

# The Provident FRIEND

April 14, 2020

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

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

Friends gathered by means of Zoom computer technology a little before noon with 21 present. Presiding clerk Rebecca Leuchak began the period of silent worship by reading the following queries taken from Old Chatham Monthly Meeting, Old Chatham, N.Y. (<http://www.oldchathamquakers.org/advices-and-queries.html>)

Do we make ourselves available in a tender and caring way when we sense a need for assistance in time of trouble?

Do we trust each other enough to make our needs known to someone in our meeting?

The clerk read announcements concerning the life of the meeting.

**For Nominating Committee**, Dan Lederer brought recommendations for the membership of Meeting committees for the year beginning on Sixth month 1, 2020. Friends approved.

**Treasurer Peter Swaszek** brought a report on the Meeting's finances as of Third month 2020. Income so far has been greater than expenses. Contribution income is somewhat higher than at this time last year, and a number of memorial donations were received. Investment figures also look good but do not reflect the recent financial impact of the pandemic. Friends thank Peter for this report.

**For the Finance Committee**, Steve Thomas brought a proposed budget for the coming fiscal year. Due to the use of invested funds for work on our Providence property and to the current financial downturn, our investment income is expected to be reduced. The Finance Committee is recommending a budget which is \$3,000 less than last year's and which also decreases considerably our usual contribution to New England Yearly Meeting and the amount we would ideally set aside for future needs of the Providence meetinghouse. Friends expressed concern about both these proposed reductions. After some discussion, Friends approved the proposed budget.

**For Ministry and Counsel**, Bruce Shaw brought a proposal that the Meeting establish a fund to assist members of our Meeting community dealing with financial difficulties due to the COVID – 19 pandemic. Friends approved proposal as follows:

*Meeting will establish a fund to assist Friends in our Meeting community who are facing financial difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The fund will be maintained by our Meeting treasurer, and contributions to the fund will be confidential. A small subcommittee, three or more persons appointed by Ministry and Counsel, will determine the distribution of financial assistance to needy Friends. The subcommittee will invite*

### CALENDAR

**Note that the Providence and Saylesville meetinghouses are closed. All Meeting gatherings are online via Zoom.**

**Wednesday, April 15, 11:00 AM,**  
Meeting Social

**Friday, April 17, 7:00 PM to  
Saturday, April 18, 9:00 PM,**  
NEYM Young Friends Virtual  
Retreat

**Sunday, April 19, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting for Worship

**Sunday, April 19,** Southeast  
Quarterly Meeting with Worship at  
11:30 AM and Business at 12:45  
PM

**Wednesday, April 22, 11:00 AM,**  
Meeting Social Hour

**Sunday, April 26, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting for Worship

**Wednesday, April 29, 11:00 AM,**  
Meeting Social Hour

**Sunday, May 3, 10:00 AM,** Meeting  
for Worship

**Wednesday, May 6, 11:00 AM,**  
Meeting Social Hour

**Sunday, May 10, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting for Worship

**Sunday, May 10, noon,** Meeting for  
Business

*Friends to apply for assistance and will ask those who apply to provide the reason for the request and the amount requested. The identities of Friends requesting assistance and the amounts granted to each will be kept confidential, but the subcommittee or the treasurer will report to Meeting for Business on a regular basis regarding the amount collected from donations, the amount distributed, and the balance in the fund. When the sense of the subcommittee is that there is no longer a need for the fund, the subcommittee will make a recommendation to Ministry and Counsel regarding the disposition of any remaining balance.*

No further business appearing, we closed with a period of silent worship at 1:45 p.m., intending to meet next on the 10th of Fifth month.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rebecca Leuchak, clerk  
Rebecca Smith, recording clerk



On Easter Day, we learned the sad news of the passing of our beloved friend John Gaffney, who was for decades a devoted member of Providence Meeting, and whose enduring work in support of marriage equality and disability rights has touched countless people. His light burned brightly indeed.

When our meetinghouse is open again, we will hold a memorial to celebrate John's life and the many wonderful memories he gave us. Condolences to John's husband, Bill Brown, may be sent to the following address:

150 Union Street, Apartment 411  
Providence, RI 02903

## **Staying Connected in Uncertain Times**

*from Communications Committee*

As all of us are aware, our meetinghouses have been closed since mid-March. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, staying connected has been a challenge, so you may want to take advantage of the various means of communication that Meeting provides.

We have two email groups, one being the Meeting Email List, often referred to as "the listserve", which functions as our electronic bulletin board by providing 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. We publish our newsletter, The Provident Friend, ten times per year. And finally there's our website, accessible to all at [www.providentfriends.org](http://www.providentfriends.org).

The committee has been publishing an updated edition of the Meeting Directory every six months, but in order to promote connectedness we're sending out revised versions more frequently. If you have had a change in your contact information since the last edition (March) or if you aren't listed in the directory but would like to be, contact Dan Lederer ([dleder1@verizon.net](mailto:dleder1@verizon.net)).

Finally, we're hoping to get everyone comfortable with Zoom so that we can gather online for Meeting for Worship, Meeting for Business, and committee meetings. In addition, we're holding a virtual Social Hour at 11:00 AM on Wednesdays. For assistance getting Zoom set up on your computer, tablet, or telephone, contact Steve Schwartz ([steve@absteve.com](mailto:steve@absteve.com)), Bradford Roarr ([bradford.barr@gmail.com](mailto:bradford.barr@gmail.com)), or Mycah Hogan ([captainhoagiebear@gmail.com](mailto:captainhoagiebear@gmail.com)).

## **NEYM Young Friends Virtual Retreat April 17**

New England Yearly Meeting's Young Friends First-Ever Virtual Retreat, from 7:00 p.m. Friday, April 17 to 9:00 p.m. Saturday, April 18, 2020. The theme for this spring retreat is: *Sexuality, Gender and Relationships*. For more information about this and other NEYM events, visit the NEYM website, [NEYM.org](http://NEYM.org).

### **Southeast Quarterly Meeting April 19**

Friends of Southeast Quarterly Meeting, which includes Providence Monthly Meeting, Conanicut Friends Meeting-Indulged, Smithfield Monthly Meeting, Westerly Monthly Meeting, and Worcester Friends Meeting, are warmly welcome and encouraged to attend our Quarterly Meeting for Business hosted by Smithfield Meeting via Zoom, which will be held next week, April 19th. Worship is at 11:30 a.m., followed by social time and a potluck lunch (BYOF). Meeting for Business will begin at 12:45 p.m. Come and enjoy the fellowship of Friends from across the Quarter and participate in the work of the Quarterly Meeting's business. More information with Zoom link and agenda and advanced documents will be sent out via our list-serve in this coming week.

### **Getting Accustomed to Virtual Meetings**

**From Eugenia Marks:** At first, I rejected the idea and the experience of sitting in front of a screen for a connection with the deeper and higher ideas that I want to inform my way in the world. As we have moved to seeing gallery images of people in their homes, and seeing people come on line with a period of greeting, the human connection has emerged with high value. I look out the window to the sky or shut my eyes as I do in the Meeting room and am able to attain a meditation level. I enjoy the innocent burble of the hoagiebear child, knowing that she is where the future that we all work for exists.

**From Mycah and Ashley Hogan:** The experience of virtual worship has been a beautiful challenge. Bringing light and friendship into our home each Sunday adds a burst of consistency, honesty, and joy that is always appreciated.

**From Glenda Byhouwer:** I liked attending the meeting virtually. I could hear much better and it added a lot to be able to see people's faces. I felt like I was connected to the group much more by being able to see them.

**From Vicky Ekk:** I certainly miss being in the meetinghouse sitting among you and waiting for the spirit to teach us! I look forward to that day as I'm sure you all do! But I'm glad I didn't wait until that unknown day to gather in worship. It is good to be together "in the cloud" where we can at least see each other's faces and hear each other's voices. I find that it helps me to be patient with the current circumstances when I know that I can spend an hour in worship even though we are really all at home. It's great to see the mix of meeting members and attenders willing to use an online tool to go beyond the isolation we all take part in during the week. It's great to see how even the most tech-

challenged of us can join in! I am grateful for the opportunity to meet virtually when we cannot do so in person. I hope to see you Sunday! Be well.

## **God at Work in Times of COVID**

*from Em McManamy*

A folksinger I listened to on Sofar Sounds made a reference to "the before time", suggesting that something had changed irrevocably with the arrival of the coronavirus. Only in hindsight will we know if this is so. It seems a momentous time to all of us now, and to some even more than to others. To paraphrase Leonard Cohen, we've found the crack in everything - that's how the light gets in. As Quakers, I believe we are more than a little familiar with this light, and we have a special gift to offer the world. We have a practice that reaches below the brokenness to find the healing that is there. Our practice dissipates fear so beautifully, and recognizes the love that binds us all. We know this experimentally, as George Fox said.

How can we share this awareness with others so that in this time, whether it is the "after time" or not, our hearts will become open to the connections all beings share as the blessed community on earth? Can we learn from the new habits we've made to build a more sustainable and just world and to create governments that actually help? How can we support each other here at Providence Meeting to work towards a new reality that is better for all, not just for some?

Let's talk about how you see God at work in times of COVID.

## **A Book Friend Forever Review Column**

*from Amy Schneidhorst*

Welcome to the first BFF (Book Friend Forever) review column for the Library Committee. Who is your favorite book friend, that favorite Quaker author or Seeker who is your go-to on your bedside table or within arm's reach on your bookshelf? This month I will share my BFF book to get us started. Then each reviewer will nominate, daisy chain style, another Providence Meeting friend to nominate their book friend. Rebecca Leuchak has agreed to be the next reviewer. Nominated Friends can share a paragraph describing what is so terrific about this author or seeker and why. Think of this column as a match-making service for our terrific library books that are missing being out in circulation.

A note about who might be included in future columns. As Leonard Kenworthy explains in his

introduction to the anthology *Living in the Light*, "Reading about these individuals should not discourage us; it should encourage us. The men and women portrayed here are among the Everests, Matterhorns, and Kilimanjaros of Quakerism. But the world is not composed solely of mountain peaks; it includes lesser mountains, hills, valleys, and plains. Humanity desperately needs common as well as uncommon individuals, ordinary as well as extraordinary people, inconspicuous as well as conspicuous men and women." (pp. 3-4)

I first came across Rufus Jones in the 1985 edition of *Faith and Practice* while preparing for my Secular Spirituality class at RISD. As someone who had not had direct experiences of a spiritual God, as my Missionary Baptist Grandmother could, I felt reassured by Jones' testimony from his early life that connection with the spiritual realm may be more of a subtle reassurance than an exclamation.

"I had no ecstatic experiences, I was subject to no miraculous seeming revelations, no sharp break occurred in the unfolding steps of a normal and ordinary life... I have few epoch-dates to record, and no single Damascus vision. What I do feel sure of, however, is a frequent influx of divine life and power--the warm intimate touch of a guiding Hand. I somehow felt all through those college years that I was being *prepared for something*." (Faith and Practice, p. 24, (1985).

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## Clerk's Corner: The Embrace of Community

*from Rebecca Leuchak*

As a career long academic, I live in a world where asking big questions and researching the world for answers is the primary foundation for teaching and learning. During this extraordinary time we find ourselves in, I am aware of how professional Epidemiologists who study from a medical perspective the incidence, spread and control of disease, and Sociologists who study from a psychological perspective the behaviors of humans in societies, are primed to do great work that will soon enlighten us all. This is an exciting time for finding answers to big questions!

While I am not in either of those fields, one thing on my mind always is the ways that we as individuals seek to build community. And I have been thinking about that even more than usual for over a month now. The shelter-at-home conditions under which we all now live bring me to the question of "What happens when the patterns of our familiar daily activity abruptly and radically shift?"

It is clear to me that the degree to which we can weather this storm of viral contagion, and the changes it has brought to our lives, is precisely in relation to the strength of community that we feel. Some of us have families, some of us have housemates, some of us live alone.



What we all have in common at Providence Monthly Meeting is a faith community that brings us as individuals into relation with each other in deeply spiritual, intentional, and defined ways. By joining in community in the Society of Friends, we, as individuals, have made the decision to be connected to each other. We are members of this community and the full depth of that statement has, in this time of crisis, come more sharply into focus for me. I have seen that sense of connection, that love for each other in our community, growing among us over the years. I have seen how much this sense of being a community has the power to support individuals. We live within the care of our Meeting community – both when we are givers and when we are receivers of that care.

In the past few weeks, we have initiated a number of ways to be in touch with this strong and loving community. Weekly worship on Sundays at our regular hour, social time afterward and also on Wednesday mornings at 11:00 a.m., Friendly Phoners group for daily check-ins with Friends, Seekers group on the third Sunday of every month at 8:45 a.m., and a Tuesday evening group for discussion. All these gatherings are virtual using Zoom.

If you are reading this and feeling somehow that you are not connected, I would urge you to get in touch. Reach out for help, our Meeting community is here for you!

And for all of us, my deepest wish is that we may work to strengthen our connection, our empathy, and our compassion in order to support each other.

## [Providence Monthly Meeting Contact List](#)

Presiding Clerk: **Rebecca Leuchak** [clerk@providentfriends.org](mailto:clerk@providentfriends.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@providentfriends.org](mailto:providentfriend@providentfriends.org)  
Email list moderator: **Dan Lederer**  
Website: **Sam Schifman** [webclerk@providentfriends.org](mailto:webclerk@providentfriends.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@providentfriends.org](mailto:info@providentfriends.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 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> 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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Newsletter of

Providence Monthly Meeting of the  
Religious Society of Friends

99 Morris Avenue

Providence, RI 02906