

The Provident FRIEND

November 11, 2019

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

Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business Cancelled This Month

The next Meeting for Business will be at noon on Sunday December 8, at the Providence meetinghouse.

Meeting at Moses Brown School Wednesday November 13

Matt Glendinning, head of Moses Brown School, invites neighbors of the school to meet on campus on Wednesday, November 13, at 5:00 PM in the school's library to hear of plans for the renovation of Moses Brown's Lower School.

Fellowship with Muslim Friends

We will be sharing fellowship with our Muslim friends again this Friday, November 15. If you are interested please contact either Wendy Virgadamo or Bob Watt. We will be meeting at the Masjid Al Kareem mosque, [39 Haskins Street, Providence](http://www.masjidalkareem.org), at 1:30 PM on Friday. Feel free to bring baked goods to share if you like..

Session for Newcomers

Our monthly session for newcomers and others wishing to learn more about the Society of Friends will take place at 11:45 AM next Sunday, November 17, in the Providence meetinghouse library. See Rebecca Smith, Rebecca Leuchak, or Betsy Cazden for more information..

Christmas Gathering Saturday, December 14

The Special Events Committee would like to announce that this year's Christmas Gathering will be on Saturday, December 14, from 5:00 until 7:00 PM. The Gathering features singing, sharing, fellowship, and a potluck. If you would like to participate with a song, a reading, or a reminiscence, please let John Lord know. Also, instrumentalists are encouraged to join the Sounds of Silence orchestra. Auditions take place during the Gathering itself, so just do your best.

Asylum-Seeking Families

from Peace and Social Action Committee

We have been asked for housing support for asylum-seeking families during their wait for processing, which can be for an indefinite period. Having sites for families available is a requirement by ICE for release from border facilities. Needed are both housing for families and commitments to help host families who can do this (rides as

CALENDAR

Friday, Nov 15, 1:30 PM, Fellowship with Muslim Neighbors, Masjid Al Kareem, 39 Haskins St., Providence

Sunday, Nov 17, 11:45 AM, Session for Newcomers, Providence Meetinghouse Library

Sunday, Dec 1, 11:30 AM, Potluck Lunch, Providence Meetinghouse

Friday Dec 6 to Sunday Dec 8, NEYM Young Friends Retreat, Providence Meetinghouse

Sunday, Dec 8, noon, Meeting for Business, Providence Meetinghouse

Saturday, Dec 14, 5:00 PM, Christmas Gathering, Providence Meetinghouse

Sunday, Dec 15, 11:45 AM, Session for Newcomers, Providence Meetinghouse Library

Tuesday, Dec 24, 4:30 PM, Candlelight Christmas Eve Service, Saylesville Meetinghouse

needed, financial support for legal defense funds, etc.). Contact committee clerk Steve Schwartz if you can help or if you have questions.

Gathering on Thanksgiving Day

Friends without plans for Thanksgiving Day (November 28) are welcome to join the McLamms (Jen, Ben, Ada, and Rowan) in Bristol. Please see Jen McFadden for more information.

World Quaker Day

On World Quaker Day our First Day School learned about Sustainability, and they will be planting a sugar maple in our garden next Sunday. Adults worked together on a project of calculating our personal and household carbon footprints. We also had an international potluck with everyone contributing dishes from their own ethnic immigrant cuisines. The diversity of foods reminded us of how we all came to our country from different places around the world and how grateful we are for the richness of life when we share and celebrate our cultural diversity.



Providence Monthly Meeting Friends gather on World Quaker Day,
October 6, 2019

Peace Witness: A Visit from Parfaite Ntahuba, Burundian Friend, Activist, and Pastor

from Jen McFadden

In October, PMM and Moses Brown School were delighted to host a Friend from Africa whose work and service are a powerful witness to peace and healing in the wake of war. Parfaite Ntahuba serves as the national coordinator for Friends Women's Association in Burundi, and she is one of only three women in Burundi to serve as pastor of an Evangelical Friends Church congregation. During her day in Providence on Oct. 4, she visited with eighth and tenth-grade students at MB and later joined the PMM community for a potluck. Every audience was touched by the story she shared of her family's experiences as refugees in Burundi's civil war and their eventual connection with a Quaker family who sheltered them. That family introduced Parfaite to a new way of life in which violence played no role. Meeting Quakers changed Parfaite's trajectory. She pursued an education and eventually became a leader in the church community that took her in. Today her large church at Kamenge Meeting serves more than 2500 members. In her work she has been led to support women affected by gender-based violence, families and individuals living with HIV/AIDS, and young couples contemplating marriage. Audiences were grateful for the opportunity to hear firsthand from someone working to remove the causes and conditions of violence and to encourage healing and economic independence in the aftermath of trauma. Special thanks go to Jonathan Vogel-Borne, Friends Peace Teams, and the African Great Lakes Initiative for supporting and facilitating Parfaite's visit to the US.

To view a video of Parfaite's talk given to MB's eighth graders, please use the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAW5QLIZ2jg&list=PLp7h6CGx96uAwISU2c6UPHWbvfCuw6kwr&index=2&t=54s>

For more on Parfaite's work and the organizations she leads, see this recent article from Friends Journal:

<https://www.friendsjournal.org/empowering-women-against-gender-based-violence/>

How to Save Taxes and Benefit Providence Monthly Meeting

from Zona Douthit

If you want to reduce your current income taxes or Rhode Island estate taxes and benefit PMM at the same time, consider giving your Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) directly to PPM now and/or giving the Meeting your IRA outright at your death.

Outright Gift

You can reduce your Rhode Island Estate taxes (on amounts over \$1.56 million this year) while benefiting the Meeting at your death by designating Meeting as a beneficiary of your IRA. This ultimately results in a larger gift because, unlike an individual, a charity will not owe income tax on any IRA withdrawals. Assets like stocks get a capital gains tax saving if left to an individual at your death, but stock inside your IRA doesn't and would be subject to state and local income taxes. To maximize the impact of your gift, leave appreciated stocks in your IRA

to a charity, and donate any that are outside your IRA to an individual.

There are some requirements about timing of the distribution if you leave part of the account to an individual, so it is important to consult with a knowledgeable adviser before designating any charity as your beneficiary. If you want to name your spouse as the primary beneficiary, consider naming PMM as a contingent beneficiary.

Required Minimum Distributions

If you are fortunate enough not to need the money that you are required to withdraw from an IRA after age 70 ½ and you make regular contributions to PMM, you can tell your IRA plan custodian that you want the RMD to go directly to PMM. You never have to claim it on your income tax, thus reducing your adjusted gross income (AGI). Why does that matter? All sorts of income taxes and deductions are based on AGI. For example, a larger AGI might increase the 3.8% Net Investment Income Tax, income tax on Social Security benefits, and federal and state income taxes. At the same time, AGI affects Medicare premiums and the deductibility of certain expenses, such as medical expenses.

If you no longer itemize because the standard deduction is now \$12,000, donating directly from an IRA has the effect of making the charitable donation essentially deductible. Donating all or part of an RMD to the Meeting can be especially useful once you are over age 90 because you are required to withdraw a large percentage of your IRA by then. Best of all, if you need the money in the future, you can always revert to giving RMDs to yourself or designate a different beneficiary for the ultimate distribution.

The rules are very specific, so it is important that you consult with a knowledgeable adviser to set this up. Please see me if you'd like further discussion of these issues.

Thoughts on Veterans Day

from Dan Lederer

On November 11, 1919, President Woodrow Wilson announced the establishment of Armistice Day to remember the end of the Great War (often referred to, at the time, as “the war to end all wars”) and those who had served in it. In 1954 Congress changed the name to Veterans Day, acknowledging the contribution of all veterans, not just those who fought or died during World War I.

Some Quakers may find the observance of Veterans Day objectionable, viewing it as a glorification of war, but I see it as honoring those members of our armed forces who endured personal hardship and risked their lives in what they believed was an effort to preserve our nation’s freedom, which, in the case of World War II, is, in my view, exactly what that struggle was all about. One can argue that subsequent conflicts, especially the Vietnam War, have been disastrous and perhaps unnecessary, but in the case of WWII there was a clear threat to our way of life. Were it not for the sacrifices of those who came before us, we might not be living in a country where every person can worship as he or she pleases, a freedom we especially enjoy as Quakers. And being of Jewish heritage myself, it’s not too far-fetched to envision that, had the Nazis prevailed, I wouldn’t be here today, and those of us who escaped extermination might well have lost many of the freedoms that we now take for granted.

I am one of only a few Friends in our Meeting who has served on active duty in the military, in my case as a Navy physician stationed in Washington, DC, during the Vietnam War. As a result I have great admiration for the dedication of the service people I encountered, but at the same time I've come to see war as an abomination, remembering what Dwight D. Eisenhower said: "I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity."

Declaring oneself a pacifist, or anti-war, is not enough. It's essential to try to discern and address the causes of war – poverty, over-population, scarcity of resources, etc. My hope is that this Veterans Day has given us an occasion to pause and consider how we can help prevent future wars and bring current conflicts to an end.

Clerk's Corner: When Whittling Is What We Need!

from Rebecca Leuchak

How hard it is to step outside the values that the secular world has so molded us into! I think about the way that our society sets convincing and compelling bars - for efficiency, goal-focused decision making, cognitive reasoning, executive function, single-minded achievement. I wonder how that meshes with our Quaker faith in the Divine Light and our spiritual practice of silent waiting for ongoing revelation.

I was reminded of the truth of alternative spiritual perspective by a Friend who spoke of the carving of a bear. When the carver was asked if carving the bear was difficult, he said "Not at all!" He explained that the first thing was to find one's own inner clarity about the form and shape of the bear within the block of wood. Then the task simply became removing with a penknife all the extraneous material, whittling it away to reveal the already existing bear. This story is reminiscent of a well-known tale of the early life of the great Renaissance artist Michelangelo, who claimed that he saw the form of a sculpture within the block of marble and with chisel and hammer gradually liberated the figure already existent within. He famously wrote: "The sculpture is already complete within the marble block, before I start my work. It is already there, I just have to chisel away the superfluous material."

Although that sculpted figure is at the core of our being, we often make great efforts to ignore and spend precious little time trying to discern it. But it is the core of who we are and has always been there. We have to a large extent built up around it a confusing layering of superfluous material that obscures the essential form.

What if we could, for a moment, indeed in increasing moments, ignore the secular world around us? What if we could step to the side of the linear conception of working towards a goal? What if we could, instead, focus on building the foundations of ourselves and of our spiritual practice? By focusing on that core, that inner bear, we might become familiar with its form and then set about the whittling that needs doing.

As individuals, we might drop the imperative to hit a certain target in work, family life, personal identity and watch pressure and anxiety and feelings of inadequacy disappear. We might be able instead to tap in to an inner

strength that would support our specific effort and endeavors. Instead of focusing on one-time and finite outcomes, we would instead be building strength of inner integrity. We would create a sustaining foundation for ongoing achievement.

I don't mean to say that general vision of where one is headed is unimportant. But the focus on an end-goal, to the neglect of building the core strength that can get one there, is really a recipe for disaster. We have a faith practice that is focused on the process of ongoing revelation, rather than an imperative to establish how things must be. Let's all whittle together!



All Are Welcome Here!

Providence Monthly Meeting Contact List

Presiding Clerk: **Rebecca Leuchak** clerk@providencefriends.org
Assistant Presiding Clerk: **Dan Lederer**
Recording Clerk: **Rebecca Smith**
Treasurer: **Peter Swaszek**
Ministry & Counsel: **Bruce Shaw**
Pastoral Care Committee: **Hans-Dieter Gomes**
Finance: **Steve Thomas**
Peace & Social Action: **Steve Schwartz**
Hospitality: **Eugenia Marks**
Religious Education: **Victoria Ekk**
Communications: **Dan Lederer**
Special Events Committee: **John Lord**
Library: **Rebecca Smith**
Archive: **Dan Lederer**
Property: **Bob Elliott and Nina Berry**
Burial Grounds: **Matt Hackman**
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Email list moderator: **Dan Lederer**
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Moses Brown School Liaison: **Ariana Steele**
Adult Religious Education: **Ben Lamm and Carol Smith**
To schedule the Meetinghouse: **Dan Lederer**
Questions and Information: **Steve Schwartz** 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
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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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Providence, RI 02906