

# The Provident FRIEND

June 16, 2020

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

## Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business 14th of Sixth Month, 2020 Minutes

[The meeting was conducted via Zoom]

**Are we ready to accept the challenge to move out of our area of comfort with regard to awareness of racism?  
What things do we do or say that continue racism?  
Taking responsibility is not accepting blame. It is empowering. Do we accept the gift of our responsibility for positive change and racial justice?**

From "Understanding Racism and Privilege Among Friends," Friends General Conference webpage on Challenging Racism:  
<https://www.fgcquaker.org/resources/understanding-racism-and-privilege-among-friends>

### Announcements

1. Quarterly Meeting will happen next Sunday with Westerly Meeting as host. Rebecca Leuchak will send an announcement later today.
2. We have had several people from Smithfield Meeting with us for Meetings for Worship, which has been very nice in the chance to get to know them better.
3. There will be a gathering on Zoom to celebrate Juneteenth, this coming Friday.
4. COVID-19 fund is still available. We have had no requests, so far. We will need to consider what to do with these funds if we do not use them for this purpose.
5. It may be useful to plan to meet for business at some point during the summer (when we do not usually meet), considering the current situation. People seemed to agree, and will schedule a meeting for July, which we will cancel if there is no need for it.

**Religious Education Committee Report - Updates of proposed options for First Day School 2020-2021** The Committee reported on the plans for resuming First Day School for Fall, 2020.

[The entire report can be seen by going to  
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1E5jOafu3vlvzIrE0RfPoc5b8bIX1BOL?usp=sharing> ]

The report was accepted with gratitude for the effort put into this.

### Meeting Treasurer's Year-End Report

Income has surpassed expectations, especially in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. We had budgeted for \$95,500 in income, and realized \$104,539. Expenses, on the other hand, came out on the low side, with \$85,691 spent instead of the \$95,500 budgeted, providing us with a surplus this year of \$18,848. Meeting funds now total \$813,473, which includes the COVID-19 fund (ca. \$5,000). We accepted the report with gratitude. Discussion followed about what to do with the COVID-19 fund, if we do not need it, including donating it to other organizations that might be able to use it effectively. There was also discussion of the ethics involved in these decisions. The Clerk suggested that

### CALENDAR

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

**Wednesday, June 17, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting Social Hour

**Friday, June 19, 6:00 PM,**  
Juneteenth Gathering

**Sunday, June 21, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting for Worship

**Sunday, June 21, 12:30 PM,**  
Quarterly Meeting, hosted by  
Westerly

**Wednesday, June 24, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting Social Hour

**Sunday, June 28, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting for Worship

**Wednesday, July 1, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting Social Hour

**Sunday, July 5, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting for Worship

**Wednesday, July 8, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting Social Hour

**Sunday, July 12, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting for Worship

**Wednesday, July 15, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting Social Hour

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

we convene a small group to discuss these issues more fully, and to bring some suggestions for resolution to the next Meeting for Business. Friends are encouraged to contact the Clerk if they would like to participate.

### **Providence Meetinghouse Management Committee**

The Committee introduced its Proposal for Reopening the Providence Meetinghouse and Grounds for Worship.

[The entire proposal can be seen by going to

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1E5jOafu3vlvzIrE0RfPoc\\_5b8b1X1BOL?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1E5jOafu3vlvzIrE0RfPoc_5b8b1X1BOL?usp=sharing) ]

]

In response to a question, it was clarified that the issue of the safety team is related to the decontamination of the meetinghouse. If the meetinghouse is not open because there is no safety team, an outdoor meeting could still take place. We approved the proposal, with the idea that we hold meeting in person on the first first day of 7<sup>th</sup> month (5 July). If we cannot satisfy the safety requirements of the proposal by that time, that meeting may happen only outdoors, with no access to the meetinghouse. An email announcement will go out, with a call for volunteers for the safety team.

### **Peace and Social Action Committee**

Peace and Social Action Committee proposed that we send the following letter to the Providence Police, with copies to Letter to the Mayor, the Providence Journal, the Governor, and our four congressional representatives.

[To see the letter, go to

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1E5jOafu3vlvzIrE0RfPoc\\_5b8b1X1BOL?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1E5jOafu3vlvzIrE0RfPoc_5b8b1X1BOL?usp=sharing) ]

We approved sending this to the Providence Police Department on behalf of Providence Friends Meeting.

The meeting adjourned, with silence, at 2:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rebecca Leuchak, clerk  
Bill Monroe, recording clerk pro tem

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## **New Address for Contributions**

*from Peter Swaszek, Meeting Treasurer*

Effectively immediately I am asking that all contribution checks for Meeting  
be sent to

Providence Monthly Meeting  
c/o Peter Swaszek  
P O Box 1787  
Kingston, RI 02881

## Who Can Help? Who Needs Help?

*from Rebecca Leuchak*

I'm sending peace and well-wishes to all in our Providence Friends Meeting during this unsettled time in the world. It is wonderful to have a strong community providing support and encouragement for each other, especially during times like these. Thank you so much to those who have been actively engaged with our community who are offering to help others, either virtually or in-person! As we move into new phases of this life in the time of Covid-19 with our country's ongoing critical need for racial justice and climate awareness, we will continue to need volunteer "helpers" available to offer assistance in many ways. See the ways you can help, listed below. **If you are interested in joining the list of helpers**, please indicate in an email to Dan Lederer (dleder1@verizon.net) which of the areas of assistance (below) you are able to offer. And we'd like to encourage **anyone who does need help**, or would just like someone to reach out to, please email Dieter Gomes (hghansdieter@gmail.com). He can then forward your request to the list of helpers. Help is needed for:

Transportation Groceries/Meals Phone calls Sending emails, cards Helping with chores inside the house (when Sheltering in Place is lifted) Helping with outside chores, i.e. raking leaves, etc.  
Pet care Other

With deep gratitude for this living example of our Friends community, thank you all so much!

## Seeking Donations and Requests for COVID-19 Support Fund

At the direction of Meeting for Business, 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. 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, Box 1787, Kingston, RI 02881. Make checks payable to "Providence Monthly 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](mailto: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.

## Juneteenth Gathering June 19

*from The Working Group on Systemic Racism*

All Friends are invited to a Juneteenth gathering of our community this Friday, June 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom.

This annual observance honors the alleged end of slavery in the United States. It is a day to reflect on and commemorate that post-Civil War moment when freedom and independence of African Americans in America was promised. Juneteenth was first celebrated in Texas in 1865 as the day when the enslaved people of Galveston, Texas received the news that they had been freed — two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued. The commemoration has since spread across the United States

and worldwide. While the date is a marker of that official act of emancipation, it also is a time to reflect upon how starkly that promise was and remains unfulfilled.

Let us take this time together on Friday to reflect on the difficult past and present of our racialized society, to acknowledge the complexities of our own personal and our national struggle with racial discrimination, and mourn the tragedies of the intervening century and a half of systemic racism in our country.

Let us also take this moment to commit toward anti-racism work within our meeting and our wider community with positive spirit and celebration. While there is much sorrow in our past, let this gathering also be a space for joy and happiness in appreciation of the work that many in our community are already doing and the affirmation that we can make positive change in the world.

The Working Group on Systemic Racism is hosting this opportunity to come together in our concern. We hope to engage all in discerning a series of steps we can take to continue our work as a Meeting on these issues that impact us all.

Please join us! (Contact Rebecca Leuchak – [rleuchak@gmail.com](mailto:rleuchak@gmail.com) for the link.)

Working Group: Ashley Hogan, Mycah Hogan, Rebecca Leuchak, Em McManamy, Bradford Roarr



## Quarterly Meeting Sunday June 21

Friends are invited to attend our Southeast Quarterly Meeting on June 21st hosted by Westerly Friends Meeting via Zoom (instructions forthcoming). We will gather for worship at 10:30 a.m. Close of worship and announcements at 11:30 a.m. will be followed by fellowship and lunch (BYOF) and meeting for business will begin promptly at 12:30 p.m. with purpose to conclude by 1:30 p.m. The agenda includes an end-of-fiscal year financial report for the Quarter, the reading of monthly meetings' State of Society reports (Providence MM, Smithfield MM, Westerly MM, and Worcester MM), and discussion of monthly meetings' plans for reviving in-person meetings for worship.

Details will be sent out electronically but get this on your calendars now! A great chance for inter-visitation and making new friendships among Friends! Contact Rebecca Leuchak ([rleuchak@gmail.com](mailto:rleuchak@gmail.com)) if you have questions. For those who like to plan ahead, the Fall Southeast Quarterly Meeting will be held on October 18 and it remains to be seen whether we will gather at the meetinghouse in Worcester, MA or via Zoom.

**Landscaping and Re-Seeding** *from Property Committee*

The Property Committee is pleased to announce that the re-seeding work on the parking area and the landscaping work have been completed. The parking area will remain closed for the summer to allow the grass to grow. Solar, motion-activated lights will be placed around the parking area and driveway.

Our parking area was constructed to infiltrate storm water back into the earth. It is made of paving grids filled with gravel or loam and seed to provide a gravel or a natural grass surface. The upper layer of dense till (soil) was excavated and replaced with free-draining soil. The grid was placed on top of this material. Storm water runoff carries sediment and pollutants into the street drains that discharge into the Bay. By installing a system to return rain to the ground, we are balancing the need for off-street parking with environmental stewardship.

We are thankful to our contractors, Jon Ryone and his son Jacob of Orchard Acres Land Creations, for their design and installation work and for their care of our community. Our property is graciously maintained by Moses Brown School's maintenance crew. [Photo: Looking east from the meetinghouse]



**Recommended Reading** *from Rebecca Smith*

With the library closed since mid-March, I have been re-reading some of the books on my shelves. One favorite is *Doomsday Book* by Connie Willis. Originally published in 1992, this novel is well-suited to the current year. The protagonist, Kivrin Engle, is a student of history at Oxford University in the year 2054. Her planned research trip to the year 1320 goes awry when she is accidentally sent to 1348, arriving in the small village of Skendgate just ahead of the bubonic plague. Complicating matters, the future Oxford is struck by an influenza epidemic which leads to a quarantine, overwhelmed hospitals, and a shortage of toilet paper. The history department is unable to retrieve Kivrin for some time, and the book follows characters in both eras through some difficult weeks. As the world falls apart around them, the people of both centuries act with selfishness, generosity, despair, determination, faith, and love. The book does not have a "happy ending," but I find it hopeful nevertheless.



## **I Can't Breathe** *from Zona Douthit*

*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. Genesis 2:7 (King James Version)*

I can't breathe when my brothers and sisters can't breathe. I can't breathe when my sisters and brothers are oppressed. I can't breathe when injustice is smothering my fellow human beings. When one of God's children is literally strangled in broad daylight by a public employee, I can't breathe. The words "I can't breathe" don't belong to one race. They belong to the human race. We not only have the right to say those words, we have the obligation.

The Preamble to the Constitution says

We, the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for a common defence, promote the general Welfare and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Murder is charged and prosecuted in the name of the People. It's not a Black or White issue. It's a human issue. Oppression and injustice are human issues.

The word spirit comes from the Latin word *spiro*, to breathe. The Holy Spirit is God's gift; we all inhale that Spirit with every breath. When police officers crush the breath out of one of us, they suffocate all of us.

I can't breathe.

## **Remembering John Gaffney** *from Cathy Gorman, with input from the Providence Human Relations Commission*

It is sad news to report our dear friend and community member John Gaffney passed away Easter morning of heart failure. Many LGBT community members will remember the key role John played in the LGBT Civil Rights movement in RI in the late 1970s. He attended his first meeting of Gay Community Services in Providence in the fall of 1977. He had relocated from Cambridge to begin work at the Providence Human Relations Commission (PHRC) and brought with him a copy of a newly written comprehensive anti-discrimination ordinance. The ordinance, which became the official ordinance creating the PHRC, included protection based on "sexual preference." This would be one of the first LGBT civil rights initiatives attempted after Anita Bryant's Dade County "Save the Children" anti-gay rights campaign.

The inclusion of a controversial gay rights provision brought visibility to the Providence Comprehensive Civil Rights ordinance that helped to ensure its passage. LGBT community activists mobilized support on behalf of all minorities gaining protection. Strong opposition made it front page news. Testimony delivered at Providence City Hall introduced the LGBT community as a political and cultural group demanding recognition. While the "sexual preference" clause was dropped prior to the ordinance's passage, reintroduction in subsequent years would ultimately be successful in part due to loyal partnerships created during the 1978 campaign.

John was seriously injured in an automobile accident on the night of the Gay Pride celebration in June of 1978 on his way home from the fundraiser he had organized for the newly established National Gay Task Force. The car he was riding in was hit by a drunk driver. John recovered despite the severity of his injuries, but from then on relied on a wheelchair due to paraplegia. After a period of rehabilitation John returned to full employment. He became an expert consultant on the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. In this capacity, he traveled extensively helping communities throughout the country improve access to transportation systems.

Returning to RI in retirement with his partner Bill of forty years, they found a home in downtown Providence.

Soon after the Supreme Court decision of 2013, he and Bill were the first Gay couple to be married under the care of the Friends Meeting at the Quaker Meeting House in Providence. Despite health challenges, John stayed involved with community activities. He rejoined the Providence Human Relations Commission and was appointed to the RIPTA Board as an advisor on disability issues. John tirelessly led advocacy for funding to repair the wheelchair lift in Providence City Hall so that all residents could access city services. One member of the PHRC summed up, "John was a true warrior for equality and equity in the city. He will be missed."

John attended Quaker Meeting regularly, serving on the Ministry and Counsel Committee. A memorial service will be held in time for friends to gather in remembrance. John's generous, compassionate, and courageous spirit will be greatly missed by all who knew him, and most especially by Dale William (Bill) Brown, his devoted husband and life companion.

## **Clerk's Corner: If Not Now, When?** *from Rebecca Leuchak*

I suspect that we all are feeling pretty overwhelmed right now with the cares of this world. I would find this condition that I find myself in worthy of complaint, except that I am chastened to think of how many in this world have lived for generations in a state of overwhelmed-ness because of the cares, the pressures, the fears and anxiety imposed upon them by an unjust world. If I feel tired navigating this turbulent time, how tired must others be who have struggled for all their lives on the rough road they were/are forced to travel, a road of pitfalls and impediments too numerous for me to imagine. That unjust world is the one that I and my ancestors before me have helped to create and worked hard to maintain and for so many years. I have been blind to this. Let's face it, that unjust world also happens to be my (our) world of privilege. And my realization of that dysfunctional duality seems such a late awakening, so impossibly naïve, so irresponsible, so bereft of integrity.

Part of the fatigue is from the sheer amount of information that is sent my way via newspapers, email, FaceBook, YouTube, and special interest blogs and podcasts, more than anyone could keep up with. I recognize in all of this the potentially good resource material for the journey I am embarked on to recognize and take responsibility for my life of White privilege and prejudice. I have dipped in to quite a bit of this material, as much as I can manage. And I am grateful that I have the technological resources and the time to devote to this, life situations that again speak to privilege not enjoyed by so many others. Take for example the fact that Bill and I very easily connected to the internet this evening to watch the epic Spike Lee film "Da 5 Bloods" via a streaming movie service. It is a powerful film that I hope you will take the opportunity to see. I have the means to access this and so many other things. This ease of access also chastens me.

But while facing this wave of information, this wave of realization of my privilege, this wave of fatigue at the virtual deluge of so much coming in to be paid attention to and for my work, my faith community, my care of daily affairs, so much going out, there is a constant pulse of thankfulness that in this time of struggles I am alert and ready for the possibilities for awakening, for empathy, for love, for yearning for a world that is just, and perhaps with my hard work and sustained intention, for moving into a new paradigm of a better place for all of us to live together. I am thankful most of all for you and the gifts that you bring to the work we have to do together.

I believe we can do this! The time is now!

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

Presiding Clerk: **Rebecca Leuchak** [clerk@providencelfriends.org](mailto:clerk@providencelfriends.org)  
Newsletter: **Jen McFadden and Dan Lederer** [providentfriend@providencelfriends.org](mailto:providentfriend@providencelfriends.org)  
Website: **Sam Schifman** [webclerk@providencelfriends.org](mailto:webclerk@providencelfriends.org)  
Questions and Information: **Steve Schwartz** [info@providencelfriends.org](mailto:info@providencelfriends.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.)

**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