

The Provident FRIEND

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

February 12, 2020

Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business 9th of Second Month, 2020 Minutes

Friends gathered at the Providence meetinghouse at noon, with 19 present.

Presiding clerk Rebecca Leuchak began the period of silent worship by reading the following queries adapted from Britain Yearly Meeting's *Quaker Faith and Practice*, Chapter 1:02:15 (<https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/chapter/1/>)

Do you take part as often as you can in meetings for meeting affairs?

Do you consider difficult questions with an informed mind as well as a generous and loving spirit?

Are you prepared to let your insights and personal wishes take their place alongside those of others or be set aside the as meeting seeks the right way forward?

The clerk read announcements concerning the life of the meeting.

Social and Hospitality Committee. For the Committee, Eugenia Marks reported that fewer people have been bringing contributions of food for our weekly fellowship time. Eugenia also brought a question about whether setting a theme for potlucks would be welcomed by the meeting. The response to the first item was that we will enjoy what is brought and that more will probably appear if a shortage is felt. The response to the question of themes was mixed. The sense of the meeting was that an occasional theme might be welcomed but that Friends should not feel compelled to adhere to it. We thank the committee for their work.

Ruth Gates Memorial Minute. For Ministry and Counsel Committee, Bruce Shaw brought a proposed memorial minute for our Friend Ruth Gates (attached). Friends approved with thanks.

Proposal for a Committee for Care of a Meeting Member. Bruce Shaw reported that M&C has been dealing over a period of years with interpersonal difficulties which have repeatedly arisen between one member and others within the Monthly Meeting. He asked approval from the Meeting to establish a Clearness Committee to meet with the individual to address this matter and to report back. Friends approved. Those appointed are Bruce Shaw, Rosanne Cedroni, Bruce Downing, Paul Graseck, Carl Bogus, and Denise Turco.

Friends United Meeting: Bruce Shaw reported that representatives of NEYM visited the Providence

CALENDAR

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

Sunday, Feb 16, 11:45 AM,
Session for Newcomers, Providence
Meetinghouse Library

Friday, Feb 21, 1:30 PM, Fellowship
with Muslim Neighbors, Masjid Al
Kareem, 39 Haskins St., Providence

Sunday, March 1, 10:15 AM,
First Day School Special Event,
Providence Meetinghouse

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

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

Friday, March 6, 5:00 PM,
Game Night, Providence Meetinghouse

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

**Saturday, May 2, 8:00 AM to 11:00
AM,** May Breakfast,
Providence Meetinghouse

Friday, May 15 – Sunday, May 17,
N.E. Junior Yearly Mtg Retreat,
Woolman Hill, Deerfield, MA

meetinghouse recently to discuss the relationship between FUM, NEYM, and individual meetings. The impetus for this was a recent change in NEYM's response to concerns within the Yearly Meeting about FUM's policy that their employees agree that "intimate sexual behavior should be confined to traditional marriage, understood to be between one man and one woman." A follow-up threshing session will be held in the near future to explore how our Meeting should act. Friends feel that this is a matter of some urgency. **Friends approved.**

Worship Sharing on the State of the Society. Ministry and Counsel has begun its annual task of preparing a State of Society report. To aid this work, the Meeting gave prayerful consideration to the following queries:

- What are we grateful for? What gifts of grace have we experienced in the life of our meeting community through the past year?
- How is our meeting being led to do God's work in the world? In what ways has our meeting recognized, developed, and nurtured the gifts of our members and attenders of all ages? How do we serve the wider society?
- Is our meeting a community where we experience a depth of Divine Presence and transforming power? Does it support our spiritual development, as individuals and together? What unfed hungers do we feel in our community life?

No further business appearing, we closed with a period of silent worship at 1:30 p.m., intending to meet next on the 8th of Third month at noon at the Providence meetinghouse.

Rebecca Leuchak, clerk

Rebecca Smith, recording clerk

Ruth Estelle Taber Gates June 27, 1927 - July 23, 2019

*I come to the garden alone, While the dew is still on the roses,
And the voice I hear falling on my ear, The Son of God discloses.
And He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He tells me I am His own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there, None other has ever known. . . .
I'd stay in the garden with Him, Though the night around me be falling,
But He bids me go; through the voice of woe, His voice to me is calling.*

This hymn, which Ruth Gates asked to have sung at her memorial meeting, captures her life in both practical and spiritual terms. Her long life was anchored in her Christian faith, and in the small but abundant garden that she and her husband Don lovingly tended.

Born in Greenfield, Massachusetts, Ruth graduated from the Northfield School, where she enjoyed volleyball, basketball, and choral singing. She received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from Simmons College, and started her first job as a visiting nurse in Worcester. She met Don Gates in a non-Quaker church youth group in 1952, and married him after a brief courtship, just before he was called up for military service. They later joined Worcester Friends Meeting, transferring to Providence when they moved to Rhode Island in 1960.

Caring for others was central to Ruth's life. Her nursing jobs most often involved visiting new mothers and newborns. After she retired in 1982, she cared for an elderly aunt, and then for her husband during his final

illness in 2008. She took a break from nursing while raising their four children, pouring her energy into her family. Her children could always find her in the kitchen, where they helped her bake cherry pies or can applesauce or tomatoes from the garden. The meeting counted on Ruth's pies for potluck meals or on meeting work-days. She taught First-Day School and served on the Sewing Committee. She also quietly drew in newcomers to the meeting, introducing them to other members and getting them involved in helping with coffee-hour. Friends remember her quiet, steady presence; her caring visits when a new baby joined a meeting family; her warm sense of humor; her practical assistance with tasks that almost went unnoticed but sustained the meeting community; and her authentic example of how to live a good life.

Ruth lived in the faithful assurance of God's living presence, reflected in Psalm 139 which was read at her memorial meeting: "O Lord, you have searched me and known me. . ." Her daughter also shared one of Ruth's favorite poems, which showed the faith undergirding her life of service:

*God hath not promised skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways all our lives through,
God hath not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, Peace without pain.*

*But God hath promised strength for the day,
Rest for the labor, Light for the way,
Grace for the trials, Help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, Undying love.*

Ruth Gates died peacefully after a period of declining health, a few weeks after joyously celebrating her 92nd birthday with her extended family. We are grateful for her many gifts to our community.

Message from Nominating Committee

Nominating Committee is now beginning its work of staffing our various committees for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins June 1. This year we're going to be focusing on Friends who are currently on no committees. As everyone is aware, Meeting has no paid staff, so the work of maintaining Meeting's activities and infrastructure is the responsibility of our 18 committees, and participation on committees is essential to the life of our Meeting.

The committee's hope is that those of you who are already serving on one or more committees will agree to continue to do so into the upcoming fiscal year. If you want to make a change, such as adding a committee or switching to a different committee, please contact Dan Lederer (dlederer1@verizon.net) soon, and definitely before the end of the month, since we hope to bring a report to Meeting for Business in March. If we don't hear from you, which is fine, we will take that to mean that you are willing to continue on your present committee or committees.

NEYM Permanent Board February 15

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 15. Friends in the area may be needed to provide overnight hospitality for the Friday before, that is February 14.

Please let Rebecca Leuchak know if you would be willing to host a Friend or two.

Session for Newcomers February 16

An information session for newcomers or others interested in learning a bit more about the Society of Friends will next take place on Sunday, Feb 16, starting about 11:45 in the library and lasting no more than an hour. All are welcome. The program will be repeated on the third Sunday of each month. For more information, contact Rebecca Smith (acelinebarrett@aol.com), Betsy Cazden, or Rebecca Leuchak.

Fellowship with Muslim Friends February 21

Fellowship with our Muslim Friends will happen again on Friday, February 21, at 1:30 PM at the Al Kareem Mosque, 39 Haskins Street, Providence. This is a particularly important time to offer this outreach of goodwill, considering current events unfolding in the world at large. We'll provide coffee and makings for tea; feel free to bring baked goods if you're able, or just come to share in friendship. Please RSVP to Wendy Virgadamo or Bob Watt so we have an idea of numbers.

First Day School Special Event March 1

First Day School Special Event on March 1: As part of the sustainability and stewardship focus of the First Day School this year, we will be having a special event for the kids in grades 2 through 5 on March 1. Megan Hall of our meeting, who hosts a pod-cast for The Public's Radio titled "Possibly" – ("Where we take on huge questions, like the future of our planet, and break them down into small questions with unexpected answers.") – will be coming to First Day School on March 1 to record the kids asking questions, some of which might be used to develop episodes for her pod-cast. We will be having lessons the prior two Sundays (February 16 and 23) to prepare. Parents should have received an email with a flyer including a permission slip to participate on March 1.

Game Night March 6

The Special Events Committee announces the return of Game Night. It's an unplugged evening of board games and family fun open to all. We'll have pizza, soft drinks, juices, and plenty of games for young and old. And, better yet, it's free. Please plan to join us on Friday, March 6, at 5:00 PM.

May Breakfast May 2

Special Events Committee is planning another May Breakfast, to be held on Saturday, May 2, from 8:00 AM to 11:00 AM. John Lord and Bruce Carlsten will coordinate purchase of food. An appeal will be issued for volunteers for prep, serving, greeting, collecting.

New England Junior Yearly Meeting Retreat May 15 - 17

New England Junior Yearly Meeting – for children grades 2 through 6 – will be having its last retreat of the year the weekend of May 15-17 at Woolman Hill in Deerfield MA. These retreats are a wonderful opportunity for our children to spend a weekend with other Quaker kids and adults in an accepting, supportive and fun environment. There are a few flyers on the back table for parents who may be interested. Financial support is available. For more information see <https://neym.org/about-jym-retreats>

Friends Camp

It's time to start planning for summer Quaker camp at South China, Maine. Brochures are available downstairs at the meetinghouse. Don't wait...camp fills up quickly! For more information, and to register online, go to friendscamp.org

Thank You Note From Carla Dowben

I want to thank all the very nice members in Ministry and Counsel who worked on all the preparations and cleanup for the Memorial service for my husband. It was so very nicely done by the Meeting. Having all our friends and family being able to gather and speak about Bob meant so much to my family and myself. Words cannot express how deeply it touched me to hear everyone speak about someone I loved so much. A big thank you to everyone in the Meeting who made this happen.

Clerk's Corner: The Gift of Love

from Rebecca Leuchak

'Tis the season for committee nominations! Hooray!

I am filled, in this beginning of the year with Groundhog Day just passed, by feelings of gratitude for the service that so many members and attenders give to nurture our Meeting community. We experience such enthusiasm for the communion of souls where all are engaged in our spiritual endeavor, the work of heeding God's call, when all experience the gathering of Light in our living together in community. This is truly is breathtaking!

I am also at this time reminded of the need for delicate and careful listening to where Friends seem to be led to serve, what gifts they can offer, how all might best contribute. How might we best support individual members in finding and bringing their gifts? How might we best match talents and vision with needs for service? How can we welcome and encourage all to work together as a Meeting?

The old story of the "Gift of the Magi" by O. Henry comes to mind – if you have never read this classic American morality tale, see here: <file:///C:/Users/mleuchak/Downloads/the-four-million-002-the-gift-of-the-magi.pdf> This is not just a Christmas story, but a tale with a message for all time and for all of us. As you may recall, a couple lives in dire financial straits in New York City and at Christmas time they each are moved to find the perfect gift for their loved one. With a love far greater than their love for themselves, they willingly sacrifice the object of which they are proudest--her hair and his watch--in order to buy something which they hope will please the other – a watch fob for him and fancy hair combs for her. The surprise ending reveals that because of their sacrifices, neither has use any more for the gift they are offered.

But O. Henry gives this mix up a deeper message. The true gift is love. It is about putting your own desires and wishes aside. It is about sacrificing out of love for the other, a love that is stronger than your love of self. It is about so loving the other that you are willing to part with your most prized possession to make someone else happy. It is about selflessness and generosity.

Let us welcome and encourage the gifts that are emerging among us. Perhaps they are just the thing to further our journey on an already determined course. Or they may lead us to start down paths unplanned. Or they may not be immediately used, but in time will find their usefulness. Let us have the wisdom and self-lessness to know that the movement of the Spirit is not determined by us, that sometimes what we bring may not be used in the short term. But let us be sure that in the long run each offering brought is building the foundation of love and generosity that lifts us all in the Spirit.

In our meeting are many gifts. Let's encourage them and give thanks!

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 Schifman** 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.)

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Providence, RI 02906