

# The Provident FRIEND

September 15, 2020

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

## Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business 13th of Ninth Month, 2020 Minutes

Friends gathered via Zoom technology at noon with 15 present.

Presiding clerk Rebecca Leuchak began the period of silent worship by reading the following queries taken from the Quaker Cloud - Friends General Conference – West Chester Friends Meeting (<https://www.fgcquaker.org/cloud/west-chester-friends-meeting/pages/queries>):

*Are our meetings for worship and our meetings for business alike held in stilled, expectant waiting upon God?*

*As we worship in living silence for purposes of business, are we drawn together by the power of God in our midst?*

*How does our worship and our work together nurture all, creating a deeper sense of community?*

The clerk read announcements concerning the life of the meeting. Victoria Ekk reported that First Day School has found ways to function during this time when students cannot meet in person.

The following items of business were brought forward:

**Property Committee:** Nina Berry reported on work done over the summer. Trees fell at both Providence and Saylesville, damaging fences but not the buildings; they have been cleared away and the fences have been repaired, as have damaged gates at Saylesville. The Providence meetinghouse has new energy-saving shades and a new fire escape. The newly-planted grass has survived with regular watering.

**Providence Meetinghouse Management Committee:** Nina Berry presented an update on possible resumption of indoor worship in

### CALENDAR

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

**Wednesday, Sept 16, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting Social Hour (Zoom)

**Sunday, Sept 20, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting for Worship (Zoom and Outdoors)

**Wednesday, Sept 23, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting Social Hour (Zoom)

**Sunday, Sept 27, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting for Worship (Zoom and Outdoors)

**Wednesday, Sept 30, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting Social Hour (Zoom)

**Sat Fri Oct 2 to Sun Oct 4, NEYM**  
Young Friends Retreat (Zoom)

**Sunday, Oct 4, World Quaker Day**

**Sunday, Oct 4, Meeting for Worship**  
(Zoom and Outdoors)

**Sunday, Oct 4, 7:00 PM, Meeting**  
Talent Show (Zoom)

**Wednesday, Oct 7, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting Social Hour (Zoom)

**Sunday, Oct 11, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting for Worship (Zoom and Outdoors)

**Wednesday, Oct 14, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting Social Hour (Zoom)

**Sunday, Oct 18, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting for Worship (Zoom and Outdoors)

**Wednesday, Oct 14, 10:00 AM,**  
Meeting Social Hour (Zoom)

Providence. After reviewing current medical recommendations and the physical characteristics of the Providence meeting room, the Committee concluded that indoor worship at Providence is not practical at present.

The Meeting Clerk will approach Moses Brown School about possible use of their tent for shelter of the Providence outdoor meeting when weather is inclement.

**Treasurer's Report:** Peter Swaszek presented the first quarter financial report. Contributions from members are strong. Income from meetinghouse use is down because the Music for Children program is not meeting; however, we will receive income from a day care using the upstairs multi-purpose room and nursery area for approximately two months. Most Meeting committees have been inactive, so expenses are down, but routine spending for utilities, etc., continues as usual. Some of the Meeting's funds have been shifted from the NEYM Pooled Fund to Friends Fiduciary. We thank Peter for his service.

**Ministry and Counsel Committee:** Bruce Shaw proposed Sam Schifman as a new member for the committee. Friends approved.

**Concerning the Meeting's Covid-19 relief fund,** Bruce Shaw reported that no members of our Meeting have yet applied to this Fund. Considering that the pandemic and economic problems continue, the Covid-19 sub-committee and the Ministry and Counsel Committee concur that it is too early to conclude that the fund will not be needed.

Some Friends expressed a concern for people in the neighborhood of the Providence meetinghouse who are suffering economically. After discussion, Friends concluded to take \$10,000 from the Meeting's General Fund for the relief of those in the wider community who are in need as a result of the Covid pandemic. We delegate to Ministry and Counsel, in consultation with the Peace and Social Action, the authority to discern a suitable recipient or recipients of our donation; they are to carry this out and report to the next Monthly Meeting. Noting that withdrawals from the General Fund will decrease our future income, we charge ourselves with the responsibility of replenishing that fund through increased contributions.

No further business appearing, we closed with a period of silent worship at 2:00 p.m., intending to meet next on the 11th of tenth month.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Leuchak, clerk

Rebecca Smith, recording clerk

**Address for Contributions**

The address for contributions to Meeting is now as follows:  
Providence Monthly Meeting  
c/o Peter Swaszek  
Box 1787  
Kingston, RI 02881

**NEYM Young Friends Retreat October 2 - 4**

*from the NEYM Staff*

The next New England Yearly Meeting Young Friends Retreat for high school age youth will be held (virtually) the weekend of October 2-4. Registration is now open. Check the NEYM web-site for more information!

**World Quaker Day/Meeting Talent Show October 4**

The first Sunday of tenth month - October 4 - we celebrate World Quaker Day! Come to Zoom worship or our Worship in-Person in the Grove – group photos will be taken! And then join with Providence Friends that evening for a sharing of our gifts and talents in an on-line Zoom talent show! That's Sunday, October 4th at 7:00 p.m. All contributions are welcome – songs, artwork, magic tricks, jokes, skits, dance acts, short stories, poetry recitation! More info coming via email soon!

**Middle/High School First Day School Starts on Zoom**

*from Cindy Giles*

Our oldest First Day Schoolers – in Middle and High School – are trying out First Day School by Zoom this fall. Our curriculum is the Bible. All the children received a Bible from the Meeting (thank you!) in August, and we had our first gathering Sept. 6. We had 6 children participate - it was wonderful to see everyone! Although we miss being together in person, using Zoom makes it easy to include short videos (this time: the books of the Old Testament and discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls). The kids have now read an entire chapter of the Bible, King James Version! We meet the first and third Sundays of each month via Zoom at 10 am. Send me a note at [cynthia.giles@gmail.com](mailto:cynthia.giles@gmail.com) if you have any questions or if you have a child age 10 or older who might be interested in participating and we will add them to the Zoom invite list.

## Reflections on Racial Justice

*from Zona Douthit*

The best thing—well, maybe the only good thing—to come out of the COVID lockdown is more time to think, and in my case to write.

In my professional life, I help people decide how to provide for their families after they pass away. I enjoy my work because clients feel good when they have completed the process and I like helping them. The people with the largest estates are usually the people whose children graduated from college with no debt and have gone on to very successful lives. I am one of them.

When the racial justice protests began in June, the lockdown enabled me to take the time to really study the structural racism in this country. Sure, before June 2020, I knew it was there, but, hey, I'm not a racist, so I figured it was someone else's problem. I didn't create it; I can't solve it.

But the more I read, the more I realized that I am part of the problem no matter how well-intentioned I am on a personal level. I am the sum-total of the privilege of my Whiteness in thousands of tiny ways because racism is not about how I see the world. It's about the way the world sees me.

So, what impact can I make? What dent can one person make in the bulwark of centuries of structural racism? I turned to my professional knowledge and wrote an article for the September issue of Friends Journal. Here is the link. I hope it provokes thoughts and love. <https://www.friendsjournal.org/okay-boomer-its-time-to-fund-reparations/>

## No One Answer

*from Dan Lederer*

I recently helped a physician friend celebrate his birthday (outdoors and at appropriate physical distancing), and during the conversation he was asked if, over the last year, he had gained any insights that he was willing to share. His words of wisdom were "There is no one answer." He explained that he was referring to diagnosing and treating certain patients in his office, but it occurred to me that this maxim could be applicable in other settings as well.

Situations arise that require us to reach deeply into our knowledge, our experience, and our principles to decide on a course of action. But we can get into difficulties if we start thinking that our way is the only right way, because when we present our line of argument to others we may find that they're convinced that their quite different approach is just as valid. The stage is then

set for entrenchment of positions and resultant conflict.

This scenario can play out between groups as well as between individuals. An example would be the political polarization in our country that seems to be worsening day by day, with both sides certain that their own stance is righteous. And out at the extremes are the ultra-right and the radical left, each firm in their belief that the other side is profoundly mistaken.

We all have opinions about what should be done to address such serious issues as the pandemic, the economic collapse, racial unrest, nuclear weapons, and climate change. A unified approach is needed in confronting each of these, but the widely differing opinions about what to do present an obstacle to effective action. Might it help for each of us to pause and consider the possibility that “there is no one answer”? After all, we can’t be certain that our favored solution to a problem will be effective, nor can we predict unintended, unwanted consequences. Instead, maybe we can accept the fact that there may be some merit to the other side’s position, and it may be possible to find common ground.

Saying to ourselves that there is no one answer won’t resolve all conflicts, but it’s a start. Given the current crises we face, our future as a society, as a nation, and maybe even as a species may well depend on our finding ways to work out our differences.

[Clerk’s Corner next page]

## **Clerk's Corner: Great News! The Spirit Moves!**

*from Rebecca Leuchak*

We made a commitment in meeting for business this ninth month to help our neighbors who are experiencing difficulties due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This initiative is in addition to the fund we established in the spring for those in our Meeting community who may be in need of financial help. If you were unable to be there Sunday to participate in the discernment that led to this corporate decision, allow me to share with you, from my perspective, just how powerfully those Friends gathered in worship for business were led by the Spirit.

As background, you know that we created the Covid-19 Relief Fund for aid to any in our Providence Friends community who are in need due to the current health and economic crisis. This resource generously built by members of our Meeting has to date gone untapped. Let me urge Friends here and now, or if need arises in the future, to contact the coordinator of the fund, Bruce Shaw, to apply for that support. Please note that all inquiries and awards will be kept strictly confidential.

But our awareness of the pressing needs in the wider community led several Friends to urge the Meeting to act in similar witness in an outward direction. Friends voiced their perspectives on the problems faced in our local community. Several Friends who have for a long time worked in community aid efforts shared their personal observations about existing needs. Those examples helped make real the suffering.

We took the time that Spirit-led discernment requires. We listened carefully for what we as a Meeting are being called to do. Our Quaker testimonies grounded our discernment. Compassion carried us all. Generosity of Spirit gained momentum. Our unity in deep concern and our shared commitment to act was a realization of great importance. Way opened to form an outward-turning assistance fund. With clear minds and open hearts, set upon action, we then focused on all the details necessary to turn our aspirations into reality.

Some may have come to the meeting anticipating serious differences on the matter, but that was transformed into a palpable appreciation for the various points of view Friends offered. These different lenses were of tremendous advantage in crafting a solution to the problem we wanted to address. Instead of difference, we all quite quickly felt commonality in our desire to be of aid to those in need. Friends finding such commonality of purpose is the true gift of loyally heeding our inner guide.

We have committed to helping those within our monthly meeting. And now we have made the same commitment as a Meeting to assist others in our wider community. The Meeting's Ministry and Counsel Committee and Peace and Social Action Committee are charged to work together to determine the best way to distribute this aid in the local Providence community.

For both of these Spirit-led acts of compassion, I thank you Friends.

More details about how to contribute will follow – stay tuned!

### **Providence Monthly Meeting Contact List**

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

**Current activities are listed on the Calendar on page 1.**

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Newsletter of

Providence Monthly Meeting of the  
Religious Society of Friends

99 Morris Avenue

Providence, RI 02906