

The Provident FRIEND

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

January 14, 2020

Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business 12th of First Month, 2020 Minutes

Friends gathered at the Providence meetinghouse at noon, with 24 present. Presiding clerk Rebecca Leuchak began the period of silent worship by reading the following queries taken from Winthrop Center Friends Church in Winthrop, Maine (<https://www.fgcquaker.org/cloud/winthrop-friends-meeting/pages/advices-and-queries>):

Do you seek to understand where a person's words come from when those words are strange or disturbing to you?

Do you listen patiently and seek the truth that other people's thoughts may contain for you?

As you learn from others, are you willing to share with them what you in turn have learned?

The following announcements were read:

There will be a memorial service for longtime Meeting member Robert Dowben here at the Providence meetinghouse on Saturday January 18 at 2:00 PM, with an inclement weather date the following day, Sunday January 19 at 2:00 PM.

Peace and Social Action Committee is asking for housing support for asylum-seeking families during their wait for processing. 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 needed, financial support for legal defense funds, etc.). Contact person: Steve Schwartz.

Noah Merrill, Secretary of New England Yearly Meeting and Bruce Neumann, Presiding Clerk of New England Yearly Meeting will be with us Sunday, 26th for the hour of worship and at rise of meeting to speak with us about the relationship of NEYM and monthly meetings within NEYM with Friends United Meeting. All are encouraged to participate in this discussion. See the all-community e-mail that was sent out to us this past week by Dan Lederer for more information, or speak to Dan or Rebecca Leuchak or Bruce Shaw.

This year New England Yearly Meeting Permanent Board will hold its regularly scheduled all-day February meeting for business at Providence Friends Meeting on Saturday, February 15th. Friends in the area may be needed to provide overnight hospitality for the Friday before, that is February 14th. Please let Rebecca Leuchak know if you would be willing to host a Friend or two!

John Gaffney noted that the R. I legislature is considering increased involvement in gambling, something that Friends have long considered incompatible with Truth. He asks Friends to consider how we may bear witness in this matter. Steve Schwartz will bring the question to the Peace and Social Action Committee.

For the Social and Hospitality Committee, Eugenia Marks reported that the weekly coffee hours continue to take place successfully, due to the efforts of members of our community. Five volunteers are needed each week for our fellowship time. Assistance in disposing of trash and recycling may also be needed. The kitchen was given a thorough cleaning in October, and the Christmas celebration was well-coordinated. We thank the committee for

CALENDAR

Friday, Jan 17, 1:30 PM, Fellowship with Muslim Neighbors, Masjid Al Kareem, 39 Haskins St., Providence

Saturday, Jan 18, 2:00 PM, Memorial Service for Robert Dowben, Providence Meetinghouse (Inclement weather date Sun, Jan 19, 2:00 PM)

Sunday, Jan 19, 11:45 AM, Session for Newcomers, Providence Meetinghouse Library

Tuesday, Jan 21, 7:00 PM, Women's Group, Home of Em McManamy

Friday, Jan 24 – Sunday, Jan 26, NEYM Elementary-Age Kids' Retreat, Wellesley Friends Meeting

Sunday, Jan 26, 11:45 AM, Discussion Regarding FUM, Providence Meetinghouse

Sunday, Feb 2, 11:30 AM, Potluck Lunch, Providence Meetinghouse

Sunday, Feb 9, noon, Meeting for Business, Providence Meetinghouse

Friday, Feb 14, 5:00 PM until Saturday, Feb 15, 5:00 PM, NEYM Permanent Board Retreat, Providence Meetinghouse

their work.

For the Religious Education Committee, Eugenia reported that the committee continues to develop a curriculum focusing on the Quaker principle of Care for the Earth. First Day School classes are being held weekly for two elementary-age groups and twice a month for teen-agers. More teachers are needed and Friends are urged to consider how they may be of service. Eugenia also mentioned that New England Yearly Meeting runs retreats which could be of value to our children. (Information can be found at <https://neym.org/attend-event/youth-retreats>.)

The Library Committee requested that the Meeting add Amy Schneidhorst to the Committee for the current year. Friends approved.

For Property Committee, Nina Berry reported that the parking area landscaping is mostly complete; some additional loam and seed will be needed in the spring. The gate to the parking lot is being kept closed but unlocked when the meetinghouse is not in use. Since those who most need to park close to the building may be least likely to be able to operate the gate, other Friends are asked to be mindful of the need to open and close it. Friends are also reminded to put away tables and chairs at the end of fellowship time on First Days, and to store both in the fellowship room. Snow rails have been added to the roof. The new storage room is being organized and extraneous items removed from the third floor. The committee is considering the possibility of adding translucent shades to the meeting room for purposes of energy efficiency. A new hot-water tank has been installed at Saylesville. We thank the committee for their work.

For the Finance Committee, Dan Lederer brought a request to allow the treasurer to overspend the telephone budget line by \$800, for a total of \$2500, for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. The increase is due to the required installation of a telephone in the elevator. Friends approved.

For Nominating Committee, Dan reported that they will begin work in the coming month. Friends will be asked if they would like to continue in current committee assignments and/or take on new ones. Committees particularly in need of new members are Hospitality, Adult Religious Education, Special Events, Nursery, Membership, and Fundraising.

For the Saylesville Meetinghouse Management Committee, Bob Watt reported that worship continues to take place there regularly, with an average attendance of seven. Special events there this year have included a visit from the Society of Architectural Historians, participation in Lincoln's Great Road Day, an open house and special meeting for worship in conjunction with an event at Hearthside House, a workshop, book swaps, and the annual candlelight service on Christmas Eve. A new fundraiser, the Light Year Project commemorating the years since the meetinghouse was built in 1703, began in December and has raised \$485.00 so far. The building is in good condition now and the fence work has been completed. The Committee continues to be involved in the historic Great Road district and also to explore ways of using the meetinghouse to increase public awareness of the Society of Friends. They recommend continued Meeting support of this meetinghouse in the coming year. Friends approved.

Noting that not all members of Providence Meeting are familiar with Saylesville and that we have not yet found unity about the relationship between those who worship in our multiple locations or about our financial priorities, we ask the Presiding Clerk, Ministry and Counsel, and Saylesville Management Committees to find ways to guide our discernment during the coming year.

No further business appearing, we closed with a period of silent worship at 2:00 p.m., intending to meet next at the on the ninth of Second month at the Providence meetinghouse.

Rebecca Leuchak, clerk
Rebecca Smith, recording clerk

Fellowship with Muslim Friends January 17

We will be sharing fellowship with our Muslim friends again on Friday, January 17. 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, at 1:30 PM on Friday. Feel free to bring baked goods to share if you like. These sessions are weather-dependent, so, if there is any question, check with Wendy or Bob.

Memorial Service for Robert Dowben January 18

There will be a memorial service for longtime Meeting member Robert Dowben at the Providence meetinghouse on Saturday January 18 at 2:00 PM, with an inclement weather date the following day, Sunday January 19 at 2:00 PM. Contact Rebecca Leuchak regarding any possible change in date.

Session for Newcomers January 19

Our monthly session for newcomers and others wishing to learn more about the Society of Friends will take place at 11:45 AM on Sunday, January 19, in the Providence meetinghouse library. See Rebecca Smith, Rebecca Leuchak, or Betsy Cazden for more information.

Women's Group January 21

Our Meeting has a women's group and all who identify as female are invited. The next meeting will be Tuesday January 21 at 7:00 PM at the home of Em McManamy in Providence. Call Em or Rebecca Leuchak for further info.

NEYM Elementary-Age Kids' Retreat January 24 - 26

There will be a New England Yearly Meeting Elementary-Age Kids' Retreat at Wellesley Meeting on January 24th to January 26th. This is for any young Friend in grades two to six. More information can be found on the NEYM website or talk with parents whose children have participated in the NEYM retreat program.

Discussion Regarding FUM on January 26

from Dan Lederer

On Sunday January 26, Bruce Neumann, New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) presiding clerk, and Noah Merrill, NEYM secretary, will join us after Meeting for Worship to discuss the current situation regarding Friends United Meeting (FUM) and its personal ethics policy. Some background is as follows:

NEYM budgets an annual contribution to FUM, which means that a portion of each monthly meeting's annual contribution to NEYM goes to FUM. Some Friends have found FUM's personal ethics policy to be objectionable, specifically the requirement that all employees sign an agreement that "intimate sexual behavior should be confined to traditional marriage, understood between one man and one woman." As a result, they have objected to our donating to FUM, even if our donation is via NEYM and therefore indirect.

In April 2019, our Meeting approved a budget that included the provision that no part of Meeting's contribution to NEYM would go to FUM, this to be accomplished by informing NEYM that this was our position. Many of us hoped that the issue was settled at that point. Sadly, this is no longer the case.

On October 5, Shearman Taber, NEYM treasurer, wrote to Kelly Kellum, FUM's general secretary, to report that, at its August sessions, NEYM had decided to end the practice of allowing its constituent monthly meetings to withhold that portion of their contribution to NEYM that would be passed on to FUM, this to go into effect at the end of NEYM's current fiscal year (September 30, 2020). In his response, Kelly Kellum reported that FUM's board is not in unity regarding this policy, but the policy remains in place. He wrote, "For some members, maintaining the Personal Ethics Policy is a matter of Biblical integrity. For other members, the policy is unjust and discriminates against LGBTQ persons. At this moment, we have not found a way to resolve this disharmony." (Please note that the policy discriminates against anyone in an intimate relationship outside of a traditional marriage, not just LGBTQ.)

After more than a decade of discernment, we at Providence Monthly Meeting finally decided to discontinue financial support of FUM beginning with our current fiscal year's budget, but, as a result of NEYM's action, we now find that, as of October 2020, we will be unable to implement this decision as long as we continue our annual contribution to NEYM. We share this dilemma with at least 11 other monthly meetings within NEYM. Bruce Neumann and Noah Merrill are coming to meet with us, and with other monthly meetings, in the hope of finding a way forward.

To see the letters from Shearman Taber and Kelly Kellum mentioned above as well as Bruce Neumann's summary of NEYM's action and his recent update, go to

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1HOaobt7aCeJRq30HWyRK2WJKB3QFCR-3?usp=sharing>

Cuban Friends

Friends in New England have a connection with Cuban Friends that is called Puente de Amigos, or Bridge of Friends. A delegation will be going to visit our Friends in Cuba in February. We are asking for donations of medical supplies that the delegation will deliver there. A box is in the hallway. Please donate unopened medicines, splints/wraps, reading glasses, and vitamins. Deadline is February 9. See Em McManamy with any questions.

Revelation in Friends Education

from Jen McFadden

To see Jen's article, which is on page 3 in the fall issue of the Moses Brown School newsletter Areté, click on

https://issuu.com/moses_brown_school/docs/arete_iq_final_web

New Books in the Library

Friends are reminded that the books in the library are for us to read! All are welcome to borrow the books -- just be sure to return them. New books are usually displayed on the top shelf. Recent arrivals include: *Listening to the Light*, *With a Tender Hand*, *Seeds that Change the World*, *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, and a picture-book version of *Christmas in the Trenches*.

Volunteer Opportunity

Volunteers are needed to help check transcriptions of old records from Dartmouth Monthly Meeting in Massachusetts. The Dartmouth Historical Society has taken on the task of making these records available online as both images and searchable transcriptions. The original

volumes have been scanned (you can see images at <http://dartmouthhas.org/colonial-era-records.html>) and the process of transcribing them is underway. The first pass is being done by professional typists; we can help by proofreading their efforts and correcting errors. The handwriting we are looking at is pretty good, and the process gives a fascinating glimpse of life in an 18th-century Friends meeting. Find out more and sign up at http://dartmouthhas.org/quaker_project.html, or talk to Rebecca Smith.

Letters of Thanks from NEYM

Dear Providence Friends -

Thank you for your hospitality during the Young Friends retreat a couple of weeks ago, and in particular for the warm welcome from Rebecca and support from Eugenia. Young Friends loved getting to visit the community garden and build the insect hotel, and I so appreciate Eugenia's prep work on these activities. Providence Friends has everything this program could dream of - warm community, excellent facilities, and a love of youth programs. We are so grateful!

Maggie Nelson
New England Yearly Meeting Young Friends Events Organizer

Dear Providence Friends -

Where do I even begin? The recent Young Friends retreat was such a successful gathering and a huge part of that is thanks to the enormous support of so many of you. Providence Meeting was not just a beautiful retreat "venue", but truly a home. Thank you to whoever encouraged Dounya to attend. Thank you, Dounya, for saying "Yes!". Thank you, Jen for connecting me with AHOPE and the Refugee Dream Center. The snowstorm was unfortunate, but the contacts will remain useful for future retreats. Thank you, Nina, for the service project ideas. Sorry we didn't end up needing them. Thank you, Eugenia, for connecting me to the Billy Taylor Park project. Thank you, Bob and Bruce, for helping to make the space work so well for us. Thank you, Betsy for introducing us so warmly after worship. Thank you, Rebecca, for being such an enthusiastic and helpful meeting contact, for all the coordination support, for answering so many tiny questions, for connecting me with individuals, for hosting our cook and for being such an attentive host. Thank you, Bill, Steve, and other Friends who helped with the post pot-luck clean-up. And thank you to the many Providence Friends who made space for us and held our retreat in the Light. We felt so cared for throughout the retreat. Only stopping because I've run out of room,

Nia Thomas
New England Yearly Meeting Quaker Practice and Leadership Coordinator

Clerk's Corner: A New Year's Letter

from Rebecca Leuchak

Dear Friends,

What strikes me every time I sit in worship with you is the power of the experience of it. Each Sunday as I prepare to come to meeting, I anticipate and feel in my heart that we are creating anew our beloved community. We surrender our expectations as we enter and take our seats. Part of our centering down into worship is developing our ears to become sensitive to the movement of the Spirit and the needs of the community within worship. I know this experientially. Meeting for worship on Sunday may very simply be the one time in our week when we consciously remind ourselves of the constant truth that we “live and move and have our being in God/in the Spirit.” In the centering silence of deep worship, we experience that.

Deep worship gives us space to explore, to open ourselves to knowledge and to an experience extending beyond the ego, beyond the self, beyond the intellect, to an expanse where we see beyond the limitations of the self and the mind and are touched by what connects us all.

Truly gathered worship means expectant waiting; it requires the participation of everyone who is present holding the Meeting in the Light, listening to the Spirit's movement in their hearts, and being willing to speak if so led. I think of each individual as a potential vessel. The Spirit may use any of us as conduits of insight, healing, and prophesy for the benefit of all who are gathered. The speaker in meeting for worship is delivering words that come from beyond them.

And at the close of each meeting for worship I feel a reluctance to return to the here-and-now world. The handshake of welcome which we use to end our worship time often comes too soon, surprises me, pulls me out of the deep lap of the Divine, that resting place from which I, for one, am loath to leave.

So I would propose that we look for a way to experiment with deep worship at more than one hour in duration. What if we tried a full morning of silent worship and then communal meal? Perhaps we could try this at Saylesville Meetinghouse? There we might gather to know that which is larger than ourselves.

New England Yearly Meeting has organized a number of New England-wide worship sessions such as this. I would propose that we try this as a monthly meeting or perhaps include all monthly meetings who are in our Southeast Quarterly Meeting. Let me know if you are interested and let's share ideas!

In Love and Light and Peace,

Rebecca Leuchak
Presiding Clerk

(These thoughts are inspired by a recent Pendle Hill Pamphlet, #460 – “On Vocal Ministry. Nurturing the Community through Listening and Faithfulness” written by Barry Crossno and J. Brent Bill. You may find this and lots of other really great reading about Quakerism in our Meeting's library. Check it out!)

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**
Newsletter: **Jen McFadden and Dan Lederer** providentfriend@providencefriends.org
Email list moderator: **Dan Lederer**
Website: **Sam Schiffman** webclerk@providencefriends.org
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

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

(At Saylesville Meetinghouse May, June, Sept, Oct. At

Providence Meetinghouse November through April.)

The Provident FRIEND

Newsletter of

Providence Monthly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends

99 Morris Avenue

Providence, RI 02906