

The Provident FRIEND

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

September 13, 2019

Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business 8th of Ninth Month, 2019 - Minutes

Friends gathered at the Saylesville meetinghouse at noon, with 18 present. Presiding clerk Rebecca Leuchak began the period of silent worship by reading the following queries taken from Southeastern Yearly Meeting (<https://seymquakers.org/resources/queries-advices/>):

Are our meetings for worship held in expectant waiting for divine guidance, with a living silence in which we feel drawn together in the Light by the presence of God?

Do we respond to the Spirit's prompting to minister, whether in silence, through the spoken word, or through action after the meeting for worship?

Are the spiritual gifts within the meeting fostered and encouraged?

The following **announcements** were read:

Friends are reminded that help is needed with hospitality on Sundays. There is a signup board in Providence for such tasks as preparation before meeting, bringing snacks, and clean-up afterward. If you enjoy the fellowship time over coffee and food, please consider pitching in to make it happen. We are a do-it-ourselves operation!

Also note that our First Day School needs teachers and assistants. The Religious Education Committee is extremely well prepared and able to guide those who volunteer. What a joy it is to get to work with the youngest members of our community. Come and pitch in!

Tomorrow, Monday, September 9th from 9:00 am to mid-afternoon in Burnside Park, Kennedy Plaza, the Sunrise Movement Summit is holding a climate action rally to make a clear and urgent call to our elected officials to embrace the Green New Deal. See their FaceBook page for more information.

Also, tomorrow there will be a demonstration at the Wyatt Detention Facility Training Building (935 High Street, Central Falls) at 5 p.m. See Steve Schwartz or consult the bulletin board downstairs in Providence for more information.

Steven Gates of Sandwich Monthly Meeting, co clerk of New England Yearly Meeting's Earthcare Ministry Committee will present a workshop on Climate Change at the Providence meetinghouse on Sunday, September 15th at 11:30. See the bulletin board there for more information about the workshop.

Friends are encouraged to attend a presentation by Friends Council on Education on Thursday, September 19th at 5:30 p.m. in the Walter Jones Library of Moses Brown School. See the bulletin board at Providence for more information.

CALENDAR

Sunday, September 15, 11:30 AM,
Climate Change Workshop with
Steven Gates, Providence
Meetinghouse

Thursday September 19, 5:30 PM,
Presentation by Friends Council on
Education, Walter Jones Library,
Moses Brown School

Friday September 20, 7:00 PM,
Documentary About Ending the
War in Afghanistan,
Westminster Unitarian Church

**Saturday, Sept 21, 11:00 AM to
4:00 PM,** Great Road Day,
Saylesville Meetinghouse

**Saturday September 21, Noon
until 7:00 PM,** SURJ RI/AMOR
Fundraiser, Providence
Meetinghouse

Saturday, October 5, 11:00 AM,
Memorial Service for Ruth Gates,
Providence Meetinghouse

Sunday, October 6, World Quaker
Day

Sunday, Oct 6, 11:25 AM Potluck
Lunch, Providence Meetinghouse

Sunday, October 13, Noon,
Meeting for Business, Saylesville
Meetinghouse

Sunday, October 20, 11:45 AM,
Green Energy Talk, Providence
Meetinghouse

Sunday, October 20, Noon,
Southeast Quarterly Meeting,
Providence Meetinghouse

All Meeting members and attenders are invited to the Westminster Unitarian Church on September 20th at 6:30 p.m. to see the movie *Endless War* sponsored by the Unitarian Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice Committee (SEEJ) and our local FCNL committee headed by Nancy Houston. The address of Westminster Unitarian Church is 119 Kenyon Avenue, East Greenwich, RI. We hope to carpool from Providence Meeting. See Adele Bourn or Nancy Houston for more details.

Saturday, September 21 is the annual Great Road Day Celebration in Lincoln, RI. The Saylesville Meetinghouse will be open with tours and demonstrations of historical activities. Friends are invited to attend and to volunteer for all or part of the 11:00 to 4:00 p.m. festivities. Donations of cookies to offer visitors would also be appreciated. For more information see the bulletin board downstairs and please contact Rebecca Smith if you can help!

SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice), RI - which meets regularly at the Providence meetinghouse is hosting AMOR's third annual Lobsterfest on Saturday, September 21 from noon to 7:00 p.m. Come eat and support the Alliance to Mobilize our Resistance (AMOR)! In addition to lobster and chicken, there will be vegetarian options. Choose the sitting that is best for you: noon to 2:00 p.m. or 2:30 to 4:30 or 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

On Saturday, October 5th at 11:00 there will be a memorial meeting for our dear Friend Ruth Gates, at the Providence meetinghouse. Please come and celebrate the life of a beloved long-time member of our community!

Friends are reminded that Friends around the globe will be celebrating World Quaker Day on Sunday, October 6th! On that day, we will have our annual Meeting community photo op and the children will have special activities in First Day School around this year's theme: "Sustainability: Planting Seeds of Renewal for the World We Love." It is also our monthly potluck lunch so bring international foods perhaps from your own immigrant ethnic ancestry?

Treasurer's first quarter financial report. Peter Swaszek reported on activity during the past three months. Contributions from members are a bit ahead of last year at this time. On the other hand, the construction projects are still not completely paid for. We thank Peter for his care of our finances.

Property Committee report: Nina Berry reported that the planned work at Saylesville meetinghouse has now been completed and paid for, including repair of the walkway and the installation of a non-leaking, water-conserving toilet. Regarding the parking/landscaping project at Providence, the good news is that there was no ledge; the bad news is that there was a thick layer of clay, which does not drain and had to be replaced with gravel. Boulders that were dug up have been used near Morris Avenue to discourage erosion, and to form tree wells. The grassy areas are being loamed and seeded, and two raised beds are being built for First Day School use. Nina noted that Property Committee's budget will be exhausted by this work. It was agreed that Property Committee will meet with Finance Committee, Fundraising Committee, and the Treasurer, and will report to a future meeting for business. We thank the Committee for their hard work.

For the **Saylesville Meetinghouse Management Committee**, Bob Watt reported that the Committee was invited to provide programming on the weekend of October 19 and 20 in conjunction with a Revolutionary War re-enactor's event at Hearthside House. There are three possible parts to this involvement. (1) A fundraiser in the form of food service at Hearthside on the afternoon of the 19th. There is a person available there with the necessary health permits, and Bob would manage the cooking of period foods; volunteers would be needed. (2) Opening the meetinghouse on Saturday the 19th for informational programming about Friends both at present and at the time of the Revolution. (3) A meeting for worship early on the morning of October 20, before our regular meeting. The Committee requested discernment from Friends about our participation with this event. After some discussion, Friends approved the proposed activities at the meetinghouse. Regarding the food service proposal, concerns were raised about both potential liability and the appropriateness of being involved in a war-related event. Meeting for Business did not feel clear to take

this activity under our care. We thank the committee.

For the **Providence Meetinghouse Management Committee**, Dan Lederer reported that the meetinghouse is used regularly by our own Meeting, by Moses Brown School, and by a number of outside groups on either a one-time or a recurring basis. We are open to use of the meetinghouse by groups whose aims are compatible with our own, as long as their schedule does not interfere with our own use of the building. Normally they are expected to make a financial contribution, but the Meeting has decided to exempt SURJ RI at this time. (See minutes of Sixth Month 9, 2019, item 5.) Groups using the meetinghouse on a regular basis have signed contracts, and some have provided certificates of liability insurance. We thank the committee.

For the **Friends Committee on National Legislation Advocacy Team**, Eugenia Marks reported that the local group includes both Quakers and non-Quakers from our area. The current focus is on advocating for diplomacy and on reining in the expansion of war. The group is prepared to welcome participation by additional Meeting members. We thank Eugenia for the information.

Bob Watt reported that Pax Christi, a Roman Catholic-led organization which is concerning itself with issues of climate change, is planning some events in October. He hoped the Meeting might participate in some way. We refer this matter to the Peace and Social Action Committee.

No further business appearing, we closed with a period of silent worship at 2:30 p.m., intending to meet next on the 13th of Tenth month at the Saylesville meetinghouse.

Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk
Rebecca Smith, Recording Clerk

World Quaker Day on Sunday, October 6

Friends World Committee for Consultation invites all to join Quakers from around the world for the 6th annual World Quaker Day. This year's theme is "Sustainability: Planting Seeds of Renewal for the World We Love". For more information, go to <http://www.worldquakerday.org/> .

Sunrise Movement Stays with the Quakers

September 7 through 9, Providence Friends Meeting hosted fifty out of over five hundred young people from across the Northeast and other parts of the Country who were in town for the Sunrise Movement Environmental Action Regional Meetings. They participated in all-day workshops on Saturday and Sunday at Rhode Island College and staged an environmental justice action in downtown Providence and at the Statehouse on Monday. The young people were very grateful for the comfortable accommodations of the Meetinghouse! Other attendees of the three-day conference stayed with individual Quakers of our community. Thank you, Friends, for creating such a welcoming space, whether in the Meetinghouse or in your individual homes, for them to stay!

News from Property Committee

Lots of work has been done over the summer months, some of which is on-going. Property Committee has some requests for Friends.

At the Providence meetinghouse, painting took place on the third floor, the stairwell, and the downstairs hallway including the cubbies. Storage cabinets (lockable) were installed in the hallway above the downstairs coat rack. A large bulletin board was installed in the downstairs hallway. The carpets in the library, the entrance, the stairway, and the third floor stairs and room were professionally

cleaned. Please participate in stewardship of the meetinghouse by not carrying or bringing anything that could spill into these areas.

The elevator is awaiting a dedicated telephone line. Until that time, please do not use the elevator unless there is someone outside the elevator while it is in use.

The parking lot and landscaping project continues. The plan is have it available when the Music for Children classes resume on September 24th. We are asking those parents and our community to try not to park on the lot during the fall so that the grass can grow. The music families will probably have to use it two days of the week because of the lack of parking around the meetinghouse while Moses Brown School is in session. There should be available parking on the streets any other time.

At the Saylesville meetinghouse, the exterior painting was completed. This was the final step of the restoration project. A new toilet was installed. The sidewalk was repaired to make it safer. Please join Friends for worship there on Sundays at 10:30 am and enjoy this beautiful and loved meetinghouse.

How We Communicate *from Communications Committee*

The committee maintains several means of communication for Friends:

- We have two email groups, one being the Meeting Email List, often referred to as "the listserve", which functions as our electronic bulletin board, with notices of upcoming events and other items of interest to Friends, and the second being the Meeting Social List, which is for more personal messages and for back and forth dialog.
- The Meeting Directory helps us communicate individually, with the next updated edition coming out in October.
- Yet another means of communication is our newsletter, The Provident Friend, published ten times per year.
- And finally there's our website, accessible to all at www.providentfriends.org.

In order to engage fully in the life of the Meeting, it's helpful to be on the email lists, to be listed in the Meeting Directory, and to receive the Meeting newsletter. If any one of these is not happening for you, please contact Dan Lederer (dlederer1@verizon.net).

The Wider World of Quakers *from Rebecca Leuchak*

In back-to-school spirit, I'd like to share a little of what I did during my summer within the wider world of Quakers. The month of August turned out to be a very Friendly month! First came New England Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions, a week spent in community with 620-plus Quakers of all ages and from all parts of our northeast region, as well as other Yearly Meetings and Quaker communities from around the world. In the glorious late-summer of mountainous western Vermont at Castleton University, Friends spent very full days and late into the nights worshipping together, discerning the business of the Yearly Meeting, singing, dancing, swimming, catching up with old F/friends, and creating new friendships.

If you were not able to go, chat with one of the half-dozen Providence Friends who were there, and check out: The daily Bible half-hour given by Colin Sexton, a Quaker pastor, former superintendent of Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends, and former general secretary of Friends United Meeting; the plenary sessions delivered by Lisa Graustein, New England Friend from Beacon Hill Meeting who has worked extensively with schools and community groups to address issues of diversity and equity, systems of oppression and prejudice in our society; and a special message delivered by teleconference from Jean Zaru, a Palestinian Quaker who was a founding member of Sabeel, an ecumenical

Palestinian Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem, co-establisher of the Friends International Center in Ramallah, and clerk of Ramallah Friends Meeting in Palestine. All may be found here: <https://neym.org/recordings/news/2019-bible-half-hours-and-plenary-recordings> More about this rich week of gathered Friends may also be found in the “News from Annual Sessions 2019” provided by New England Yearly Meeting on the web at: https://neym.org/sites/default/files/News%20from%20Sessions%202019_0.pdf

Leaving NEYM Sessions, I headed south to the Quaker conference at Powell House, a retreat center of New York Yearly Meeting located across the border in the traditional territory of the Mohican people near Old Chatham, New York. The annual meeting and workshops of the Quaker Religious Education Collaborative (QREC) brought together thirty participants from three continents representing a wide spectrum of Quaker practice and theology. We worshiped in programmed and unprogrammed ways, shared our faith and our practices, our projects and ministries, and intentionally leaned in to all the rich variety of Quakerism in the twenty-first century.

This time and work together was truly a joy! We explored ways to use play and technology to deepen spirituality, discussed possibilities for youth ministry with teens, thought about effective outreach to young adults, probed effective ways to provide support to individuals within our communities who experience need, and swapped techniques and tools for first day school curriculum. The proceedings were also live-streamed for participants connecting from a distance, and the proceedings were simultaneously translated into Spanish for participants from Mexico, Bolivia, and Colombia. My first QREC conference taught me that the group brings together Friends who are committed, energized, and creative educators in their Quaker communities.

Put Military Decisions in the Hands of Congress

by Eugenia Marks

(This article appeared as a Letter to the Editor in the *Providence Journal* on August 30, 2019.)

Eighteen years have elapsed since the attack on the World Trade Towers in New York. In that time grief has rippled from the families of some 250,000 dead civilians and 15,000 dead U. S. troops and contractors engaged in “the war on terror,” the endless war. According to a 2018 Congressional Research Service report, the executive branch has extended its authority to 41 operations in 19 countries with another 61 nations hosting sites for military exercises and bases, at a cost of \$5.9 trillion — yes, trillion — over the 18 years of this on-going war.

War is horror. The U. S. Constitution has a mechanism to remind us of that slaughter and mayhem as we as a people and a government decide whether an outcome is worth the tragedy. Presidential emergency authority followed by congressional decisions to continue a military response allows us to weigh the losses of life, economy, and environment.

Congress has an opportunity to vote for peace by supporting the House version of the National Defense Appropriations Act that contains an amendment limiting executive military authority in Iran, where an increase in brinksmanship is pushing toward more armed conflict. Congress should decide on a case-by-case basis to ascertain the pros and cons of extending ourselves, our youth whom we send to battle, our tax base that supports the war machine, and the devastation of vast stretches of land and structure in these deadly missions.

Budgets for productive social programs and bountiful lives should be the goals that propel us. Let us stop this endless war.

Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin, by John D'Emilio

(The University of Chicago, The Free Press, 2003)

Book Review by Libby Edgerly

(This book is available in the library at the Providence meetinghouse.)

One of the pleasures of living a long time, for me, is to learn some of the truths hidden in past events. A “true” biography of Bayard Rustin could not have been written until after the Stonewall riots in June 1969 in New York City, the development of gay liberation groups, the legalizing of gay marriage, and the partial opening of some Christian denominations to the gay community. Rustin was a “lost” prophet because he was born in 1912. For the years of his enormously effective organizing for peace and racial justice, society branded him a criminal and sinner for his sexual orientation. To protect the organizations he worked in and the people he worked with from this branding, he cooperated with them to keep his sexual activity out of the public eye (not always successfully) and never made it part of his civil rights message. He allowed himself to be “lost” as much as possible, although towards the end of his life he received many public honors.

These honors did not result in his story being fully written into the historical record until this book. Powerful early influences included being raised by his Quaker grandmother, who agreed with the peace testimony of Quakers but was definitely an activist on behalf of racial justice. And, in the era of Jim Crow, he had the unusual experience of growing up in a predominantly white, small town in Pennsylvania that fully accepted him into the academic, sports, and musical activities available to young people, as long as he kept his sexual orientation hidden. He was a strong athlete and gifted musician and singer.

Rustin began to earn money working for pacifism when he worked at summer camps for the American Friends Service Committee. He then worked under the guidance of A.J. Muste, the leader of the pacifist organization The Fellowship of Reconciliation, and urged Muste to expand the agenda of FOR to include racial justice. A theme in Rustin’s life was to demonstrate that nonviolence could be extremely effective in achieving these ends, if practiced skillfully and strategically. He was so good at this that he was in demand as an organizer as far away as England and Africa. Martin Luther King, Jr., often called on his skills, even for writing speeches.

An important part of Rustin’s story is that, whenever conflicts arose within organizations and between organizations, those who wanted to diminish Rustin’s influence could threaten the exposure of his sexual orientation. The details about infighting and how Rustin and others managed this is important reality-training for anyone engaged in social movements that have noble aims but fallible people – ie, all such organizations.

When Rustin was organizing the 1963 March on Washington, there were many groups with differing agendas that had to cooperate but found it difficult. Rustin told them that he was running the March on the basis of consensus. He said his understanding of the consensus process was that anyone who opposed the March had to make a vigorous, public presentation of his/her reasons. He suspected that no group would want to be labeled as “opposing” the March, and he was right.

Next time you head down to the lower level of our meetinghouse, take a moment to check out the new bulletin board at the foot of the stairs with its collection of photographs documenting the rich life of our community. This was a project conceived by Dan Lederer, who printed all the beautiful images taken by Laura Landen, Bill Monroe, Nina Berry, and others. Bob Elliott mounted the bulletin board. Thank you, Friends!

Two weeks ago, I took a quiet afternoon to post that collection of wonderful Friends' faces. It was a mindful moment for me, a moment of deep appreciation and of reconfirmation of something I have always recognized in us - all the energy, creativity, good will, and love that individuals, too many to name here, pour into the life of our meeting community through their volunteer efforts to make things happen. The photos document the many events we have celebrated over the past year: the ground breaking, construction, and opening of our new wing, the May Breakfast, the guest lectures and workshops, World Quaker Day, our Committee Fair, and of course the foundation for all, our weekly gatherings for meeting for worship.

As I posted them, I also cherished the photos of long-ago moments with Friends, some who have not been to Meeting in a while, some who have moved away, and others who are no longer with us. With each photo, I had the chance to reflect on the beauty of individuals coming together to share with each other, nurture each other, build for each other a place where we can deepen our understanding of our inner divine existence, discern our relation to the divine Spirit present all around us in the world, and discover the path that that Spirit is calling us to travel. Ongoing, strong, and deep is that journey we take together, and each of us provides our share of Light to guide the way.

We started on this journey – some recently, some many years ago – knowing that it is not without setbacks, twists and turns, detours, even moments of losing our way. But we engage in it, in full conviction that the truths of others shared in our Quaker community are key to finding our own individual truth. We need each other to reach the Truth!

Thank you, Friends, for your beautiful faces in these photos, for making that commitment to community, for all you do to make our community thrive. Thank you for your bright Light that fills our Meeting with the grace and power of the Spirit!

I am grateful for the opportunity to work with other dear Friends to put this display together, and grateful for this particular deeply moving way to reconnect with all of you. Who would have suspected that a bulletin board could provide such experience of joy? I invite all to come enjoy this display of our many Friendly faces. May you experience similar delight!

[Providence Monthly Meeting Contact List](#)

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Newsletter of

Providence Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

(401) 331-4218 or <http://providencefriends.org>

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

Providence, RI 02906