

# The Provident FRIEND

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

April 17, 2019

## Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business 14th of Fourth Month, 2019 - Minutes

We gathered at noon at the Providence meetinghouse with 19 present. Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak read the following queries taken from "A Query Buff Looks at Queries" by Barry Morley, Sandy Spring (MD) Monthly Meeting (Friends Journal, May 1, 1988, <https://www.friendsjournal.org/quaker-queries/>)

Do you keep yourself open to the promise, power, and possibilities of your own inner life? Do you recognize the things in your life that center you, and do you turn to them before you need to? Do you look for the best in people, giving them opportunity to respond accordingly?

The clerk also read a note of appreciation from a couple who had attended the mid-week meeting at Brown University. For Nominating Committee, Dan Lederer brought a proposed roster for committees and individual positions in the 2019-2020 year. Friends approved with thanks to the Nominating Committee. Morgan Lord reported that she and Bob Watt had attended a meeting at the local Unitarian church to learn about the sanctuary activities there. They expect to bring more information and a proposal next month.

For Finance Committee, Dan reminded us that last year at this time, our Meeting discussed the use of the Saylesville meetinghouse and decided to ask for a report after one year. He now brought a report on activity there during the past year. Meeting for Worship has been held weekly with an average attendance of eight. The monthly book-swaps have an average of close to 20 visitors. Several events were held at the meetinghouse, including a Quaker wedding program, a tour for a family reunion group and one in conjunction with Lincoln's Great Road Day, a visit by home-schoolers, a story-telling workshop, and the annual Christmas Eve candlelight service.

For the Saylesville Meetinghouse Management Committee, Bruce Downing reported on a recent committee meeting and plans for the coming year. A number of successful events have taken place at the meetinghouse during the past year, several of which may be repeated, such as Great Road Day and a home-schoolers' visit. A visit by a group of architectural historians is planned for later this month. We anticipate continuing to work with Hearthside House and Historic New England. The book-swap and garden will also continue, and additional activities may include tours and educational programs, a book sale, and use of the meetinghouse for retreats and meetings. The Committee considers that building

### CALENDAR

#### Friday, April 19

**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, April 20

**10:00 am to 12:00 pm**, Bookswap, Saylesville Meetinghouse

#### Sunday, April 21

**11:45 am**, Introduction to Quakerism, Providence Meetinghouse Library

#### Sunday, April 28

**8:30 am**, Racism/White Privilege Reading Group, Providence Meetinghouse

#### Saturday, May 4

**8:00 to 11:00 am**, May Breakfast, Providence Meetinghouse

#### Sunday, May 5

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

#### Sunday, May 12

**12 pm**, PMM Business Meeting, Saylesville Meetinghouse

#### Wednesdays (Weekly)

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

\* community arts/general interest events

use and fundraising have made a good beginning and are likely to increase, and recommends that the Meeting continue to support the Saylesville meetinghouse.

For the Finance Committee, Dan brought a recommendation that Providence Meeting continue funding the Saylesville meetinghouse during the coming fiscal year. There has been regular activity at that meetinghouse over the past year, and a new committee has recently been formed to oversee it. Finance Committee recommends that Meeting continue to monitor the level of activity occurring at the meetinghouse and the success of the management committee in providing events that add to the life of Meeting as a whole. After some discussion, Friends approved, intending to evaluate the situation again in a year's time.

For the Finance Committee, Dan brought a proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year. The budget predicts total expenditures of \$95,500.00, of which \$60,000.00 would be raised from contributions from members and attenders. The contribution from our Meeting to New England Yearly Meeting would be noted as not to be shared with Friends United Meeting. Friends approved the budget as presented, with thanks to the Treasurer and Finance Committee for their work.

The meeting closed with silence at 1:15 PM.

Rebecca Smith, recording clerk  
Rebecca Leuchak, presiding clerk

### **Monthly Information Sessions on Quakerism - Third Sundays, 11:45 am**

Information sessions will be offered for newcomers or others interested in learning a bit more about the Society of Friends. These sessions, consisting of a very brief presentation followed by discussion, are planned to take place on the third Sunday of each month at the Providence meetinghouse, starting about 11:45 AM and lasting no more than an hour. It is not necessary to register in advance or to commit to more than one session. The next session will take place on April 21. For more information, contact Rebecca Smith ([acelinebarrett@aol.com](mailto:acelinebarrett@aol.com)), Betsy Cazden, or Rebecca Leuchak.

### **Interfaith Volunteer Opportunity**

The Interfaith Group is putting together a joint volunteer opportunity with our Muslim friends from Masjid Al Kareem. We are working with the RI Food Bank to find a time and date that would work for us, and we need an estimate of the number of people who would be interested in attending first. They have opportunities on the weekdays, either from 9am - 12pm or 12 - 3pm. Volunteers would be packing boxes, and requirements are that they be at least 14 years old, be able to lift up to 35 pounds, be able to understand labels, and see and hear well enough to avoid warehouse equipment. If interested, please contact Wendy Virgadamo ([virgadamo.wendy@gmail.com](mailto:virgadamo.wendy@gmail.com)), and we will start to look at specific dates, likely in May or June. Other volunteer opportunities may follow, including some work over the summer with Habitat for Humanity.

### **Conversation Circles: Quaker Parenting and Religious Education**

The Quaker Religious Education Collaborative (QREC) is offering online "Conversation Circles" on April 23 and April 25 on the topic of Quaker Parenting: Supporting parents and other caregivers on the spiritual journey of child-rearing. Another series will be offered May 14 and 16 entitled Quakerism for Teens: Coming of Age in the Society of Friends. You can find more information on these online conversations, as well as about QREC's summer retreat in Chatham, NY (Aug. 7-9) at <http://quakers4re.org/conversation-circles/upcoming>

## **An Update from the Library** from Rebecca Smith

Providence Meeting has received a lovely donation of children's books published by the Vermont Folk Life Center and given by Jean McCandless and the NEYM Children and Family Bookstore. The stories take place during various periods of history and feature children of several races and nationalities. The titles are *The Two Brothers*, *Alec's Primer*, *Malian's Song*, *Daisy and the Doll*, *The Scrimshaw Ring*, *John and Tom*, and *The Ghost on the Hearth*. The books have been catalogued and are on the children's bookshelves downstairs, ready for borrowing.

In order to make it possible for Friends to get at the books on the shelves, we have relocated several of the chairs that were in the library to the new multi-purpose room. We invite committees to consider meeting in the new room! Or, if you are meeting in the library and need more chairs, you will find folding chairs in the newly-accessible cupboard to the right of the fireplace.

## **Meeting's New Email List: Providence Friends Social Group** from Communications Committee

Communications Committee continues to seek members for the Providence Friends Social Group. While we encourage use of the regular Email List to announce events in the life of the Meeting, this new list is where we welcome virtually any kind of notices or commentaries, provided of course that they are in good taste and are respectful of other members of the group and of our wider community. On it you can advertise events that you're involved in, request help with an activity, comment on any kind of issue, etc. It will work the same as our current Email List, which is to say that, as a member of the group, you will receive messages and will be able to post them to the group by directing them, in this case, to [providence-friends-social@googlegroups.com](mailto:providence-friends-social@googlegroups.com). In contrast to our current Email List, you can feel free to share your responses with the group.

No one is put on this list automatically, so if you would like to be included in the new Providence Friends Social Group you need to contact committee clerk Dan Lederer ([dlederer1@verizon.net](mailto:dlederer1@verizon.net)). We're hoping you'll give it a try--if it turns out that you don't like it, you can always opt out! We're looking forward to some lively conversations without disturbing those among us who want to keep their email messages to a minimum.

Even if you choose not to be part of the new email group, it's still important for Friends who want to engage fully with Meeting to be on the (old) Meeting Email List and to be listed in the Meeting Directory. If this is not happening for you, please contact Dan.

## **Glorious Spring Day = A Day of Living Faith** from Rebecca Leuchak

Living Faith is a day-long gathering of Friends from throughout New England. The event adds another opportunity for yearly gathering, falling mid-way between our annual NEYM Sessions each August. And like the summer gathering, it is a chance for Friends to worship together, get to know each other, share the different ways we experience and live our faith, and build community.

On Saturday, April 6, Providence Monthly Meeting Friends Victoria Ekk, Rebecca Leuchak, Bob Watt, Liberty Goodwin, and Paul Klinkman attended this year's Living Faith gathering at Friends Academy just outside of New Bedford, MA. The school's campus was a glorious setting full of signs of spring under bright, sunny skies.

After some brief welcoming and orienting remarks, the 150 participants joined together in inter-generational worship to help us center in the Life and Source of our living faith. Following worship, the

children met with the youth staff to have concurrent programming. Adults and teens attended one of three morning program offerings. All ages came together at noon for a delicious lunch and fellowship. After lunch, Friends had the same schedule as the morning with children's programming and the adults and teens could choose from a menu of many different workshops. The day closed with waiting worship.

Workshop program choices for the afternoon included: Experiencing Healing Circle; Quaker and Native Americans in Southeastern New England, 1666-1680; Holding with Love; Faithful Financial Stewardship for Friends and Friends Meetings; Writing as a Spiritual Practice; Reaching Out to College Students; Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness; What's a Quaker Mean When They Say "Authority?" – Explorations of Faithfulness and Obedience in Our Experiences as Friends.

Those of us who attended the Living Faith Gathering would be happy to share our impressions about the whole day, and those who attended workshops can debrief about what we learned if anyone would like to hear more. Victoria Ekk attended *Writing as a Spiritual Practice*. Paul Klinkman attended *What's a Quaker Mean When They Say "Authority?"*. Rebecca Leuchak and Bob Watt attended *Quaker and Native Americans in Southeastern New England, 1666-1680*.

The next great gathering of New England Friends will be at our 359<sup>th</sup> Annual Sessions, August 3-8, 2019 at Castleton University in lovely Castleton, VT. This year's theme with is "Provoke One Another to Love." It's a good time to begin planning! See the NEYM website for more information: <https://neym.org/sessions>

## **A Report from the Border** from Amy Schneidhorst

Hello Friends! I had the opportunity to participate in a Meta Peace team at the US/ Mexico border at Tijuana from February 15-23. I wanted to share some of what I learned about the conditions we found there and to introduce you to Al Otro Lado ("To the Other Side" in English), a bi-national, direct legal service agency whose work we supported while there. AOL was founded by two immigration attorneys on each side of the border in 2012 and is otherwise run entirely by volunteers: lawyers, medical professionals, and other volunteers who bring various skills. 90% of the volunteers are not lawyers and 50% are new to law. We were part of a 30-volunteer group the week we arrived. The agency attracts retirees and students, and ages in between from throughout California as well as other parts of the Pacific Northwest. We learned that between Thanksgiving and our mid-February visit, 1,000 volunteers had kept AOL operating in adverse conditions (including tear gassing) at the border.

AOL staff and volunteers provide individuals with information on Creditable and Reasonable Fear interviews and inform them of their legal rights so that they can make an educated decision whether to pursue U.S.-based protection or consider other options. Our group took part in education outreach at the El Chaparral plaza near the walkway from Tijuana to San Diego, where we directed asylum seekers to AOL to access legal, medical and mental health services. Asylum seekers who receive their numbers may have a wait of 4-6 weeks in Mexico until their name and number are called for their 10-person group. Once their names and numbers are called, many are optimistic that they are past the worst of their journey. Those familiar with the system have the foreknowledge that asylum seekers may be bused to detention centers or forced off buses and abandoned before they reach the detention center just over one mile away. Those who are "fortunate" enough to stay on the bus are detained in underground holding pens/cells, where men and women are separated and children separated from their parents if they are older than 4 years old. AOL volunteers advise asylum seekers about detention practices that are designed to pressure migrants to self-deport, such as limiting or seizing clothing, documents and identification. Volunteers help individuals change clothes so that their warmest layer is next to their skin; they do this while standing in the open air on the street. Migrants are also advised to write their contact information in permanent marker on their bodies before they board

government buses. Knowing the inhumane conditions these migrants face shaped our anxieties about their days ahead.

Each day the number of asylum seekers called changed and individuals could be separated from their families if their names happened to fall under different numbers. In February, 22,740 names had been added to the most current version of the list and 19,900 names had been called from the list. An average of 40 names were called each day, with some days as low as 0 persons and some days as high as 100. In February, persons originated from 37 countries, with 39% from Honduras, 28% from Mexico, 11% from El Salvador, 8% from Guatemala, 4% from Nicaragua, 3% from Cameroon, and 1% from Venezuela. At the end of March, an average of 38 persons were allowed to cross the border daily and the average wait time increased to 43-44 days.

Currently, the most expeditious way to support AOL in their work is to make purchases from their Amazon wish list. Please note that warm winter layers are no longer needed, but food and office supplies are greatly appreciated. You can access the wish list and have supplies sent directly to where they're needed by following the link

below: [https://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/3FMBCXBJFJDT/ref=bnav\\_topnav\\_lists\\_4](https://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/3FMBCXBJFJDT/ref=bnav_topnav_lists_4)

**Clerk's Corner: Lessons in Play-Doh**  
from Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk  
(Note: This is not a product endorsement!)

You never know where a lesson will come from – devotional reading, spiritual reflection, messages shared in meeting for worship. These are the familiar places we would think bring us a deepening of our faith. We should, of course, take our personal spiritual growth seriously, but I recently had a revelation fall upon me in the most delightful way: through play--specifically while working with Play-Doh!

At a recent gathering of New England Quakers, attenders were divided up into small groups for an ice-breaker exercise. Each group of four to six Friends was given plastic tubs of Play-Doh in a range of colors. We were asked to use the Play-Doh to create a three-dimensional representation of the connections between the members of our home meeting community.

Our group did not jump in and start creating right away, even though we had a pretty tight time-frame for completing the assignment. Instead, we began by spending considerable time pondering what we wanted to do. We came up with the idea of producing a weaving, with each person fashioning a number of rods to create the warp and the weft that would eventually make up the finished form. We decided we would set the warp out in a parallel fashion and then weave in and out of the warp forming a square.

With the plan agreed upon and firmly in mind, each of us began rolling out long rods from the various colors of the modeling clay provided. We worked with concentration, not talking much, as we all had a clear understanding of our goal. We worked quickly and efficiently at this stage to use up all of the material and to get on to the more intricate and time-consuming task of actually weaving. Friends working side by side and across the table from each other were constantly visually checking the thickness and length of the rods, trying to stay in similar dimensions to the others creating their own rods. We were intent, and silent in our endeavors, but there was lots of non-verbal communication - glances, smiles, nods.

Soon the collection of bright, long rods of clay was ready and again, wordlessly, we began to assemble half into the parallel grid of a warp. Then one person began the actual weaving with a single weaver or weft rod at the mid-point of the rectangular layout of the warp. Over and under and over and under until the full length of the Play-Doh snake was intertwined. Then from two sides two other Friends took turns one to the right of the first weft began weaving another rod, opposite to the first – under and over and under and over. When that was finished, then one to the left of the first weft was woven in, and so on – alternating right side and then left, we continued until we had used up all of the rolled out Play-Doh rods

and the weaving was complete: a colorful square representing a creative collaboration among Friends.

Only when we were finished did we look up from the table to see what other groups had created. What we saw was a wide range of finished products, but what most groups had in common is that they had approached the task by each member of the group sculpting their own small clay figure – something of great meaning to themselves – and then these all were assembled in some kind of imaginative tableau. The relationship of the parts was in the placement of the separate elements into proximity with the others.

I was struck by how both our project's component parts and its final shape was a complete collaboration. It was not separate elements collected into a whole composition. The composition itself was the unity. We had discerned our common vision and we had executed the task collaboratively. No one could say which part was theirs. We were all of the whole and the whole was all of us. It dawned on me that in fact this is my ideal of true community in the Spirit.

And when I realized how conceptually rich this communally created weaving was, I was struck by how it had emerged – through consensus we reached clarity of our goal, with self-less dedication to the work we moved forward towards that shared goal, and our work was efficient with rapid execution because we were clear, because we wanted to express our unity, not our individuality.

Every single group's project was beautifully creative, all in very different ways, and of course that creative individuality is essential in a healthy community. But having experienced the making of our Play-Doh representation of connections between the members of our meeting communities, I felt the joy of abandoning my own will to follow the leading to something greater.

It strikes me, too, that it is not just the serious approach that brings insight--the silly can teach us as well. Every activity of our life might bring significant revelation, in play and in work, when we least expect it. That's a lesson in and of itself!



**Comments by Bruce Carlsten, Providence Meetinghouse Expansion Celebration, March 31, 2019**

Last night, I went to my computer and opened up the folder entitled “PMH Expansion.” The very first document in this folder was an email from Mike Hirtle dealing with the subject of choosing an architect. The email focused on a bid from a potential architect dated November 15, 2015! This was well over three years ago and represented the beginning of the effort that is culminating today in this Opening Ceremony. My “PMH Expansion folder” presently holds over 0.6 of a GB of information dealing with the expansion.

People have been overly generous in expressing their thanks to me but, if I was the coxswain of this project, you, the members and attenders of Providence Friends Meeting, were the oars. And we all know that a coxswain without oars would not get anywhere. The thanks go to you, who, among many other things, have to date opened up your hearts and contributed approximately 59% of the total construction cost, significantly reducing the amount that we might have had to withdraw from our General Fund. (As an aside, we were initially optimistically hoping for contributions to cover up to 40% of the construction costs.) It looks like the project’s total cost will end up approximately \$10,000 less than the total amount approved by the Meeting.

It should be noted that, as part of the expansion expenditure, in addition to providing a larger nursery room, a multi-purpose room, a wheelchair-accessible lift, and a large basement serving as a workshop and storage space, two new bathrooms have been added, active fire and safety equipment have been installed, the electrical service was upgraded from 100A to 400A, and the 65-year-old furnace was replaced with a new, 95% efficient boiler that will provide heat and hot water to the whole meetinghouse. Additionally, the heat in each of the five heating zones can now be controlled remotely, allowing for greater heating efficiency in the building and greater convenience for the PMH activity scheduler.

Sincere thanks go to the initial Expansion Committee that, after many meetings and many design changes, came up with the final building design that was approved at the December 10, 2017 Meeting for Business. Then there was the Fundraising Committee that developed the strategy to raise funds to pay for the proposed construction. Finally, I want to give special thanks to Dan and Nina for always being available as my sounding board when problems arose, and, of course, to Rebecca, our presiding clerk, for her continued support and for clerking the Fundraising Committee.

**Providence Monthly Meeting Contact List**

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 To schedule the Meetinghouse: **Dan Lederer** [scheduling@providencelfriends.org](mailto:scheduling@providencelfriends.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

**The Provident FRIEND**

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Providence Monthly Meeting of the  
Religious Society of Friends

99 Morris Avenue

Providence, RI 02906