NEYM and to outside groups, and eliminating our voluntary donations to the town of Lincoln and the city of Providence. The Finance Committee acknowledges that these cuts are painful, but is recommending them as the most prudent way forward.

We are reminded that each of us needs to consider our appropriate participation in the meeting's financial life. The Finance Committee could be more forthright in approaching individual members, as has been done more diligently for fundraising for the building expansion. Friends have different perceptions on how much should be set aside for long-term maintenance reserves for the Providence meetinghouse; the Finance Committee has brought what it considers a prudent figure, neither overly aggressive nor overly frugal.

We approve the budget as proposed.

**8. Building expansion.** It was reported that the contract with the contractor for the building expansion has been finalized and is expected to be forwarded to New England Yearly Meeting for its approval, as owner of the underlying land.

**9. FCNL.** Dede Carlsten reported on this meeting's participation in the priorities setting process for the Friends Committee on National Legislation. Our meeting's input will be incorporated along

with that of meetings and churches all over the country in formulating FCNL's priorities for the 2019-20 Congressional session. Using a suggestion from an FCNL conference call, the ad hoc committee solicited ideas from the entire meeting, and then provided opportunities for Friends to indicate their preferences with orange sticky dots. A total of 87 Friends, including children, participated in this discernment. Dede read the top seven priorities; the list as submitted to FCNL will be published in the newsletter.

10. We closed at 2:15 pm with a brief period of grateful silence, intending to meet next on the 13<sup>th</sup> of 5<sup>th</sup> month at the Saylesville meetinghouse.

Mike Hirtle, clerk

Elizabeth Cazden, recording clerk

## Report to FCNL on Providence Monthly Meeting's Legislative Priorities

by Providence FCNL Advocacy Team

**BACKGROUND:** Every two years, the Friends Committee on National Legislation invites Quaker meetings and churches throughout the United States to participate in setting FCNL's legislative priorities for the next biennial session of Congress. A committee of Friends will collate these local meeting priorities and present a draft for approval to the FCNL General Committee in November 2018, to guide FCNL's work in 2019-2020. The General Committee is made up of Friends appointed by yearly meetings, plus some additional Friends named at large. Providence member Betsy Cazden is currently one of the representatives from New England Yearly Meeting to the FCNL General Committee.

**HOW WE DID THIS:** Meetings are free to decide how to discern their top priorities. This year, we followed a suggestion from another meeting. We put up large paper and for several weeks invited people to free-write their priorities. A small committee combined and refined those into a list. Then for several more weeks, Friends (including the First Day School children) were invited/encouraged to take three sticky dots and vote for their top priorities. Many Friends, including parents and children, were excited about being engaged in this process. By our count, a total of 87 people put 261 orange dots on the lists! The results of the tally were sent to FCNL, and we have reported them to meeting for business.

### **PROVIDENCE MEETING'S PRIORITIES (in order by number of dots)**

1. Universal health care for all; reduce cost of health care; health care for children (46 votes)
2. Address global warming and transition to renewable energy (including electric cars) (34)
3. Spend less on the military, more on constructive things such as environment, global warming, education, health care, infrastructure, etc. (31)
4. Sensible gun regulation (background checks, ban semi-automatics & large magazines, CDC research) (22)

5. Nuclear weapons: Protocol requiring multi-person approval for use; restore Congressional duty on declaring war (22)
6. Preserve/protect lakes, rivers, aquifers, oceans. Protect clean water and air (22)
7. Police accountability (18)

Other issues that were mentioned but got fewer votes: Prison reform and bail abuse (13), equitable funding and guarantee of education for all; universal preK and a system beyond high school (12); comprehensive immigration reform and DACA (10); day care and parental leave (9); establish a department of peace (5); improve the skillset of and empower the diplomatic corps (4); racial equity (3); end the international arms trade (1).

FCNL's work depends on Friends throughout the country engaging with our elected officials on issues we care about. We hope that whatever issues you most care about, you will get involved in writing letters, calling, or visiting our Congressional delegation.

**Calling Quaker Youth: FREE Conference on Youth and Climate Justice, May 10, URI**  
with contributions from Eugenia Marks

Friends young and old may be interested in an upcoming conference on youth and climate justice, hosted by Interfaith Power and Light and facilitated by Peter Nightingale (well known to many Providence Friends) and environmental law professor Mary Christina Wood. The after-school conference takes place from 3:30-5:30 on the URI campus in Providence (80 Washington St., Providence, 02903). The event "is guaranteed to empower youth, students and young adults to create their climate future." Among the topics addressed will be a groundbreaking lawsuit in which 21 young plaintiffs argue that the federal government has violated their constitutional rights to life, liberty, and property, and has failed in its duty to protect air, land, and water. (For more on this case, please see [www.ourchildrenstrust.org](http://www.ourchildrenstrust.org)).

The effects of climate change are already apparent in our everyday lives. Rising temperatures in Narragansett Bay are leading to decreasing populations of seafood and marine life and enabling the spread of invasive species. Rising sea levels threaten coastal communities. An article in this week's *Science News* ranks the risk of death from heat as significantly greater than any other natural disaster -- including lightning, tornadoes, floods, and hurricanes.

Our children need more than messages of doom and gloom. They (and we) need tools, strategies, support, and a sense of agency. That's what this May 10 conference is about. So let's act as though our lives depend on our action. They do.  
To register kids and families for this free conference and for more information, please click [here](#).

**Seth Kolker's Central Falls Students Return to Washington, DC to Change the World**

On April 16, students from Central Falls, RI set out for Washington, DC to learn how to lobby their leaders and take an active role in shaping the future. Their teacher, PMM attendee Seth Kolker, created an after-school program called "How to Change the World," an experience that built on the students' first trip to DC for the Women's March in 2017. This year, Central Falls high school



students have been participating in an after-school program teaching them leadership and advocacy skills. They raised over \$11,000 for their trip through a GoFundMe campaign and public presentations. During their week in Washington, students are staying with Arlington-area host families and spending their days meeting with members of Congress, activists, and lobbyists, touring universities, and taking in the sights of the nation's capitol. Many thanks to all who supported Seth and his students in this endeavor!

## Use of the Saylesville Meetinghouse

From Dan Lederer for Finance Committee

As noted in the minutes elsewhere in this issue, on April 8 Meeting for Business approved a new procedure for scheduling and organizing events taking place at the Saylesville meetinghouse as follows:

*Finance Committee will assume oversight of building usage and will maintain an accessible electronic calendar. Any Friend wanting to use the building for Meeting for Worship or other events will first inform the clerk of Finance Committee of the intended use. The clerk of Finance Committee will base permission to use the building on guidelines to be developed by Finance Committee in consultation with Property Committee and Ministry and Counsel, these to be a modified version of guidelines already in place for use of the Providence meetinghouse. Activities will need to conform to the limitations of our Church Mutual insurance policy. If there is any concern about the appropriateness of a request, Finance Committee will refer the matter to Ministry and Counsel. Regardless of whether there is collaboration with an outside group, the person coordinating a specific event will take full responsibility for opening and closing the building, will ensure that the building is in good condition before, during, and after the event, will be present during the event, and afterwards will report details of the event to Finance Committee including duration, staffing, attendance, and any proceeds.*

What this means is that, in the absence of a preparative meeting at Saylesville, Finance Committee will be responsible for screening, scheduling, and documenting all events taking place at the meetinghouse, so Friends will need to contact the clerk of Finance Committee, Dan Lederer, in advance of any specific event, including Meeting for Worship. Dan can be reached by email ([dllederer1@verizon.net](mailto:dllederer1@verizon.net)) or telephone (401-831-0243). A calendar will be accessible at [saylesvillemeetinghouse@gmail.com](mailto:saylesvillemeetinghouse@gmail.com) but viewing it requires a password. Call Dan for the password or any questions you may have.

## Providence Monthly Meeting Contact List

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**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

**The Provident FRIEND**

Newsletter of

Providence Monthly Meeting of the  
Religious Society of Friends

99 Morris Avenue

Providence, RI 02906