

The Provident FRIEND

February 12, 2019

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

Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business 10th of Second Month, 2019 Minutes

Friends gathered at the Providence meetinghouse at noon with 19 present. Presiding clerk Rebecca Leuchak began the period of silent worship by reading these queries, taken from London Yearly Meeting's *Quaker Faith and Practice* (5th edition on-line), 2013, Chapter 1.02: "Advices and Queries" – numbers 5 and 7 (<https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/chapter/1/>):

As you learn from others, can you in turn give freely from what you have gained?
Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come?
Do you approach new ideas with discernment?

The clerk then read the following statement:

"Honoring those who came before us: We acknowledge that we are here upon the traditional land of the Narraganset People, stewards of this place for thousands of years, and that in 1638 Canonicus and Miantonomi, the two chief sachems of the Narragansett entered into an agreement through the Deed of Providence with Roger Williams to cede him this territory, its boundaries from the falls of Pawtucket in the north to the falls of Pawtuxet in the south, and from the Seekonk River in the east to the Neutaconkanut Hill in the west.

Upon this land Roger Williams commenced a settlement to be known as Providence.

As we gather for our monthly meeting for business let us acknowledge these traditional native inhabitants of this land, this in itself a small gesture but with hopes that we may take further steps toward reconciliation and right relationship."

The following announcements were read:

- **The documentary film "The Nuns, The Priests, and The Bombs"** will be screened on Monday Feb 11, at 5:30 PM in the Friedman Auditorium, Metcalf Building, 190 Thayer Street, Brown War Watch will be facilitating a panel discussion following.
- **The Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting meets all day at Providence Meetinghouse on Saturday Feb 23.** Permanent Board meetings are open and all are welcome. Hospitality will be needed for breakfast and lunch. See Rebecca Leuchak for more information.
- **Racism/White Privilege Reading Group - Next reading-focused discussion is Sunday, February 24 at 8:30 a.m. in Providence Meetinghouse. The reading is the book by Debby Irving, *Waking Up White, and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Elephant Room Press, 2014). Discussion will cover the first half of the book – through chapter 23 ("Diversity Training"), that is, to page 130. The book is available on Amazon in paperback or for kindle, and there are used copies**

CALENDAR

Saturday, February 16

Bookswap, Saylesville Meetinghouse

Saturday, February 23

NEYM Permanent Board meets all day at the Providence meetinghouse. All are welcome.

Sunday, February 24

8:30 am, Racism/White Privilege Reading Group on Debby Irving's *Waking Up White, and finding Myself in the Story of Race*. See Bill Monroe for more details.

Friday, March 1, through Sunday, March 3

NEYM Young Friends Retreat at the Providence Meetinghouse

Sunday, March 3

11:15 am, PMM Monthly Potluck, Providence Meetinghouse

Sunday, March 10

12 pm, PMM Business Meeting, Providence Meetinghouse

Sunday, March 17

Southeast Quarterly Meeting at Westerly Monthly Meeting. Meeting for Worship there starts at 10:30 am. All in our Quarter are welcome. Childcare is provided.

Wednesdays (Weekly)

12 pm, Mid-week Meeting for Worship Brown University Chaplain's Suite Page-Robinson Hall, 69 Brown Street Room 409

available there as well.

- **Providence Meeting is hosting a New England Yearly Meeting Young Friends Retreat on March 1, 2, and 3.** Quaker high-schoolers from all over New England will spend the weekend in service projects locally. They will be worshipping with us on that first Sunday in March.
 - **Southeast Quarterly Meeting will be held at Westerly, RI Monthly Meeting on March 17th after meeting for worship which begins at 10:30 a.m.** Friends Committee on National Legislation will be presenting a program followed by the Quarter's meeting for business. All in our Quarter are welcome and encouraged to attend. Childcare is provided.
 - **A talk by Debby Irving** author of *Waking Up White* - March 31st, 2019, 1 pm at First Unitarian Church of Worcester, 90 Main Street. This event is co-sponsored by the First Unitarian Church of Worcester and the Worcester Friends Meeting (Quakers) at 901 Pleasant Street, Worcester, with financial support from the Legacy Gift Fund of the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends." Correspondence
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Peace and Social Action proposal: Peace and Social Action brought a proposal that Providence Meeting consider a formal expression of support for and request for membership in the Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty. We ask P&SA to bring us more information for us to consider at a future Meeting for Business.

Burial Grounds Committee proposal: In Matt Hackman's absence, Nina Berry brought a request to spend \$16,000.000 to complete the work of fencing the perimeter of the Saylesville burial grounds by installing black chain-link fence around the rear and side boundaries. The work will include a comprehensive updated survey of the entire property (burial grounds, and meetinghouse grounds) to ensure that the fence follows the property lines correctly, clearing brush along the fence lines, removal of some old broken fence, and purchase and installation of new fence. This sum is an addition to the burial ground budget. Friends approved.

Building Expansion Committee report: Bruce Carlsten reported the completion of several more steps toward occupation of our new space, including many successful inspections. The final inspections by the Fire Marshall and Building Inspector are scheduled for two days from now, following which we anticipate finally receiving a certificate of occupancy. Some work will still remain to be finished, particularly the landscaping which must wait for spring, and funds will be held back until this is done. Bruce requested that Meeting increase the authorized total for this project by up to \$17,000 from the initially approved amount of \$657,000 to allow for prompt payment of invoices. This could increase the total to \$674,000. Friends approved.

Communications Committee report: Dan Lederer reported on the means by which the Communications Committee fulfill its mission to enhance communication both within the Meeting community and between that community and the wider world. These include our internal e-mail list, network project, and directory, the *Provident Friend* newsletter, the Meeting handbook and Meeting website, and the brochures stocked in the foyer. Communication Committee also maintains the Meeting Archives and has undertaken an oral history project. Items for the newsletter need to go to the editor no later than the Meeting for Business of each month; the address is providentfriend@providentfriends.org. Any Friends not yet included in the e-mail list or directory, or not receiving the newsletter, are advised to contact Dan at dlederer1@verizon.net.

No further business appearing, we closed with a period of silent worship at 1:30 p.m., intending to meet next on the Tenth of Third month at noon at the Providence meetinghouse.

Rebecca Leuchak, presiding clerk
Rebecca Smith, recording clerk

NEYM Young Friends Retreat

Young Friends from all corners of New England will be converging on our Providence Friends Meetinghouse for their March Young Friends Retreat from Friday evening, March 1 to Sunday noon, March 3. Their theme for this retreat is “ACTION” and they will be working out in our local community on service projects while they are in Providence. If you don’t already know about our New England Yearly Meeting’s wonderful retreat programs, see the NEYM web-site: <https://neym.org/organization/youth-programs>

There are retreats for all ages:

Junior Yearly Meeting – children in second through sixth grades

Junior High Yearly Meeting – children in seventh and eighth grades

Young Friends Yearly Meeting – for high school aged youth

Young Adult Friends Yearly Meeting – typically for those of ages 18 to 35

For the retreat at our Meetinghouse on the first weekend in March, all high school age youth are welcome and encouraged to attend! There is more info on what to expect on the FAQ page of the Youth Programs section of the NEYM web-site: <https://neym.org/young-friends/frequently-asked-questions-about-young-friends-retreats>. Some of that info is as follows:

Each retreat has its own theme or topic, chosen by the Young Friends at Yearly Meeting in August. Most retreats start at 7:00-8:00 p.m. on Friday night and end around noon on Sunday. On the first night we play games, get to know each other a bit, and meet in small groups called "affinity groups." The next morning there is singing, worship, and a program about the retreat theme. After lunch there is a large chunk of free time for games, napping, reading, and hanging out. Late afternoon, there are usually interest groups—a chance to explore some aspect of the theme in greater depth. After dinner, there is an evening program of full group activities, and affinity groups meet again. Sunday morning is busy with cleaning up the meeting house, doing some final closing and evaluation as a group, and worshiping with the host Meeting.

The fee structure is a version of the Pay-As-Led approach that New England Quakers adopted for Sessions several years ago. It’s about trust and abundance. Families can pay less or more depending on their budgets—from giving more to support others to zero dollars—no questions asked. For a typical weekend retreat, we offer these guidelines: \$45 is great if budgets are tight, \$70 covers food and supply expenses, \$150 covers all related costs. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

Young Friends is part of the youth programs of New England Yearly Meeting and is overseen by Youth Ministries Committee. Young Friends has its own Ministry & Counsel that helps guide the group, helps people follow the commitments, and looks after the spiritual life of the group. Young Friends also has a coordinator, Nia Thomas, who organizes the retreats, and checks in with Young Friends between retreats. To sign up, fill out the short registration form found at neym.org/young-friends/register. Registration typically opens about a month before a given retreat. If you have any questions about registration, contact Nia Thomas, nia@neym.org.

State of Society Report Underway

Every year in February, our meeting produces a State of Society report. According to NEYM, the function of this exercise is to facilitate “a searching self-examination by the meeting and its members of their spiritual strengths and weaknesses and of the efforts made to foster growth in the spiritual life.” (1985 New England Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice, p. 244). At our meeting potluck on February 3, members and attenders discussed the following queries:

1. What are we grateful for? What gifts of grace have we experienced in the life of our meeting community through the past year?
2. How is our meeting being led to do the work of the Spirit in the world? Where could we, as a meeting, be more open to learning, growing, and serving one another both in our meeting and in the wider community?
3. Is our Meeting a community where we experience a depth of Divine Presence and transforming power?

What unmet hungers do we feel in our community life? How is our meeting being led to do the work of the Spirit in the world? Where could we, as a meeting, be more open to learning, growing, and serving one another both in our meeting and in the wider community?

4. How have we deepened our connection to the testimonies that guide our faith? Peace and Social Witness? Environmental Stewardship? Simplicity? Equality? Integrity? Stewardship of Resources?
5. Is our Meeting community a crucible for spiritual pilgrims, an intersection of the journey inward/journey outward? Does this spiritual community offer each of us the opportunity to explore and share who we are beneath our public personae?
6. In what ways has our Meeting recognized, developed, and nurtured the gifts of our members and attenders of all ages? What have we been doing to invite new attenders and encourage continued participation?

In the coming weeks, Ministry & Counsel committee will be drafting a report based on the community's responses to these queries. If you were not able to attend the discussion on Feb. 3 but wish to add your thoughts, or if you've had further insights since then, please email any additional responses to Jen McFadden at jenniferlamm@gmail.com. All feedback is gratefully received; the report does not identify individual contributors but attempts to compile the insights of all in order to provide an accurate account of the state of our society.

News from the Providence FCNL Advocacy Team from Nancy Houston

In the summer of 2017, some members of the PMM invited the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) to hold a workshop aimed at getting a Providence based advocacy team off the ground. A team had already been formed in Westerly earlier in the year. Through the workshop, we found there was enough interest for FCNL to hold trainings that September, and our advocacy team was launched. We are now one of at least 97 advocacy teams in 38 states across the country. More teams are being formed all the time, and the program has only been in place for a couple of years. Teams consist of both Friends and like-minded people.

All the advocacy teams lobby for the same topic, which changes each year, in an effort to magnify our impact. Over the time our team has been in existence we have lobbied to stop further increases to the defense budget (2017), to prevent nuclear (or any) war with North Korea (2018), and now to build Congressional support for a repeal of the 2001 and 2002 Authorizations for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) passed in the wake of 9/11. Over 17-plus years and three successive presidencies, these authorizations have been stretched to become a virtual blank check for endless war around the globe without Congressional approval or oversight.

At the core of FCNL's philosophy is that our advocacy must be based upon mutual respect, and that we are in it for the long term. Therefore we are encouraged to develop respectful relationships with our members of Congress and their staff.

We meet monthly, usually on the first Friday following the first Wednesday of each month, to listen to recorded calls with other FCNL advocacy teams around the country. We are taught the most effective ways to advocate for our causes, usually with heart-felt stories connecting whatever the issue happens to be with our lives or our community. We are given regular policy updates, and we have the chance to hear from and learn from other teams across the country.

Since our team's launch in autumn of 2017, we've had at least six in-district lobby visits with our members of Congress or their staff, two letters to the editor published, and several postcard-writing sessions. FCNL is constantly tweaking its vision of how advocacy teams can work and is always coming up with ideas, in addition to or instead of lobby visits, that advocacy teams can use to advance our cause. There are many

ways for people who may not be comfortable with meeting with Congressional offices to get involved. There are even ways for “naptivists” (people who have to cram their advocacy into those short periods when their children are napping) to be involved. If you are interested, please speak to one of our members: Eugenia Marks, Adele Bourne, Dede Carlsten, Steve Schwartz, or Nancy Houston.

Report from Communications Committee

The mission of Communications Committee is to enhance communication among Meeting members and attenders as well as between Meeting and the outside community. We have a variety of means for doing this.

The Meeting Website is often the first place someone will go who is wanting to find out about Friends meetings in the area. It provides information about our three worship sites, a calendar of events, a brief description of our committees, and various resources including past issues of our newsletter. Sam Schifman is our webmaster. The Provident Friend, which is our newsletter, is published 10 months out of the year and reaches around 475 people electronically plus another 50 or so by regular mail. It includes a calendar of upcoming events, the minutes of the most recent Meeting for Business, the Clerk’s Corner column, and other articles of interest to Friends. Jen McFadden serves as editor, and any items for the newsletter need to go to her no later than the day of Meeting for Business in any given month. And the Meeting Email List, often referred to as “the listserve”, is our electronic bulletin board. It reaches around 150 people. Once you’re on the list you can post messages. We ask that these be of general interest to Friends. We will be considering adding an additional means for Friends to convey more personal messages.

The Meeting Directory lists contact information for members and attenders and is a valuable asset when Friends want to communicate with each other. We ask permission for any details that we publish. The directory is revised every six months and is distributed via the email list but does not appear on our website. The committee maintains the Meeting Handbook, which provides details about Meeting’s officers and committees. The handbook has been revised multiple times over the years and is in need of yet another revision due to the restructuring of our committees. The Meeting Archives are kept in electronic form on a dedicated Google Drive. Included are minutes of committee meetings and Meeting for Business, contracts, treasurer’s reports, and many other documents important in the life of the Meeting. Specific documents are available on request. Periodically, selected documents are relayed to the Yearly Meeting’s archives at UMass Amherst.

We maintain several brochures in the foyer. There is one for newcomers, one that describes our committees, one that invites membership, and one that is a compilation of testimonials from members and attenders. We are in the process of developing additional brochures for memorial services and weddings. An oral history project is ongoing. We interview seasoned Quakers who can tell us about events that occurred while they were active in Meeting. These interviews are transcribed and are available in the Meeting Archives. We have also sponsored the Meeting Network Project. Friends are asked to write about work they have done or are doing, and whatever pursuit they are passionate about. We revive this project periodically to hear from Friends new to Meeting.

If you want to engage fully in the life of Meeting, it’s important to be on the Meeting Email List, to be listed in the Meeting Directory, and to receive the Meeting newsletter. If one or more of these is not happening for you, please contact Dan Lederer (dlederer1@verizon.net).



The Generations Sangha at the Providence meetinghouse, Feb 9, 2019

Clerk's Corner: The Long Journey Home with a Crayon and The Moon

From Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk

When we are lost how do we find our way home?

This question has occupied people's thoughts for millennia. We know of it famously from the very first great epic poems: *Gilgamesh* (3rd millennium b.c.e.) and *The Odyssey* (8th century b.c.e.). And the narrative theme has been a constant of storytelling for old and young since those ancient times – in literature, in film, in song, and image. Joseph Campbell in his seminal book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* of 1949 called it the “mono-myth” and assigned twelve stages to the mythic structure of the journey. In our own time the fans of this epic plot in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and George Lucas's *Star Wars* are legion.

At a comfortable distance the narrative arc is riveting: the characters heroic, the adventures thrilling, the resolution of the story inevitable and so very satisfying. Yet as a personally experienced reality of one's own life or the life reality of a loved-one, being lost and searching for home – well that is so wrenching and raw, scary and uncertain. There is no way of knowing, in the midst of the journey, if and how the story resolves. And it is stunning how relevant this theme is for so many today - immigrants, migrants, refugees, displaced persons, and wanderers within our own community.

Home, family, community, identity – these are all complexly defined concepts. What we inherit or construct as our sense of home may not be the same to another. I was reminded recently of how subjective these concepts are when I recalled with vivid clarity during worship one Sunday morning my very favorite book as a child: *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, which was first published in 1955. The arc of that particular journey home centers on a young boy lost and owning nothing but a fat purple crayon clutched firmly in his little hand. As he searches for the way back home, he draws his way along a path across the blank pages of the book. He creates on those pages in simple line drawings the adventures that he experiences – traveling through a forest, sailing on a boat across the sea, sharing a pie picnic with a gathering of random forest animals (including a moose who likes all nine kinds of pie), and finally as he gets so very tired from the long, long journey, in the last few pages of the book, he finally remembers where home is. He knows with great faith that from his bed in his bedroom in his home he could always see the moon. And so with his purple crayon he draws the moon and around the moon a window framing it just right, and then a bed and then the covers. And with that he climbs up into his bed and pulls the blankets over him, gives one last glance at the moon, and safely, warmly, finally falls fast asleep.

Is it coincidence that in my own life, in all the places I have lived, my memory of those places I called home is most marked by the views out of the windows? It is not any memory of the actual rooms or possessions within the interior of my living space, but the view of what I could see beyond - from the apartment in Philadelphia, my bedroom in Antwerp, the sight out of our windows in Manhattan, our house in Cranston, and now in Providence. The lesson that I take from Harold, and his very own moon, is that we have the power within ourselves to make home. Our Quaker moon is that Inner Light, that we carry always within us, shining brightly wherever we find ourselves. If we experience that Light fully, if we have faith, it allows us to make wherever we are bright and familiar - framing our surroundings, illuminating our existence with what we know is true. Thus home is for each of us our Light, our point of view, our vantage point on the world, our moon through our own window. My definition of home is not yours, nor yours mine. My point of view is not yours, nor is yours mine. It may be a long journey to get to our own personal, luminous clarity. But in the end we all, whatever our differences, share in the Light that lets us find our way home.

Providence Monthly Meeting Contact List

Clerk: **Rebecca Leuchak** clerk@providencefriends.org
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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 - 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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99 Morris Avenue

Providence, RI 02906