

The Provident FRIEND

May 16, 2019

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

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

Friends gathered at Saylesville meetinghouse at noon with 14 in attendance. In opening worship, Clerk Rebecca Leuchak read the following queries taken from Britain Yearly Meeting's *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 5th edition. (Chapter 1: Advices and Queries, No. 19, <https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/passage/1-02/>)

Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognise the gifts they bring. Remember that the meeting as a whole shares a responsibility for every child in its care. How do you share your deepest beliefs with them, while leaving them free to develop as the spirit of God may lead them? Do you invite them to share their insights with you? Are you ready both to learn from them and to accept your responsibilities towards them?

Announcements.

Rebecca Leuchak reported that she attended the meeting of NEYM Permanent Board yesterday. Topics of discussion included membership, social media, and white supremacy and reparations. We are reminded that NEYM sessions will take place in Castleton, Vermont in the first week of August.

From Hospitality Committee: Coffee and tea need human partners to function at the social gathering after Meeting for Worship. Please select a Sunday and a role and sign up on the white board. Thanks for your partnering.

New England Yearly Meeting has a Student Scholarship Grant Program that offers funding for people pursuing post-secondary education and/or training. The deadline for applications is May 15th. The application form and instructions on how to apply may be found on the NEYM website's "Quaker Grants" page at: <https://neym.org/quaker-grants>

May 3rd is the 100th anniversary of Pete Seeger's birth and we're having a birthday party! Come help us celebrate Pete's life-long work for a better world by singing together the songs he loved on Saturday, May 18th, at 7pm here at the meetinghouse. The suggested donation is \$20 but no one will be turned away for lack of funds. The link for tickets in advance is www.groupsinging.org/events. If you'd like to make a reservation and pay at the door - send an email to Debbie (debbieblock1456@gmail.com). Performers will include Bill Harley, Charlie King, Annie Patterson, and Peter Blood.

Introduction to Quakerism: An information session for newcomers

CALENDAR

Saturday, May 18

7:00 pm Peter Seeger Memorial Singalong, Providence Meetinghouse

Saturday, May 18

Bookswap, Saylesville Meetinghouse

Sunday, May 19

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

Sunday, June 2

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

11:15 am, PMM Monthly

Potluck/First Day School Picnic, Providence Meetinghouse

Sunday, June 9

12 pm, PMM Business Meeting, Saylesville Meetinghouse

Sunday, June 30 through

Saturday, July 6

Friends General Conference Gathering, Grinnell, Iowa

Saturday, August 3 through

Thursday, August 8

NEYM Sessions, Castleton, VT

or others interested in learning a bit more about the Society of Friends is offered on the third Sunday of each month at the Providence meetinghouse, starting about 11:45 AM. The program consists of a very brief presentation followed by discussion, and lasts 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 May 19. For more information, contact Rebecca Smith (acelinebarrett@aol.com), Betsy Cazden, or Rebecca Leuchak.

A Community Conversation on Wireless Technology Safety will be held on May 22, 2019, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Saylesville Friends Meetinghouse, 374 Great Road, Lincoln, RI. For more information contact: Liberty Goodwin - liberty@toxicsinfo.org

Providence Friends Meeting First Day School Picnic will be June 2nd immediately after the rise of meeting for worship. All are invited for a picnic with hamburgers, veggie burgers, and hot dogs and good company as a way to thank everyone who helped out this past year at First Day School and in the Nursery. An e-mail invitation is coming so that everyone can be part of the fun. After June 2nd, First Day School will be taking summer break. We will ask for Meeting members and attenders to assist in supervising children at the Moses Brown playground on sunny Sundays and in the multipurpose room for reading and game playing on rainy days. Contact Victoria Ekk if you can help out!

The renowned peace educator and activist George Lakey will be leading a workshop at the New Bedford Friends Meeting on Sunday, June 2, from 1:00 PM to 4:30 PM. The topic of his presentation is "How We Win: A Workshop on Nonviolent Direct Action." New Bedford Friends Meeting is located at 83 Spring Street. There is a \$20 suggested donation for the programs. See Rebecca Leuchak if you are interested in car-pooling.

Marcelle Martin, author of *Our Life is Love*, will give a presentation and facilitate a discussion at the rise of worship on Sunday, June 9, at Westerly Friends Meeting. Free and open to all Friends in our Southeast Quarterly Meeting community, participants are encouraged to bring a dish to pass for the potluck lunch. For more information, contact Rebecca Leuchak or the clerk of Westerly Friends Meeting, Beth Hansen.

The Conanicut Worship Group has moved its meeting site back to the Conanicut meetinghouse at the corner of North Road and Weeden Lane on Jamestown. Meeting starts at 10:30 AM. This schedule will continue through the end of October.

For Ministry and Counsel Committee, Jen McFadden presented the proposed State of Society report for 2018. With a few minor changes, Friends approved the report. (see below)

For Peace and Social Action Committee, Steve Schwartz reported on the committee's donations to outside organizations during the current fiscal year. The budgeted amount of \$2,500 was distributed to the following organizations: AHOPE, AMOR, Camp St. Ministries, Casa pueblo, Dorcas International, Environmental Council of R.I., Islamic mosque outreach, Pride Day expenses, R. I. Coalition for the Homeless, Syrian American Medical Society.

For the Property Committee, Nina Berry reported on the work that has been carried out at the Providence and Saylesville meetinghouses. Saylesville is scheduled to be painted in June, which will be the last item on the schedule for this building. The project of fencing the burial grounds is nearing completion. It was noted that the new storm windows and other work have made the building considerably more comfortable. Extensive work has been completed at Providence. We thank Nina and her committee for their hard work.

Nina also brought a request for authorization to spend up to \$50,000 above the amount available in the PMH Maintenance Fund in order to repair and improve the parking area at Providence and to carry out associated landscaping. After some discussion, including concerns about the financial impact, use of the grounds by children, and safety of those using the meetinghouse, Friends approved the request.

For the Religious Education Committee, Victoria Ekk reported on a year in which construction sent the First Day School from Providence meetinghouse to Moses Brown School and then into the new section of the meetinghouse. The children (19 in total) now divide into three levels in addition to the nursery. The elementary and intermediate groups explored themes of simplicity and diversity this year. The older group has explored a variety of religious traditions. After the picnic on Sixth Month 2, FDS summer mode will consist of trips to the Moses Brown playground when weather permits, with informal programs indoors when necessary. Additional volunteers continue to be welcome and needed to work with the children; lesson plans are provided. We thank the committee for its care of our children.

For the Program Committee, Bruce Carlsten passed on John Lord's report. The committee has sponsored two social events in recent months. Both the Game Night and last week's May Breakfast were very successful. The Breakfast in particular brought great enthusiasm, attracted about 60 people, and also made a small profit.

No further business appearing, Friends closed with a period of worship at 2:00 p.m., intending to meet next on the 9th of Sixth Month at the Saylesville meetinghouse.

Rebecca Leuchak, Clerk
Rebecca Smith, Recording Clerk

State of the Society (for Calendar Year 2018)

As we reflect on the state of our society, we find that many members and attenders value the personal relationships our meeting community fosters. We cherish the friendships that grow out of shared worship, committee work, coffee hours, potlucks, informal socializing, round-table discussions, and other forms of fellowship. Friends are grateful for the faithful committee work that enables and cultivates these relationships. We especially appreciate the diversity of gifts and perspectives that our members and attenders bring.

We are also deeply grateful for our vibrant First Day School and nursery, and for the opportunities these present for intergenerational support and learning. FDS conversations about Quaker testimonies often make their way home to be considered by families and friends throughout the week. The meeting's commitment to its children also provides support, enrichment, and fellowship for their families. We continue to provide childcare for every meeting for business and many other meeting activities, to help families (including single parents) participate more fully in the life of the meeting.

A major project for 2018 has been construction of an addition to the Providence meetinghouse, with an expanded nursery, an all-purpose room, additional fully-accessible bathrooms, and a lift to make both levels fully accessible. We thank the NEYM Legacy Gift Fund for its grant toward the cost of the lift. We are excited about the possibilities the addition represents for our growing meeting and for the wider Providence community.

Many value the Meeting's engagement with issues in the world, from committee work to broader Quaker concerns to social issues on community, state, and national levels, which we hope have furthered the work of the Spirit in the world. These include a working group on racism and white privilege; an invited talk on Quakers' complicity in running Indian boarding schools; our ongoing monthly fellowship with a local mosque; our growing work toward interfaith action and support; our

continued participation in RI PRIDE; our local FCNL Advocacy Team; and other activities and programs supported by our Peace and Social Action Committee.

As in past years, Friends have differing experiences of whether the meeting is a place where we experience a depth of Divine Presence. Some find it so; others wonder if we are too focused on material concerns and social action issues, with less careful support for spiritual matters. While some have found comfort and insight from messages given during worship, others wish for further seasoning, more careful discernment, and some attention to brevity and clarity.

We have identified some frustrations that may hinder our shared work, or that may stand in the way of accessing the Divine. Some attenders find the announcements after worship to be repetitive and excessively long and would prefer other ways of conveying information. Some feel that their efforts to carry out the meeting's work are perceived as insufficient or undervalued, which may discourage committee involvement. We are aware that our meeting community remains overwhelmingly white and middle-class, in a city and region that is far more diverse. We see the need to become a more welcoming, inclusive community as we work to address the systemic injustices of poverty, white privilege, discrimination, and xenophobia.

We continue to consider our stewardship of the historic Saylesville meetinghouse. Some Friends feel the money spent annually to maintain the historic building might better be invested in social justice programs, outreach, or service work. The worship group at Saylesville is small and intimate, with deep and meaningful messages arising from the silence, although the small group also faces some internal challenges that Ministry and Counsel is addressing. An ad hoc committee has carried out a number of special programs at the meetinghouse during the past year, often in partnership with two local historic houses, including a community tomato garden, a historical wedding reenactment, a family genealogy visit, and a visit and talk for an organization of home-schooling families. These have brought joy, connection, and some additional income. Members of the wider community come for the ongoing monthly bookswap and the annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, which many find a special opportunity to experience the Divine Presence. The property committee has used a bequest to complete substantial restoration work on the building and grounds, hoping to make the space more usable by the Lincoln community and by Friends for workshops, invited speakers, and other opportunities for spiritual development.

Members and attenders of our Conanicut Friends Meeting (Indulged) also gathered to assess the state of the small but committed worship community there. Consensus seemed to gather easily around the value of silence in worship. Some noted that vocal ministry sometimes drifts into more secular or personal concerns, but that focused and spiritual messages are a welcomed part of seeking. Conanicut Friends also feel led to do better as a meeting in connecting positively with visitors, and in being active in the larger community of Friends and neighbors. CFM attenders appreciated this introspective time together and saw this process of discernment and reporting as an opportunity to recognize connections with Providence Friends and the larger Quaker community.

In summary, Providence Monthly Meeting is at once grateful for our meeting and cognizant of challenges within it. We recognize that we are continually growing into our community, and that gratitude and challenge can work together to support, sustain, and direct that growth. We take great joy in one another's presence as we find ways to share our gifts, learn from one another, and listen to and live by the wisdom that arises in our shared work and worship.

The Provident Friend Seeks Submissions
from Communications Committee

You are reading this article in The Provident Friend, Meeting's monthly newsletter. Although it's a labor of love, preparing the newsletter each month requires a lot of work, and Communications Committee doesn't have the resources to be doing much writing of articles ourselves. We need your help, so we're

inviting you to submit items for the newsletter, such as announcements and descriptions of upcoming events, reports of events that have already taken place, activities of committees, thoughts on Quakerism, etc.

In addition to the electronic copy that most of you receive, we prepare a PDF version for mailing out to Friends who prefer a paper copy and also for entering into the Meeting Archives. This is limited to eight pages, and for that reason we ask that articles be no longer than 500 words. At times we may have to hold an article over until the next issue because of space limitations.

In regard to photos, there are a few provisions. First, we want any photos to relate to and complement an article. Second, we are trying to follow NEYM privacy guidelines, so we ask you to affirm that any person photographed has given permission for his or her image to be published. Of course it's up to the editor and the committee to decide whether photos are suitable for inclusion, and this applies to articles as well.

Finally, in order to get the newsletter out in a timely way, we ask Friends to send in their items for an issue no later than the day of that month's Meeting for Business, which is the second Sunday of the month.

Communications Committee looks forward to hearing from you and making our newsletter truly representative of our Friends community. You can send your items to providentfriend@providencefriends.org.

Join Friends at Providence PrideFest, June 15

This June, Providence Friends Meeting will once again participate in both PrideFest and the Illuminated Night Parade on Saturday, June 15th. We've successfully hosted a booth and marched for the past three years and look forward to showing our support and pride again this year. We are looking for volunteers for both PrideFest (12-5) and the evening Parade (8-10); we hope to have a strong showing this year, especially with our parade walking group (it is a blast and an event not to miss!). Please email Morgan Lord (mhlord2001@gmail.com) if you can volunteer for PrideFest or walk in the parade. Additionally, you'll see a sign up sheet at Meeting soon.

Family Game Night Draws Crowds

On Friday, March 29, our community room was overrun by about 30 enthusiastic game-players of all ages. Special Events Committee's first Family Game Night was a big success, hosting about 30 people of all ages. We went through 10 pizzas and several gallons of soda and juice and we played Bananananagrams, Pit, Scrabble Slam, several Cooperative Kids Games, Apples to Apples and some alien game that a group of adults got heavily involved in. A die-hard group of Blokus fans was the last of the adults to pack it in around 9 pm, with high hopes for a reunion again soon. Our youngest Friends and a few brave chaperones stayed for a much-anticipated sleepover in the new classroom spaces. Reports indicate that silence and sleep eventually descended upon our First Day Schoolers, whose refreshed parents came to retrieve them the next morning. We hope the three chaperones have by now recovered from their ordeal—they deserve special commendation for their courage and fortitude. Thanks to all who contributed to this memorable event, particularly the Special Events and First Day School committees!

May Breakfast Serves Scores (and Scones)

The May breakfast was a success. We served over 60 people and gave many tours of our meetinghouse and new addition to members of our neighboring community. It was a great morning of food and fellowship as Providence Friends and friends welcomed spring with a festive May breakfast on Saturday, May 4. Volunteers dished up piles of fluffy scrambled eggs, pancakes, home fries, bacon and

sausage, muffins and breads, fresh fruit, and bottomless cups of coffee, tea and juice. We hosted about 60 visitors from the Providence Meeting community and its surrounding neighborhood, and new friends and curious community enjoyed tours of the new building wing. Though the weather outside was dreary, the mood was festive and the food delicious! Many thanks go to the Special Events Committee for their care in planning and promoting the event, and to the many volunteers and attendees who helped make it a success, including a great crew of flippers and hash browners and brewers and muffin makers and servers, setter-uppers and cleaner-uppers, and all who came to support our effort. The fourth was certainly with us!



Above: Scenes from PMM's May Breakfast; Right and below: Celebrating the opening of the new wing in the meetinghouse



Clerk's Corner: Nature Moves Us with Such Marvelous Messages!

Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk

I have written here before about the metaphor of the swan for our meeting community--the smoothly gliding, graceful bird whose churning effort takes place below the surface, out of sight. Another, related metaphor recently occurred to me. We familiarly praise the duck and the swan and other aquatic birds for their ability to let water roll off of their back. We use this trait as a metaphor for being unflustered, for taking life lightly and not getting stressed, not letting our "feathers get ruffled". Like the gliding swim, this is seen as an effortless trait of the water bird. But the reality, just as with the paddling feet, is that what gives these birds their waterproof plumage is a very necessary, practical, and labor-intensive activity.

We call it "preening"-- a bird's way of grooming its feathers to keep them in the best condition in order to maintain their waterproof surface. While preening, birds remove dust, dirt, and parasites from their feathers. They align each feather in the optimum position relative to adjacent feathers and body shape for waterproofing and insulation. With their beaks they distribute the oily, waxy substance produced by the uropygial gland in their hind region to all the other areas of their body, thoroughly coating their feathers with a natural water barrier. This process is a time-consuming one--most water birds will preen several times a day to keep themselves healthy.

So we see that creating an unruffled and serene presence requires quite a bit of labor – for the swan it is by paddling and preening. I would ask what necessary, practical, and intensive work is needed for Friends to create the centered condition for our own personal spiritual growth. What work is needed for Quakers to create the conditions for the unruffled and serene community that heeds the call of the Spirit? What paddling and preening must we do to create in ourselves and in our community a place of calm where reflection, deep listening, communion of Spirit can occur, and to reach that place where we are gracefully gliding in the Light, effortlessly floating on the current of the divine?

Providence Monthly Meeting Contact List

Presiding Clerk: **Rebecca Leuchak** clerk@providencefriends.org
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To schedule the Meetinghouse: **Dan Lederer** scheduling@providencefriends.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 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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Religious Society of Friends

99 Morris Avenue
