

The Provident FRIEND

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

June 13, 2019

Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business 9th of Sixth Month, 2019 - Minutes

Friends gathered at the Saylesville meetinghouse at noon with 12 in attendance. During opening worship, acting clerk Mike Hirtle read the following queries taken from *New England Yearly Meeting Interim Faith and Practice*, 2015 edition, Queries 13, 14, and 15, p. 112:

Do you use your time, energy, resources, gifts, and material possessions in the service of God's love?
Are you ready to respond to any concern God may lay upon you, large or small?
Do you maintain an appropriate balance among work, service, worship, family, and recreation?
Are you ready to rest if God asks it of you?

Announcements

- June 15th is Rhode Island Pride. We need volunteers for the booth during the day and walkers for the parade at night. See Morgan Lord for details and sign-up sheets in the lower level of Providence Meetinghouse.
- A CPR course will be held at Providence at 11:45 AM on Sunday June 16. There is a signup sheet downstairs in the Providence Meetinghouse. See Molly Thomas for any questions.
- Our next Southeast Quarterly Meeting will be held at Worcester Monthly Meeting on the fourth Sunday of June – the 23rd. Worship begins at 11:00 a.m. with a potluck lunch after and special program on Challenging White Supremacy. The Quarterly meeting for business will follow after the program. Come for part or all of the afternoon to meet and work with Friends from the monthly meetings in our Quarter. Directions to Worcester Friends Meeting are on the New England Yearly Meeting web-site. Contact Rebecca Leuchak, if you wish to carpool.
- Friends are encouraged over the summer take the opportunity to worship at our meetinghouses in Jamestown and in Lincoln (Saylesville) as well as in Providence. Information for times and location are on our Providence Friends Meeting web-site. Both are beautiful old historic buildings with a smaller number of Friends present for worship on a Sunday morning.
- Friends General Conference will be held at Grinnell College in Grinnell, IA from June 30-July 6. See the Friends General Conference web-site for more info and registration.
- New England Yearly Meeting 359th Annual Sessions will be held from August 3 through 8 at Castleton University in Castleton, Vermont. See the NEYM website for more info and to register.

CALENDAR

Saturday, June 15

Rhode Island Pride

Sunday, June 16

11:45 am, CPR Course,
Providence Meetinghouse

Sunday, June 16

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

Saturday, June 22

Bookswap, Saylesville
Meetinghouse

Sunday, June 23

11:00 am, Southeast Quarterly
Meeting, Worcester Monthly
Meeting

Sunday, June 30 through Saturday, July 6

Friends General Conference
Gathering, Grinnell, Iowa

Sunday, July 7

11:15 am, PMM Monthly
Potluck, Providence
Meetinghouse

Saturday, August 3 through Thursday, August 8

NEYM Sessions, Castleton, VT

* community arts/general
interest events

For the Hospitality Committee, Eugenia Marks reported that the committee has organized for the coming year. This committee has taken on responsibility for stocking the bathrooms as well as the kitchen. They are happy to see people volunteering to help at coffee hours and hope this will continue. We thank the committee members, past and present, for their work.

For the Peace and Social Action Committee, Bob Watt reported that on September 15, Steve Gates will speak on climate-related issues. On October 27 Carol Rein will speak about her travels in the Middle East. These talks will take place at the Providence meetinghouse.

Martha Yager was proposed as an additional member of the committee; Friends approved.

The committee requested that Providence Friends Meeting participate in a Sanctuary Coalition being organized by the First Unitarian Church, and based in their building in Providence, to provide housing and support for immigrant families in danger of deportation. They are currently looking for member groups to provide volunteers willing to be trained to spend time with these families. Friends support P&SA in continuing to communicate with the Unitarians about this effort. More information may come to a future Meeting for Business.

For the Providence Meetinghouse Management Committee, Dan Lederer brought a proposal to allow SURJ RI (Showing Up for Racial Justice Rhode Island) to use the Providence Meetinghouse free of charge. Martha Yager is our liaison to this group and passed on its appreciation for the use of the space. Dan noted that the committee has introduced a policy of using written agreements to govern use of the building by outside groups, usually with an associated fee. Due to the limited funds of this group and the congruence that appears between its goals and Friends' principles, the PMM committee would like to waive the fee. Friends approved.

Treasurer's Report. In the absence of the treasurer, Dan Lederer presented the year-end report. Last year's budget included optimistic estimates for donations and fundraising, both of which fell somewhat short. Although the level of contributions was the highest ever, we ended the fiscal year with a deficit of \$6,342.00. The budget for next year includes a reduced, hopefully more realistic, estimate of contributions to the Meeting. Only a few bills remain to be paid from the work that has been done on the Providence and Saylesville meetinghouses, and funds are available to pay them. We thank the Treasurer for his care of our finances.

Saylesville. Bruce Downing reminded Friends that hosts are needed weekly for Saylesville worship and Friends may see him for more details.

There being no further business, Friends closed with silence at 1:30, intending to meet next on Ninth month 8, at noon at the Saylesville meetinghouse.

Mike Hirtle, acting clerk
Rebecca Smith, recording clerk

Presiding Clerk's Thank you

To all who have been a part of our community over this past year, who have led a major initiative, who have pitched in when help was needed, who have responded to needs of others, who have worked in the world for justice and peace, who have held our community grounded in the Spirit, who have supported our Meeting in time and in treasure, I thank you!

In Love and Light,
Rebecca Leuchak

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), Betsy Cazden, or Rebecca Leuchak.

An Invitation to Join the "Virtual Plenary" for NEYM Sessions

from Lisa Graustein, Beacon Hill (MA) Friends Meeting

At Annual Sessions in August 2019, Lisa Graustein (Beacon Hill, MA, Friends Meeting) will facilitate a plenary (whole group) session designed to "ground ourselves in the decisions that have led us to this point, ... call in the wisdom of our ancestors, create art and prayer together, and envision a future beyond ourselves ... [to] learn, interact, engage, pray, and imagine together, bringing that sense of community, hope and creativity into the rest of our week ... [seeking] understanding of where and how we have been the Beloved Community and where we have failed to live up to God's vision. In preparation for this summer, Lisa is inviting New England Friends—whether we plan to attend Annual Sessions or not—into an experiment with a "virtual plenary." These videos will explore some of the minutes we have approved in past years, how they are moving among us, and spiritual practices we can try out as part of our shared work living into the minutes. She welcomes Friends with wisdom, insight, and practices to offer to join her at: <https://neym.org/sessions/news/join-virtual-plenary> There you will find the links to the video resources that Lisa used in putting together the content and links to work Friends are doing around the minutes. Also on the website are definitions and more information about some of the words and terms Lisa uses in the videos.

Report from the Reading Group on Dismantling White Supremacy

from William S. Monroe

At its 2016 Sessions, New England Yearly Meeting passed a minute devoted to "Dismantling White Supremacy" within the Yearly Meeting and our monthly meetings. The minute read as follows:

We are complicit in white supremacy. We at New England Yearly Meeting have been "colonized" by our white supremacist culture and fall short of our full potential as a gathered body of Quaker Meetings because of this colonization.

We commit to engaging in interrupting white supremacy in ourselves:

1. within individuals
2. interpersonally
3. in our meetings
4. and at all system levels of NEYM

To start this, we ask Permanent Board to explore an external cultural competency audit of New England Yearly Meeting.

We support Friends General Conference, an organization of which we are a part, in its efforts to interrupt white supremacy in its organization.

We commit to support fundraising by the New England Yearly Meeting FGC committee to raise \$4,000 from our membership and our monthly meetings by the end of 2016. These funds will be available to FGC towards the cost of an external cultural competency audit if FGC decides to have one conducted. If more than \$4,000 is raised, we direct the Permanent Board of NEYM to find use for the additional funds to support the work of interrupting white supremacy.

One suggestion that was made since then was to have our monthly meetings educate themselves about the issues through readings and discussions. With that in mind, a group within Providence Friends Meeting began a reading and discussion group on white supremacy. From September through June, we read a series of books and articles dealing with this issue, and discussed them once a month, before meeting for worship. Some of the books were suggested by groups within the Yearly Meeting,

and others by those in the group. Here is what we read:

Amanda Kemp, *Say the Wrong Thing: Stories and Strategies for Racial Justice and Authentic Community* (Lancaster, Pa.: Joy Will Come Press, 2016.)

Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why it's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018)

Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*, Vol. 313; 5 (June 2014): p. 54-71.

Debby Irving, *Waking Up White, and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Elephant Room Press, 2014)

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* – Rev. ed. (New York: New Press, 2010).

I believe we all benefited greatly from these readings and discussions, no matter where we were on our journeys. One thing that struck me through all of this is that we cannot separate the issue of race in the United States from the legacy of slavery. Racism in the U.S. differs from racism almost everywhere else because most black people in this country are descended from those who were brought here as enslaved humans. That legacy lives on in the relations of black and white people here as it does nowhere else. I might also mention that the use of the term "white supremacy" in the NEYM minute was very controversial, and almost derailed the acceptance of that minute, because many people present, while they understood that white people have benefited from "white privilege", they did not think that our meetings harbor "white supremacy." One thing that I have come to see is that white people benefit from white privilege, and that white supremacy makes that possible. There is no "white privilege" without "white supremacy."

Our group will meet again in the fall to see how we might proceed from here. One thing we may do is to show some films. We will let everyone know when we plan some events. Others are welcome to join us. If you would like more information on the things we read. Please ask.

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.

FGC Gathering June 30 to July 6

Friends General Conference puts on a yearly Gathering, which is a week of Quaker worship, workshops, and community for all ages. This year's Gathering will be held June 30-July 6 2019 in Grinnell, Iowa. Friends, this is definitely the year to attend as a young person! There is no youth program fee and 50% off youth meals! The Gathering offers a variety of programming for different ages. Junior Gathering is open for children and youth ages 0-14, while the High School Gathering is for grades 10-12. A note for young people: All youth must attend with a parent or sponsor. You can attend as a part-time (3 day) or full time (6 day) attender. You do not have to be a Quaker to attend. Hope to see you there!

Report from Conanicut
from Marcie Lindsay

Conancicut Friends Meeting (Indulged) finally removed , in the middle of June ,the small electric radiators that allow worshipers to comfortably return to the Old Meetinghouse on Weeden Lane in May. They will be reconnected in late September, as the temperature can drop to the mid50's before the move to the winter worship site at the Quest Montessori School in Narragansett.

Summertime welcomes many visitors from the older Quaker families that still summer on the island. Father's Day weekend always seems a prime time for families to recall services with their parents in the years past.

The Jamestown Historical Society that manages the maintenance of the building has recently finished a limited structural assessment by Michael James, PE. This will help in organizing the most necessary maintenance issues. Also through the summer, evaluation will be made of the landscaping that need updating while offering some abatement of the road noise.

As always, we welcome visitors to our weekly services at 10:30 am.

Climate Change Year

The Peace and Social Action Committee has deliberated more than once about what to do in the Meeting about climate change. The Committee agreed in June that it will attempt to make this a "climate change" year in Providence Meeting. On September 15th, following social hour, Steve Gates, a member of Falmouth Meeting, will meet with us to talk about how each of us can reduce our carbon footprint. On October 20th, we will learn more about how to switch our electricity use to clean, renewable sources. We will meet on Nov 17th to discuss the environmental impact of various forms, methods, and kinds of transportation. More to follow as the year unfolds.

A Conversion Narrative
from Mike Hirtle

I recently visited the Sarasota Monthly Meeting while my wife and I are sojourning in Florida from our home meeting in Providence, Rhode Island. At the rise of meeting and the end of their social time, they fostered a presentation by a Quaker historian, Jerry Frost, who spoke about William Penn. During his wonderful presentation, Jerry used a term with which I was not familiar. He said that a large number of Friends in the 17th century wrote "conversion narratives" to memorialize how they came to the Society of Friends. It occurred to me that I have a "conversion narrative" in which Friends might be interested.

(At this point, I insert a parenthetical paragraph. One of the things about Friend Frost's talk that impressed me the most was how scrupulous he said that historians have to be about accepting facts. Accounts written long after the events they describe have to be held in a light of skepticism. I am writing about experiences that took place in my life more than 35 years ago. My memory might be somewhat suspect about dates, numbers and other specifics, but please trust that the sense of my impressions and the effects on me are indelible and unchanging.)

I was born in maritime Canada in 1950 and my father was a minister in the United Church of Canada. I was brought up in a home faithful to the traditions of Protestantism and attended church on a weekly basis even after my father left the ministry for a social work career in the YMCA serving "underprivileged" youth in Detroit and Washington DC. I was married in 1972 after graduating from college at the University of Maryland, and my wife and I continued the custom of faithful attendance in a series of traditional Protestant denominations. In 1982 we moved from western New York to south Jersey outside of Philadelphia. We had two children, a daughter entering the second grade and a son ready for pre-kindergarten. We had had a poor experience with the public school in the Buffalo area

and were anxious to find a better educational environment for our children. Someone suggested to us that a Quaker school in Cinnaminson, New Jersey might be a good alternative for us. I was granted an interview but was dismayed to learn that Westfield Friends School had a waiting list that was several years long and even complicated by the fact that some parents signed up before their expected children were even born, indicating their gender as TBD. For some reason, known only to God, we secured a place for both of our children at Westfield Friends School.

I knew that Quakers had a great reputation for education but other than that, I had no idea of what the Society of Friends was all about. I thought it might be a good idea to find out what my children were getting into. Out of this curiosity I started to attend the Meeting in Cinnaminson that was steward of the school. I discovered that I was quite comfortable with the "manner of Friends" and I enjoyed being with these quiet and thoughtful people. I attended regularly for nearly two years but made no further commitment to membership. But in 1983 or 1984 I crossed the Delaware to attend the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. I was particularly interested in the "war tax concern" agenda topic. A number of Friends were advocating for withholding from the government that portion of their income tax debt that represented the share of the US budget spent on defense. There were a few different options for how that money would be directed, most suggesting some appropriate charity. The big meeting room at the 4th and Arch was filled almost to capacity. I think that there were at least 300 Friends in attendance.

Friends spoke at the war tax session for well over an hour. The majority spoke of the wisdom of obeying the law and "rendering unto Caesar". Some pointed out that America's defense spending has a lot to do with keeping the peace instead of making war. Others argued that putting one's family and property at risk was reckless. Supporters of the resistance spoke passionately about following their conscience and making a statement aligned with age-old Quaker principles. It was clear that there would be no unity and no consensus. At the end of the session, a weighty Friend rose to console us saying that sometimes in the past it had taken Friends a very long time to sort out difficult issues.

What impressed me greatly was the fact that these people, on both sides of the issue, listened to each other with a lot of respect. I returned to Westfield, committed more than ever to continue as a faithful attender. Another year passed.

Reading that the war tax issue would be addressed again at Yearly meeting, and remembering how much I enjoyed my participation of the previous year, I returned to the big Philadelphia Meetinghouse. Most of the same Friends were in attendance and I looked forward to the discussion continuing, but in this new year things had changed drastically. A paid employee of the Yearly Meeting who was a war tax resister had come under attack from the IRS. Furthermore, the government was threatening the Meeting itself and, while I did not understand the specifics, it was apparent that the resources of the Meeting might be at risk.

The same Friends who had grappled with this matter a year earlier were now facing the following question: Are Friends willing to put their property at jeopardy to support this Friend? One after another members rose to say that while they had spoken before in opposition to this form of protest, they felt that the Meeting needed to stand behind this Friend in his act of conscience.

I have been involved in a lot of Quaker business meetings, threshing sessions and the like before and since, but I have never been in any meeting in which the sense of unity and consensus was stronger than on that day in Philadelphia. The instant, in which I recognized this unity, was the instant of my conversion and the precise time at which I became a convinced Friend. I looked around and decided, then and there, that I needed to be one with these people.

That very evening I wrote to the clerk of Westfield Monthly Meeting asking to be considered for membership in the Society of Friends.

Clerk's Corner: Continuing Revelation

from Rebecca Leuchak

In meeting for worship on a Sunday, the settling in to quiet and the silent waiting are such familiar and cherished practices for me now, after decades of membership in the Society of Friends. These practices lie at the very heart of what we as Quakers in unprogrammed meetings do communally to nurture our faith personally and corporately. The customs are so familiar. The gentle steps I take to enact that personal calming and centering are adopted with such joy and anticipation. It is like coming home to the place that nourishes me. Our meeting for worship – our corporate gathering of faith in the Light.—always feels special. Indeed, in some faith languages one might say “sacred.”

I frankly often am not particularly focused on how powerful a sensation this is that I feel when we worship together, though it is always there for the finding and affects me every time. And I am grateful when I turn to reflect on the experience of its rediscovery each time I sit in the meeting room with all assembled. But what is stunning to me *every single Sunday*, is the absolute clarity in my own mind that these practices are the profound and pragmatic foundation upon which our belief in ongoing revelation is built. That you and I can sit in silent worship, in patient waiting, and come to realization of truths we had never dreamed of is thanks to our ability to listen to the Inner Light. That we can feel this individually is a marvelous thing. That we feel this through a deep sense of connectedness with others is even more amazing.

As I come to the end of my first year as your presiding clerk, I reflect on how grateful I am—for our vibrant meeting community, for the shining presence each of you brings, and, most importantly, for the Spirit that fills us all. To have had a year of seeking the Divine Light through deep listening, to have had the opportunity to reflect each month, and to make an attempt to translate those reflections into words written on the page, with the help of our faithful newsletter editor—that has been truly a gift for your presiding clerk. It is a gift that I hope will continue for the year to come.

In this coming year, I invite you to join me in the pages of our newsletter. Submit your own reflections about your spiritual journey, your own insights and truths. There is such abundant variety in the ways we each understand our own path and our goal. And there are so many forms for expressing this! Let your Light shine in these pages. What canst Thou say through this newsletter, lovingly produced each month by members of our Meeting?.When we sit together in Friendly silence and experience the presence of the Spirit, there is the power to transcend our worldly cares, to transform our selves and make a new world, to come in to the peace of the Spirit, which passeth all understanding.*

*adapted from Philipians 4:7 King James Version.

[Providence Monthly Meeting Contact List](#)

Presiding Clerk: **Rebecca Leuchak** clerk@providencefriends.org
Newsletter: **Jen McFadden** providentfriend@providencefriends.org
Website: **Sam Schiffman** webclerk@providencefriends.org
General Inquiries: info@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

The Provident FRIEND

Newsletter of

Providence Monthly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends

99 Morris Avenue

Providence, RI 02906