

The Provident FRIEND

January 15, 2019

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

Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship
with a Concern for Business
13th of First Month, 2019

Minutes

Friends gathered at the Providence meetinghouse at noon, with 25 present. Presiding clerk Rebecca Leuchak began the period of silent worship by reading the following queries adapted from New England Yearly Meeting's *Interim Faith and Practice*:

Do Friends attend to what love requires of us? Do we enter into prayer and discernment in order to understand how to respond to the call?

Do Friends offer up our time, talents, energy, and resources for God's guidance in their use?

Are we ready to respond to any concern God may lay upon us, large or small?

Announcements.

At next our next regular first-day potluck, Sunday, February 3rd, we will have a discussion of the state of our society in preparation for the writing of that annual report.

A memorial service for Rickart ("Rick") Keller will be held on Saturday, January 26, at 2:00 PM at the Providence meetinghouse. Rick was a deeply loved, long-time member of our Meeting who served the community faithfully as our presiding clerk and on a number of Meeting committees over the years. His wife, Janet, also a dear former member of our community, invites all to come and celebrate Rick's life and memory. Please see Rebecca Leuchak for more information.

Peace and Social Action Committee informs us that, as a meeting community, we continue to support Camp Street Community Ministries' Food Pantry. Our food collection is also available to anyone who is in need. Please leave food, paper goods, and personal health and grooming items, which are not covered by "food stamps/SNAP", in the Apple Bag marked Camp Street on our foyer bench.

For **Ministry and Counsel Committee**, Bruce Shaw reported that Pierre Morenon and John Gaffney have been added to the committee to fill vacancies.

Committee Restructuring. At the November Meeting for Business, Friends approved a restructuring of several of our committees, including laying down the Funeral and Burial Grounds Committee and making the burial grounds the responsibility of Property Committee. However, the Ad Hoc Committee on Committee Restructuring met again to reconsider this arrangement, taking into account the facts that the care of our three burial grounds (Providence, Cumberland, and Saylesville) includes specific responsibilities to the deceased and their families,

CALENDAR

Wednesdays (Weekly)

12 pm, Mid-week Meeting for Worship
Brown University Chaplain's Suite
Page-Robinson Hall, 69 Brown Street
Room 409. Contact Bill Monroe
(william_monroe@brown.edu) for more
information.

Friday, January 18

1:30 pm, Fellowship with Muslim
Neighbors. Bring cookies to share, or
just come to share a smile and good
conversation! Masjid Al Kareem, 39
Haskins St., Providence

Saturday, January 19

Bookswap, Saylesville Meetinghouse

Friday, January 25 - Sunday, January

27 NEYM Junior Yearly Meeting
Retreat: Honesty. Wellesley, MA

Saturday, January 26, 2019

2:00 pm, Memorial Service for Rickart
("Rick") Keller
Providence Meetinghouse.

Sunday, January 27

11:30 am, after Meeting for Worship:
A Celebration of Committees

Sunday, February 3

11:15 am, PMM Monthly Potluck,
Providence Meetinghouse followed by
State of the Society discussion

Sunday, February 10

12 pm, PMM Business Meeting,
Providence Meetinghouse

and that the funding for the upkeep of the burial grounds is separate from that of Property Committee. The Restructuring Committee asks for Meeting's approval to have a Burial Grounds Committee that is appointed by Property Committee and reports to Property Committee but is a separate committee, similar to the relationship of Pastoral Care Committee to Ministry and Counsel. Friends approved.

Nominating Committee proposal. At the November Meeting for Business, Friends approved the creation of two new committees to oversee use of our meetinghouses. In order that this necessary oversight may be carried out between now and next June, Dan Lederer brought a proposal to appoint members to the new committees effective immediately. The names proposed were, for Providence Meetinghouse Management: Dan Lederer, Victoria Ekk, Eugenia Marks, Nina Berry, Bruce Carlsten, Peter Swaszek, and Bruce Shaw; and for Saylesville Meetinghouse Management: Bruce Downing, Paul Klinkman, Liberty Goodwin, Eugenia Marks, Rosanne Cedroni, Bob Watt, Rebecca Smith, Betsy Cazden, and Craig Schneider. Friends approved.

Nominating Committee Report. Ruth Bourns reported on the work of Nominating Committee. During late January and February, the committee will contact members and attenders to determine how each may be called and suited to serve the Meeting through committee membership. Many people volunteer, but Nominating also works to recruit Friends whom they find suited to particular tasks. We note that children are not excluded from committee membership. Except for Ministry and Counsel, which chooses its own members for six- year terms, all committee commitments will be for one year at a time, beginning in June. Rebecca Leuchak passed out a booklet with information about the Meeting's various committees and announced that there will be a committee fair after worship on the 27th of this month so that Friends may acquaint themselves with the possibilities. This information will also go out on the listserve.

Building Expansion Committee Report. Bruce Carlsten reported a great deal of progress, both interior and exterior. The new sections are substantially complete, and the older sections are returning to normal. All the bathrooms are usable, but the Nursery and First Day School are still sharing the room downstairs. Work remains to be done before the lift can be used, and we await the final inspections that will allow us to obtain a Certificate of Occupancy and begin using the new space. We hope to have the certificate by the end of this month. Friends received the report with gratitude.

In related discussion, it was clear that many Friends would find it helpful if there were written instructional information at the places in the meetinghouses where we need to know specific practical things. Relevant committees are asked to take this into consideration.

Quarterly Meeting news. A message was received from David Madden, recent clerk of our Quarterly Meeting. As of Tenth Month 2018, the name of the Quarter has been changed to "Southeast Quarterly Meeting." Since Worcester Monthly Meeting in Massachusetts is part of the Quarter, the former name, "Rhode Island – Smithfield Quarterly Meeting," was somewhat misleading; the new name is intended to remove the appearance of an exclusive focus on Rhode Island. David Madden, clerk, and Kathy Malin, recording clerk have both felt clear to lay down these positions after several years' service. Although replacements have not yet come forward, the plan is that each Monthly Meeting will take responsibility for leadership when it hosts Quarterly Meeting until such time as a new clerk and recording clerk are chosen. Quarterly meetings take place three times a year, in March, June, and October, rotating among the four monthly meetings (Providence, Smithfield, Westerly, and Worcester) in alphabetical order. The next meeting of the Southeast Quarter will take place at Westerly on Sunday, March 17th, at Westerly Friends Meeting, 57 Elm Street, Westerly. Meeting for worship begins at 10:30. Potluck lunch follows the rise of meeting and Quarterly meeting for business follows lunch. All in our Quarter are invited and encouraged to attend.

No further business appearing, we closed with a period of silent worship at 1:30 p.m., intending to meet next on

the 10th of Second month at noon at the Providence meetinghouse.

Rebecca Leuchak, presiding clerk

Rebecca Smith, recording clerk

Message from Nominating Committee

from Ruth Bourns, committee clerk

The Nominating Committee at Providence Monthly Meeting wishes to let the Meeting family know about some events in January designed to convey information about the Committees that operate within the Meeting.

Beginning January 13 you will be handed a packet of one page descriptions of the Meeting Committees along with pictures of the committee at work. In addition, on January 27 during coffee hour there will be a Nominating Committee Fair in the Social Hall. There will be tables with representatives of all Committees who can answer questions about the Committee and provide handouts. The Nominating Committee's hope is that these two activities will provide information and inspiration to help everyone find the Committee where they can make a contribution that will help to keep the Meeting "afloat" and alive with activity and spiritual growth.

In February the Nominating Committee will make calls to all members and attenders listed in the Meeting Directory. The Committee members will seek to ascertain on which committees members and attenders wish to serve for the year June 2019 - June 2020. Expect a call from a member of the Nominating Committee or a member of Ministry and Counsel early in February to discuss on which Committee you might want to channel your energies.

Approval has been given for changes in some previous Meeting Committees. The work of Marriage Clearness will be taken on by Ministry and Counsel. The work of Quaker Education Support will be taken on by Finance Committee, and the Meetinghouse Expansion Committee will be laid down because its work will be finished. A Burial Grounds Committee will be appointed by Property Committee and will report to Property Committee. There will be several new Committees. They will include a Membership Committee, a Fundraising and Development Committee, a Providence Meetinghouse Management Committee and possibly a similar Committee to oversee the use of the Saylesville Meetinghouse.

This mid-winter activity around the Nominating Committee's work can be an exciting time in the life of the Meeting. We look forward to input from all members and attenders.

Peace and Social Action Committee Announces Feb 11 Screening of a New Documentary: The Nuns, the Priests, and the Bombs

The film will be shown in the Metcalf Building's Friedman Auditorium, 190 Thayer Street, Providence, at 5:30 pm on Monday, February 11th. Following the film, Helen Young, the producer, and several others will serve on a panel discussion.

Helen Young, an Emmy award-winning broadcast journalist, was a staff writer and producer for CBS News and NBC News for twenty years. Her film follows two well-known cases of nonviolent protest against nuclear weapons: the July 2012 break-in at America's "Fort Knox of Uranium" by an 82-year old Catholic nun and two fellow peace activists; and the 2009 Plowshares action at a US naval base near

Seattle, WA. All five participants were given federal prison terms, and the documentary follows their trial, convictions and sentencing. In the film, the activists also talk about their motivation for trespassing and what they hoped to accomplish by their crimes. For those of us who have forgotten, or may never have known, the film also illustrates the impact of a nuclear weapon striking the northeast coast of the United States. Peace and Social Action Committee urges you to consider attending this important event on February 11th. Bring a friend!

Greetings from Beijing!

From Seth Kolker

After a successful cross-country road trip to deliver my girlfriend (Sarah)'s car to California, it's been an exciting few months in China. I'm grateful that Rebecca has asked me to share some of it with you! I'm also grateful to be spending the year on a Schwarzman Scholarship, a fully-funded Masters program in global public policy that is attached to Tsinghua University. The cohort is the program's biggest strength: 135 "Schwarzies" from 40 countries are packed together in one building that contains our dorms, classes, library, and dining hall - so it's virtually impossible to walk 50 meters without running into some sort of fascinating conversation.

Meanwhile, I've been confused and impressed and troubled by some of the dizzying information about how this country has changed and functions today, but it leaves us all nicely humble and curious to know more. Mandarin classes are intense, filled with tonal corrections and laughter at our many mistakes. The other day, I mixed up a fourth-tone "paidui" (to stand in line) with a first-tone "paidui" (party) and apparently said that because the subway station was crowded, I had to...party.

Getting this year to take a giant step back from my work at Central Falls High School has been challenging and productive, as I'd hoped. I do dearly miss my students, who are continuing the program on How to Change the World that so many of you supported last year. It's also been an adjustment to leave a more grounded community to be a student in a dorm again; homesickness was hardest during Christmas. At the same time, getting exposure to everything from Confucianism, to South Africa's land reform debates, to Egyptian farming cooperatives, has been an amazing education. It's helped me question and clarify what I'd like to do with my life and why, with a growing internal consensus that I want to focus it on helping transform America's educational system.

Chinese New Year is approaching and so we have a break from classes! I'll be in Rhode Island for a few days and plan to attend Meeting on Sunday, Jan 27 - so I'll look forward to seeing you all there.

Clerk's Corner: On the Farm

From Rebecca Leuchak, presiding clerk

I was born in the era of J.F.K. on a farm in rural Pennsylvania. My father was a farmer just as his parents were. I spent my childhood in the garden doing the tasks that needed doing – weeding, planting, picking crops. I learned early that sometimes things worked out. Rain was enough and sun shone and perhaps the ground hogs didn't mow down the entire row of bean seedlings or peas. These were seasons of plenty. Summers when the garden was amazingly lush and fruitful. But I also knew that for all the work and the hopes, there were inevitably the summers when it was too dry, or too wet, too cold or too hot, too much sun, or not enough. Sometimes the weeds or the wildlife devastated the garden. No matter

what, the work was there to be done. That was the job. Every single year. And a greatly satisfying job it was.

Growing things is still as much a part of my life as it was then. Living in the city now, my gardens are not on my own land. I create gardens where ever I can find the available space to make them – in my small backyard, in several community plots within blocks of my house, and at the home of a friend who has a patch with good south facing exposure. I garden differently now than when I worked alongside my father and his father. My priority now is more on the preparation of the garden beds, amending the soil with compost. I plant. I water. I weed. And all of my plots are surrounded by really good fences to keep out the hungry ground hogs and rabbits. But even though these precautions minimize some of the risk, they still do not ensure always a great yield, for no matter what I put in to the project, there are sometimes conditions less favorable, beyond my control, leading to outcomes less than desired. Yet I continue to labor and gain much joy from the work. And lo and behold, sometimes there is the thrill of a really fine crop!

Gardening is a lesson in hope and the will to persevere no matter what. And so I think of our meeting community as a kind of spiritual garden, one that requires the same commitment to the work that is needed for my vegetables to flourish. Instead of farming alone, within our Friends Meeting we are growing this garden of ours together. Our commitment to this spiritual work must be steadfast, our efforts well-grounded in the shared hope that there will be fruit, and the same shared, patient resolve to go the distance through periods of prospering spiritual flowering and times of less spiritual abundance. Our individual and collective growth in faith must be patiently nourished, enriched by resources of spiritual literature, personal forms of spiritual practice, and engagement with each other and with the wider world in the Light. I am convinced that there will be growth of the Spirit in all of us as individuals and as a body if we persevere in nurturing the soil of our souls, sowing the seed, tending the new growth and the ripening fruit.

Our “do it yourself” Quaker tradition of working together through committees is the framework within which we accomplish our gardening. And just as I gained great pleasure from being out in my father’s garden as a child, and now love to work in the plots of my several city gardens, so too I find joy in the gardening work at our Meeting. Working with others in committees over the twenty-five years that my husband and I have been members of Providence Friends Meeting has given me great joy!

I realize that in this work collectively we face sometimes unpredictable outcomes. Sometimes the fruits of our labor have not been as hoped or expected. Yet, careful sowing and tending over the long season of our individual and collective spiritual growth is the key. We will at times be astonished by the richness of the harvest. Other times we will feel that the fruits are less than we expected. In all seasons we need to hold on to the hope and the commitment that our labors are for the good, for the flourishing of our spiritual life. This is why I toil, and why I am so eager to call others to the work.

As our Nominating Committee begins its discernment toward forming the Meeting’s committees, I urge you to join me in the work! Engage in a conversation with members of the Nominating Committee, find a role to play, roll up your sleeves, lend a hand. Let’s create this garden together. Remembering that famous aphorism spoken by J.F.K. that so marked me as a child. You know the saying from decades ago: “Ask not” I am asking you to participate, to build, to grow, to nurture our Friends community - with thanks for all that you already are doing each day to bear witness! Friends, we are an amazing spiritual community! Together we are doing this! It is holy and joyous work to garden together in the Spirit!



Above: Meeting Member Bill Harley performing at Moses Brown School on January 12 in a benefit for the Rhode Island Community Food Bank (photo courtesy of Erin X. Smithers)

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>

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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 - 10-11:30 am 2nd & 4th Wed's - Saylesville

Wednesday - Noon-12:45 pm Brown University in
Page-Robinson Hall, Room 409

Potluck, Providence - each First Sunday

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

Meeting for Business

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

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Religious Society of Friends

99 Morris Avenue

Providence, RI 02906