

The Provident FRIEND

May 12, 2020

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

Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business 10th of Fifth Month, 2020 Minutes

Friends gathered by means of Zoom computer technology at noon with 18 present.

Presiding clerk Rebecca Leuchak began the period of silent worship by reading the following queries taken from Britain Yearly Meeting's *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 5th edition. Chapter 1: Advices and Queries, No. 19 (<https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/passage/1-02/>)

Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognize the gifts they bring. Remember that the meeting as a whole shares a responsibility for every child in its care. How do you share your deepest beliefs with them, while leaving them free to develop as the spirit of God may lead them? Do you invite them to share their insights with you? Are you ready both to learn from them and to accept your responsibilities towards them?

The clerk read announcements concerning the life of the meeting.

The following items of business were brought forward:

For the Providence Meetinghouse Management Committee, Dan Lederer reported that the committee had met to consider resuming use of the meetinghouse. The committee approved the following:

The meetinghouse and grounds will remain closed to all activities. Whenever guidelines from the Governor and Mayor change, the committee will reconvene to reconsider the restrictions on meetinghouse activities. The committee emphasizes that it is the responsibility of the management committee to recommend any future changes in restrictions on meetinghouse activities. In the meantime, Friends are encouraged to meet in homes if they so choose.

In discussion, Friends expressed some concerns regarding a blanket closure but agreed to follow the guidance of the Meetinghouse Management Committee. Those with concerns are asked to contact the committee, which will continue its discernment.

For Ministry and Counsel Committee Bruce Shaw reported the following:

A small committee was formed to continue discernment of the FUM issues. The urgency of this work is somewhat lessened by the fact that NEYM is expected to continue the previous policy of allowing monthly meetings to withhold contributions, but the committee will meet as way opens and report to our Meeting. A memorial meeting for John Gaffney will be scheduled when it is practical to do so. Jen McFadden and Pierre Morenon are working on a memorial minute and would be happy to hear from Friends who would like to share their memories of John.

The Meeting has established a Covid-19 relief fund. Contributions may be sent to our treasurer. Friends facing financial hardship as a result of the Covid pandemic are encouraged to contact Bruce Shaw.

CALENDAR

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

Wednesday, May 13, 11:00 AM,
Meeting Social Hour

Sunday, May 17, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship

Tuesday, May 19, 7:00 PM,
Women's Group Meeting

Wednesday, May 20, 11:00 AM,
Meeting Social Hour

Sunday, May 24, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship

Wednesday, May 27, 11:00 AM,
Meeting Social Hour

Sunday, May 31, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship

Wednesday, June 3, 11:00 AM,
Meeting Social Hour

Sunday, June 7, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship

Wednesday, June 10, 11:00 AM,
Meeting Social Hour

Sunday, June 14, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship

Sunday, June 14, noon,
Meeting for Business

For the Religious Education Committee, Victoria Ekk reported on this year's activities. The younger children met weekly and the middle schoolers twice a month. The average attendance was 8 – 10, and the discussions centered on environmental stewardship. It was not practical to continue First Day School remotely while the children are spending so much time online for their secular schooling. The committee is exploring ways of resuming contact over the summer and/or in the fall. Bible stories and Quaker history will be part of the curriculum for the coming year. We thank the committee for their work. We also note our concern at missing this time with our younger families. We ask that they share suggestions for any ways we may meet their needs in the meantime.

For the Peace and Social Action Committee, Steve Schwartz reported that the committee has provided financial support during this fiscal year to the following organizations: AMOR, which works with refugees, asylum seekers and others; the 134 Collaborative, which serves the homeless community (chosen as a substitute for Camp Street Ministries, which is currently inactive because of the coronavirus issue); Friends Committee on National Legislation; and Environment Council RI, an umbrella organization that helps members effectively address environmental issues, particularly climate change. We thank the committee for their work.

For the Property Committee, Nina Berry reported on its work over the past year. Considerable improvements have been made both at Providence and at Saylesville and reference handbooks have been created for the Providence meetinghouse. The committee hopes to undertake additional work as conditions permit. Nina is stepping down as clerk of property after many years. We thank her and the rest of the committee.

The Clerk reported on Southeast Quarterly Meeting held on Fourth month 19 via Zoom.

A concern arose about how we keep in contact with Friends and attenders who have fallen away from our community and with whom we are out of touch. After some discussion, Friends were in unity to ask the presiding clerk and the clerk of Ministry and Counsel to schedule a time for Ministry and Counsel, Pastoral Care, and others who hold this concern to discuss creating a more structured effort of outreach.

No further business appearing, we closed with a period of silent worship about 2:00 p.m., intending to meet next on the 14th of Sixth month.

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

COVID-19 Support Funding Now Available

At the direction of Meeting for Business, the Ministry and Counsel Committee has established a fund to assist members and attenders of Providence Meeting who may be experiencing temporary financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated shutdown. The text of the proposal is in the Meeting for Business minutes in the April newsletter. A committee consisting of Bruce Shaw (clerk), Dan Lederer, and Victoria Ekk has been appointed to administer the fund in conjunction with our treasurer, Peter Swaszek. The following guidelines have been established for the fund:

- If you are able, and wish to make a donation to the fund, please send a check to Peter Swaszek, 57 Brayton St., E. Greenwich, RI 02818. Make checks payable to "Providence Friends Meeting", with "COVID-19 Fund" in the memo line.
- If you wish to apply for a grant from the fund, please email or call Bruce Shaw (bshaw@mosesbrown.org or 401 331 4691).
- Donations to the fund will be confidential, known only to the treasurer.
- Grant requests and award amounts will be confidential, known only to the 3 committee members and the treasurer.
- Grant requests must relate to hardship suffered as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Applicants will be asked what other agencies have been contacted for support.

- No Meeting officers, those in positions of authority, or members of the grant committee may receive grants.
- The treasurer or fund committee clerk will periodically report to Meeting for Business the total amount of donations to the fund, the total amount of grants, and the balance remaining in the fund.

Women's Group Meeting May 19

The women's group will meet next on Tuesday, May 19, 7:00 - 9:00 pm via zoom. If you'd like to attend please email Em at mmcmanamy3@gmail.com. Our focus will be song, and we will share a concert of Annie Patterson (of Rise up Singing fame!). We'll mute our mikes during the concert so that we have a chance to sing out, and share our thoughts between songs and afterwards. If you need a copy of the songbook, let us know as we'll try to make copies available from the meetinghouse.

Please Share Your Memories

Our meeting is mourning the loss of John Gaffney and grieving the fact that we cannot currently plan for a memorial meeting. As we await the possibility to gather in person, Jen McFadden and Pierre Morenon have the honor of drafting John's memorial minute. If you have a memory, story, or bit of information to share about John's rich life, please email it to jmcfadden@mosesbrown.org, or to pmorenon@ric.edu. (You may also reach out by phone, if you prefer. Jen can be reached at 970-456-5642.)

News from Conanicut Friends Meeting

from Marcie Lindsay

[Editors' Note: The Conanicut meetinghouse, on Jamestown, is one of Providence Monthly Meeting's three worship sites.]

Conanicut Friends Meeting (Indulged) (CFM) held its last Meeting for Worship this spring at the home of Jamestownner Marcie Lindsay on March 15, at the start of state-wide COVID restrictions and quarantine.

The Quest Montessori School in Narraganset, the winter worship site for CFM in 2018 and 2019, had to close its school building that weekend. Along with all public institutions, they await the progress of the pandemic, and the evolving responses. The dozen or so regular winter attenders of CFM have kept in touch through emails, phone calls, and a continuing effort to join in worship at our regular Meeting time of 10:30 on Sundays. Some of us have also joined Providence Friends Meeting Zoom experiences.

Spearheaded by John Drotos, a pollinator garden was dug behind the old 1786 Meetinghouse. About 14 native plants were set in the ground, with plenty of space for others to follow. Five members were able to work together to start off this project, which will be expanded as we return to Worship and caring for the historic site, with the support of the Jamestown Historical Society.

As with all other religious communities we look forward to gathering together in the warmer days of summer, and hope that restrictions ease to allow visitors to share our unprogrammed worship.



The first Sunday in May was warm and inviting for several (no more than 5 of course) Friends to start a new pollinator garden behind the meetinghouse in Jamestown. From left to right, Tina Duhaime, Mary Forman, and John Drotos (unidentifiable except to photographer Marcie Lindsay).

Reflections on Meeting for Worship on Zoom

from Elsie Morse

I have been thrilled with the opportunity to share Meeting for worship with as many friends as have been able to attend on Zoom. Bit by bit through the help of our most Tech-comfortable Friends we have learned how to maximize it's potentially distracting features. I have felt the real presence of fellow participants as well as the power and joy of being able to connect with friends who are not able to travel to Meeting. I have been delighted in the sense of the wider world of our meeting that includes Friends' living spaces as well as some of our most comfortable. Though no one is claiming that Zoom beats gathering in the Meeting House, we are learning that we might be able to adapt into real meetings for the support of hard of hearing Friends or for Friends who are not able to travel to Meeting.

A Cuban Story

from Em McManamy

I have a Cuban story to tell, and an idea for children (or adults!) who would like to extend a hand of friendship. When I was in Cuba in February, I brought the Providence Meeting's children's letters with me and shared them with the children. They loved reading them! One boy, Cristian, age 6, said he would like to write back. He took one of your letters that day and the next. I saw him in the dining area, working while his mom, Davia, prepared our meals. He had many questions, but he wrote the letter entirely by himself. His letter back to the children of our meeting is attached. He was working on the letter. You will see it is quite advanced for a 6 year old!

If you would like to write back to Cristian, he would love to receive letters and share them (however they are currently) with others at his meeting, Puerto Padre Meeting. You can send them to the clerk of Cuba Yearly Meeting, who happens to live in the town of Puerto Padre as well. Here is his email address:
jorgepenare@gmail.com

We have heard that the scarcity that exists in Cuba (food, gasoline, and most other things) is worse with the country sheltering in place, which makes it hard to get what they need. When we were there, our hosts would go to their neighbors' homes to trade and buy food (such as eggs) for our breakfast. I hear that they have school assistance, but don't have enough money to buy internet time, though most now have smartphones, and some use Facebook.

So that's some background. Are you curious to learn more? They would love to hear from you. Google translate a letter, if you need help. I'm happy to assist as well if needed.

*[Cristian's letter, translated from Spanish by Em] Hi! My name is Cristian. I am 6. I live in a green house. I have a pet I have a dog. As to music I like to play the guitar. I am very happy to be your friend.



Clerk's Corner: A Walk in the Woods

from Rebecca Leuchak

After this long winter, I sought relief from home-bound fatigue. Two Friends and I went walking in some of the more pristine natural landscape of our State last weekend. Following a quiet trail, within a very short distance from the parking lot at Beach Pond, we were surrounded by the expanse of dense forest. There as we wandered in the woods over several hours, we received a great gift. We were given the chance to appreciate the regenerative power of the Spirit through small and subtle movements of nature: the trees beginning to leaf out in the canopy high above our heads, the sap rising to nourish new growth, the emerging plant life everywhere on the forest floor – skunk cabbage a particular favorite, but also the fiddle heads of ferns, and the beginnings of wildflower carpets. When I stood still, I could almost hear the rush of all that energy! It was the wildflowers that spoke to me most clearly, their message one I would like to share.

Unlike the brightly-colored and luxurious hot-house flowers that I adorn my dining table with, the early spring flowers of the forest are small and shy. They are not easy to spot until you really search for them. Their color is not shouting amidst the green undergrowth. They speak softly, but they are everywhere.

This contrast of exuberant blooms artfully arranged in my home with the untended natural blooming of the forest floor reminded me of the way our attention in our everyday world typically is drawn to the big news, the splashy events, the loud media talking about the people thrust into the limelight*. And yet in this time of Covid-19, we see attention in the media and our own awareness turning to the everyday people who are dedicating themselves to helping, healing, without fanfare, without bright lights and acclaim. Their simple and quiet acts of humanity are what are sustaining our hope when we feel the world seems bleak.

This message of the low-lying wildflowers is just one of so many often unremarked, yet remarkable messages we may hear in our current circumstances if we listen. Messages that remind us of the importance of the fundamental tenants of our faith, that the divine is here and present in the everyday, of the unfailing strength of abiding love and Light within each and every one of us.

When the world around us seems an impenetrable forest, might we look and take the time to be still, to wait and look and listen for the small and profound things as we wander in these woods?

*The term "limelight" comes from the pre-electricity days of theaters, the 1820's until the end of the century, when oxygen-hydrogen fueled lamps were made intensely brighter by adding a small block of lime rock to the flame. These super bright lights were used particularly at the front edge and in the center areas of stages – a person standing in the limelight would be at the center of audience attention.

Providence Monthly Meeting Contact List

Presiding Clerk: **Rebecca Leuchak** clerk@providencefriends.org
Assistant Presiding Clerk: **Dan Lederer**
Recording Clerk: **Rebecca Smith**
Treasurer: **Peter Swazek**
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

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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.)

Please note that the information to the left applies to normal circumstances.

All activities listed are currently suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic. Our hope is that all will be resumed eventually once we can do so safely.

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Newsletter of

Providence Monthly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends

99 Morris Avenue

Providence, RI 02906