

The Provident FRIEND

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

May 25, 2018

GROUNDBREAKING!

from Rebecca Leuchak

At the rise of meeting on April 22, our community gathered to celebrate the official start of a project that has been many years in the making: the long-awaited expansion of the Providence Friends Meetinghouse.

Festivities began in the meeting room after announcements: Bill Munroe and Rebecca Leuchak led us in song, Mike Hirtle shared Jesus' Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders (Matthew 7:24–27), and Bruce Carlsten was pleased to inform us all that our house, like our faith, will be built firmly upon rock and not upon sand. Let the wind and rain come—it shall not fall. David Bourns read us Julie Cadwallader-Staub's poem "Blackbirds," a meditation on the miracle of unity (see the full text of the poem below). After another song together, we made our way outside to the planned building site along the south wall.

The day was full of auspicious signs: the weather was perfect, those in attendance fit perfectly, shoulder-to-shoulder, along the periphery of the new addition, and the children's enthusiasm was infectious. When it came time to dig, our First Day Schoolers took center-stage with their donated plastic shovels (courtesy of Harry Adler of Adler's Hardware) and hard-hats (lent by our contractors) and led us in breaking ground. They and their teachers had been preparing for this celebration for weeks, discussing what the meeting's building expansion meant for them, creating a poster to inspire participation in fundraising, and assembling a time capsule full of PMM mementos from 2018. The children contributed photos, drawings of special people and belongings, and letters to future selves, along with a flash drive containing information on meeting events, ideas, lessons, and other memorabilia from our 2018 First Day School.

After the groundbreaking, the children buried their time capsule in a large planter and planted over it a few pansies and some butterfly-friendly seeds. The planter will live on the back patio for the summer, and we plan to move it near the new wing once it is completed in the fall. FDS children will retrieve the time capsule in five years, when many of them will be in middle and high school. We look forward to documenting their growth and the development of our meeting again in April 2023. We ended our time together with a fine potluck lunch, topped off by generous helpings of desserts specially decorated for the occasion.

Many hands and hearts brought us to this day, and many more will be needed as we proceed with the project. We are grateful to all who have helped bring this project to life, especially to Bruce Carlsten and the Building Expansion Committee. But truly this joyful work has been the result of many enthusiastic F/friends! (Photo below is courtesy of Laura Landen.)

CALENDAR

Saturday, June 2

10:00 am - 4:00 pm, NEYM

Workshop: Supporting Ministry and Ministers

Mount Toby Friends Meeting

140 Long Plain Rd, Leverett, MA 01054

[Click here for more information or to register](#)

Sunday, June 3

11:15 am, PMM Monthly

Potluck, Providence

Meetinghouse

Sunday, June 10

12 pm, PMM Business Meeting,

Saylesville Meetinghouse

Saturday, June 16

10 am - noon, Saylesville

Meetinghouse Bookswap

Please note there will be NO scheduled cookie fellowship with Muslim friends during May, as they fast during the holy month of Ramadan.

Friday, August 31 - Monday, September 3

Art Camp 2018

Quaker camp for adult artists of all media

Friends Camp, South China, Maine

[Click here for more information or to register](#)

* community arts/general interest events



Announcing a Matching Grant for PMM Expansion

from Rebecca Leuchak for the Building Expansion Fundraising Sub-Committee

A group of donors has come forward to offer a matching grant of up to \$15,000 for the meetinghouse expansion project. That means that **when you donate now, a contribution of equal value comes from this source - doubling the impact of your giving.** Now is a great time to give if you haven't done so yet, and a great time to give a little bit more if you can. We'd really like to raise all \$15,000 needed to max out our challenge grant, and every donation helps! Matched gifts may be made from now until December 1 by sending a check to Peter Swaszek, Treasurer, [57 Brayton Street, East Greenwich, RI 02818](#), or by dropping a check into the donations box at the meetinghouse. **Please make sure to indicate "Building Fund" in the memo line.** Friends will be updated on the status of this endeavor as we move forward. In advance of your gift, thank you!

Conanicut Friends Meeting Resumes Worship on Jamestown

from Marcie Lindsay

Conanicut Friends Meeting resumed its summer worship services beginning on Sunday May 6 at 10:30 am at the old 1786 Friends Meetinghouse on Weeden Lane. We welcome visitors! Last fall the meetinghouse was graced with a partial reshingling, and this spring, the entire trim was refurbished and repainted. The Jamestown Historical Society maintains a yearly maintenance program with the help of CFM members that keeps the meetinghouse welcoming for all. Besides weekly worship services, the Meetinghouse will also be open in conjunction with Jamestown Historical Society on **Saturday, June 23** for the opening of the JHS properties on the Island and **Saturday, July 21 from 11-3** in honor of Windmill Day. In the fall, the Meetinghouse is also open in conjunction with the national Smithsonian Museum day on **Saturday September 22.**

Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business 13th of 5th Month, 2018 - Minutes

1. We gathered at 12:10 pm at the Saylesville meetinghouse, with 12 present. The clerk read the following queries on education from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's *Faith & Practice*:

What is our Meeting's role in the life and support of Friends' education? If supporting or maintaining a Friends school, have we developed an appropriate relationship of Meeting and school? What is our role in the spiritual life of the school and its maintenance of Friends' principles?

What does our Meeting do to support education in the wider community?

What help do we provide for the children and adults in our Meeting to pursue the education they seek, whether academic, technical, or vocational? Do we make provision for children in our Meeting to attend a Friends school?

2. Announcements

A four-day artist camp for adult Quakers or attenders is being offered at Friends Camp in South China, Maine starting on 31st of 8th month.

The NEYM Legacy Gift Committee is sponsoring a workshop, "Supporting Ministry and Ministers," on June 2 at Mt. Toby Meeting in Leverett, Massachusetts. This workshop will provide an opportunity to learn how meetings can support Friends in ministry and witness while also providing spiritual and financial accountability. See the NEYM website for details.

3. Correspondence

We received a message from Steven Lewis Simpson regarding his film *Neither Wolf Nor Dog*, which depicts the response of modern day Native Americans to the 1890 Wounded Knee massacre in South Dakota. It is currently showing at Cinemaworld in Lincoln.

4. **Business meeting location.** Ministry and Counsel is seeking guidance regarding whether to continue our practice of meeting for business four times a year at Saylesville. Ministry and Counsel was not able to unite on a recommendation, and seeks further guidance. Friends expressed a number of reasons to continue our current practice of meeting in Saylesville four times a year. We are aware that those who do not like meeting in Saylesville are likely to not be here today. We note that we never hold meeting for business at the Connanicut meetinghouse; perhaps that would also be worth considering. We are not clear to change our current practice.

5. **Finance matters.** Finance Committee is seeking guidance regarding their practice related to handling money withheld from Friends United Meeting over concerns about FUM's personnel policy. By way of explanation, Dan Lederer noted that this meeting has not been in unity to withhold its entire contribution for the portion of our donation to the New England YM budget that goes to Friends United Meeting (FUM). Instead, individual donors may request that Providence withhold the portion of their contributions that would otherwise support FUM through NEYM. (See 9th mo. 2017, minute 5.) The percentage of the Providence MM budget that goes to FUM through NEYM is 0.35% of each contribution. During the current fiscal year (ending the end of this month) the total amount so withheld has been \$40. As in past years, the Finance Committee recommends that the \$40 so withheld be donated to the African Great Lakes Initiative for its peacebuilding and reconciliation work. Friends approved, and requested further information about

the current status of FUM's personnel policy.

6. Building expansion. Bruce Carlsten reported on the progress of the Providence building expansion. The contractor has been waiting for the fully executed contract, before actually beginning to dig, and it should be in hand in a few days. The utility work will begin this week, with foundation digging to follow. A detailed work schedule is available. The projected completion date is the end of September.

7. Change of clerkship. We note that both of our clerks will complete their terms at the end of this month, and thank them for their service.

Mike Hirtle, clerk

Elizabeth Cazden, recording clerk

Announcing an Updated Listserve Email Address

The Communications Committee would like all to know that the Meeting Email List ("listserve") has changed from Yahoo to Google. In order to post a message to the group, send it to providence-friends-meeting@googlegroups.com. As before, the routine settings do not allow attachments. If your message requires an attachment, and you're sure about the reliability of the source, please confer with committee clerk Dan Lederer.

Furniture Items in Need of Good Homes

Property Committee is clearing out items in the Saylesville Meetinghouse, and there are some pieces of furniture—especially chairs and tables--that are available to Friends if they could use them. Some chairs need repairing. If you would like any of these items, or if you're interested in seeing photos, please contact Nina Berry or Bob Elliott at Property@providencefriends.org.

Updates from Junior Member Hannah Monroe

Hannah Monroe, junior member of our meeting, just completed a master's degree in critical sociology at Brock University in Ontario, Canada, and recently gave an interview at her local radio station. Listen to her talk about her work with the disability, mental health, and neuro-diversity collective OPIRG and learn more about her perspective on disability and gender studies - at http://www.cfbu.ca/aud/HM_OPIRG.mp3.

A Memorable Event at Saylesville

from the Saylesville Meetinghouse Working Group

On April 21, the Saylesville Friends Meetinghouse along Lincoln's Great Road hosted a marriage-vow-renewal ceremony, borrowing from Quaker tradition and staged in mid-nineteenth century period dress. The event was a collaboration between Providence Friends and Hearthside House as a concluding event for the museum's exhibit *Something Old, Something New: 150 Years of Wedding Fashions & Traditions*. As one of the oldest Quaker meeting houses in New England—and one that has been in continuous use as a place of worship since 1704—Saylesville Meetinghouse was an ideal setting for the throng of visitors in hoop skirts, bonnets, and elegant top hats. Kathy Hartley, director of the Hearthside House museum, noted that many of Hearthside's earliest families worshipped there, as well as some prominent early Rhode Islanders. A replica of a wedding certificate was on display, commemorating Anne Smith's marriage to Stephen Hopkins at Saylesville Meetinghouse on January 2, 1755. Anne Smith was the grandmother to Stephen Hopkins Smith, builder of Hearthside House, signer of the Declaration of Independence, and long-time governor of Rhode Island. He also worshipped in the meetinghouse and is buried in the cemetery.

The public "I Take Thee" event was a re-commitment of wedding vows by a couple who volunteer as docents at the museum, in observance of their 17th wedding anniversary. The ceremony was conducted as an 1860s-era wedding, and though it was not a Quaker meeting for worship, it borrowed some of Friends' practices. As background, Rebecca Leuchak provided a brief account of the history of the meetinghouse and an introduction to the traditions and process for a Quaker wedding ceremony. The couple declared their vows of love to each other in the presence of those gathered. After a period of silent reflection, guests were invited to share their thoughts, good wishes, and advice to the couple. Once everyone who wished to speak had done so, the couple signed a re-commitment certificate displayed on a table in the center of the room. At the close of the ceremony the certificate was moved outdoors for each guest to sign, and all enjoyed a brief reception on the lawn to congratulate the couple, share light refreshments, and enjoy the glorious weather.

Visitors were encouraged to learn more about the Saylesville Meetinghouse. Kathy Hartley put it this way: "Worship is held each Sunday at this Meetinghouse, and it is also open for viewing once a month. But few know that it even exists right in their own community. With an increasing amount of activity focused on bringing history to life along Great Road, the Friends have reached out to become part of these activities with Hearthside House as a way to showcase the rich history that this place of worship has had since the earliest days of Rhode Island." Some in attendance took the opportunity to stroll among the grave stones in the burial ground beside the meetinghouse. A few were moved to find the gravesites of long-gone ancestors who had once been active members of Saylesville Meeting, while others noted the resting places of many of Lincoln's earliest settlers, including the Arnolds.

For this collaboration with our Great Road neighbors, members of the Providence Monthly Meeting came together to prepare, spending considerable time cleaning up the Meetinghouse, restoring a more historical appearance to the interior, enlivening the exterior with spring flowers, baking cookies, and serving generally as hosts and guides to the many visitors who attended. Many thanks to all Friends who generously pitched in to make this happen, including Nina Berry, Bruce Downing, Ann and Bob Durant, Mike Hirtle, Rebecca Leuchak, Eugenia Marks, Sherri Provencal, Craig Schneider, Rebecca Smith, and Bob Watt.

A full-page feature on the event also appeared in The Valley Breeze. The full-page feature may be found by clicking [here](http://www.valleybreeze.com/2018-05-02/cumberland-lincoln-area/quaker-meeting-house-keeping-history-alive-lincoln#.WwggNy-ZPLY):

<http://www.valleybreeze.com/2018-05-02/cumberland-lincoln-area/quaker-meeting-house-keeping-history-alive-lincoln#.WwggNy-ZPLY>

Blackbirds

by Julie Cadwallader-Staub of South Burlington, VT

(Published by The Mennonite, November 3, 2009.

For more of Julie's poetry, please visit her website at <http://www.juliecpoetry.com>)

I am 52 years old, and have spent
truly the better part
of my life out-of-doors
but yesterday I heard a new sound above my head
a rustling, ruffling quietness in the spring air

and when I turned my face upward
I saw a flock of blackbirds
rounding a curve I didn't know was there
and the sound was simply all those wings
just feathers against air, against gravity
and such a beautiful winning
the whole flock taking a long, wide return
as if one body and one mind.

How do they do that?

Oh if we live only in human society
with cruelty and fear
its apathy and exhaustion
what a puny existence that would be

but instead we live and move and have our being
here, in this curving and soaring world
so that when, every now and then, mercy and tenderness
triumph in our lives
and when, even more rarely, we manage to unite
and move together
toward a common good,

we can think to ourselves:

ah yes, this is how it's meant to be.



Providence Monthly Meeting Contact List

Clerk: **Mike Hirtle** clerk@providencefriends.org
Assistant Presiding Clerk: **Rebecca Leuchak** assistclerk@providencefriends.org
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Archive: archivist@providencefriends.org

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(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 2nd & 4th 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

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99 Morris Avenue

Providence, RI 02906