

The Provident FRIEND

December 16, 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 Twelfth Month, 2020 Minutes

Friends gathered via Zoom technology a little before noon with 15 present.

Presiding clerk Rebecca Leuchak began the period of silent worship by reading the following queries taken from Frederick (Maryland) Friends Meeting:

- *What in my present life most distracts me from God?*
- *How well do the ways in which I choose to use my time, my possessions, my money, and my energy reflect my most deeply held values?*
- *What am I ready to release so that I can give my attention to what matters most?*

The following items of business were brought forward:

New member for Ministry and Counsel. Dan Lederer was proposed as a new member for the Ministry and Counsel Committee. Friends approved.

Minute concerning Marcus Mitchell. Marcus Mitchell, an attender here, sojourning from Cherry Street Meeting in Philadelphia, has been proposed as a member of the Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights. We request the Clerk of the Meeting to write to the R. I. Judiciary committee, expressing our unity with our member Marcus and affirming the Quaker commitment to human rights.

Second Quarter Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Peter Swaszek reported that contributions so far are somewhat above last year's at this time, and committee expenditures are low. The daycare center which has been using the Providence meetinghouse for several months will be leaving soon,

CALENDAR

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

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

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

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

Friday, Dec 25, Christmas

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

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

Sunday, Jan 3, 10:00 AM, Meeting
for Worship (Zoom and Outdoors*)

Wednesday, Jan 6, 10:00 AM,
Meeting Social Hour (Zoom)

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

Sunday, Jan 10, Noon, Meeting for
Business (Zoom)

*weather permitting

so that source of income will end. We are uncertain when or if the Music for Children program will be able to return. Some money has been distributed from the Covid-19 relief fund, but more remains in case of further need. Overall, the Meeting's finances are in good order but we are uncertain what the rest of the fiscal year will bring. We thank Peter for his good stewardship.

Report from Peace and Social Action Committee. Steve Schwartz reported that the Peace and Social Action committee used its giving budget of \$1,500 to support the work of Cartwheel RI, a local food distribution organization founded by our attender Evan McManamy. Our Meeting agrees to contribute an additional \$400, being the amount we have budgeted for special concerns, and we invite Evan to attend our January meeting so that we may learn more about the financial and operational details of this organization.

Nuclear Weapons Concern. Also from Peace and Social Action, Steve brought up the pending U. S. ratification of the U.N. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Committee requests that Providence Meeting endorse a (not yet designed) RIPTA bus advertisement to raise awareness of this treaty. We note that we are in unity with the concept, and approve the request subject to approving the ad when it is designed. If a decision needs to be made before our next Meeting for Business, we appoint Bruce Shaw and Steve Schwartz to act for us.

Eugenia Marks reminded us of the members of our Meeting with whom we have not had much or any contact during this time of Covid. We refer to our minute of Fifth Month 2020 on the same subject and add Eugenia to the group which will address the issue.

The Presiding Clerk expressed a concern to have the Meeting reflect on our sense of the nature of our community and what we hold important, and to discuss this at a future meeting.

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 First month 2021.

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

Meeting's Christmas Gathering

from Vicky Ekk

On Saturday December 12, First Day School (FDS) sponsored a virtual Family Holiday Gathering open to all members and attenders of Providence Monthly Meeting. FDS families and Meeting participants sat before their computer screens to share happy memories of past holidays and voice their gratefulness for the warmth of community. It was delightful to hear such a variety of memories of Christmas experiences in different US regions and even across the world! The children listened with interest and shared in sounds and images what makes this holiday both exciting and challenging! We had a chance to sing a COVID version of “We Three Kings...” along with Rebecca Leuchak and “Away in a Manger” and “Silent Night” with Bob Elliott. The hour spent together left all feeling grateful for the opportunity to be together to wish each other well despite having to be physically apart. FDS wishes PMM happy and healthy holiday celebrations and a hope filled 2021!

Outdoor In-Person Worship

Outdoor in-person worship is continuing as temperatures allow. Friends will follow the same procedure as they have all summer, although warm layers for sitting still in the crisp weather are encouraged. The Grove is beautiful this time of year! Look for an announcement via email on Sunday morning before 9:00 a.m. if the in-person meeting is cancelled due to inclement weather.

Candlelight Worship on Christmas Eve

Join Friends for candlelight worship on Christmas Eve, December 24, at 4:30 PM. Light a candle at home and settle in to worship united with Friends via Zoom. Please note that this year this much loved gathering will be virtual and via Zoom – the link will be sent out closer to the event.

Light Year Project at Saylesville

Providence Friends Meeting at the Saylesville Friends Quaker Meetinghouse, 374 Great Road, Lincoln, will hold its Light Year Display again this year from Nov 15 through Jan 26. During the event the community can sponsor a solar light to represent one of the 317 continuous years of worship at the meetinghouse. The sponsorship suggested donation is \$10. Checks can be made out to Providence Friends Meeting with Light Year Display on the memo line, and checks can be sent to Light Year 2020, 199 River Road, Lincoln, RI 02865. For more

information, call 508-643-0884.

Financial Support of Meeting

Friends' support of our Meeting in the form of financial donations is always welcome, but especially so in this season of giving and before the end of the fiscal year! Contributions can be made out to Providence Friends Meeting and sent to our treasurer Peter Swaszek, P.O. Box 1787, Kingston, RI 02881. Thank you for all you do and the many ways that you contribute to our community!

Holding Meeting Together

from Dan Lederer

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused us to alter our individual routines and at the same time has led to changes in how Meeting functions. Out of concern for safety we've decided to continue to keep our meetinghouses closed to most activities. The question then has been how to maintain Meeting's vitality under circumstances that prevent us from gathering together.

In response to this challenge, we've tried to keep connected via outdoor in-person worship in The Grove (still attractive to a few of the more hardy souls among us as the weather gets cooler), online Meeting for Worship, and online Social Hour. We've held virtual First Day School sessions, committee meetings, anti-racism discussions, and special events such as the Arts Show (October 4) and the Christmas Program (December 12).

But some Friends who regularly attended Meeting activities in the past haven't been taking advantage of these opportunities to be together, probably for a variety of reasons. No doubt some of them are dealing with personal obligations that are occupying their time and attention, while others may find online communication to be unavailable, confusing, or even objectionable.

We want these folks to be back with us when we can gather safely once again, so it's important to reach out to them now and let them know we miss them. Also, we need to ask ourselves a question: Can we think of any new ways to do more, both as individuals and as a group, to promote the life of our Meeting during these unique times? Please share your

thoughts.

Meeting's COVID-19 Fund

from Bruce Shaw

Providence Meeting has established a COVID-19 Fund to assist anyone in our Meeting community who is facing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If you are in need of financial assistance or you become aware of anyone else in our community in need of financial assistance, please speak with a member of the Pastoral Care Committee (Hans-Dieter Gomes, clerk) or a member of the COVID-19 Fund oversight committee (Bruce Shaw, Dan Lederer, Vicky Ekk). All communications regarding the fund will be considered confidential. Let's be sure we all reach out to any Friends who may be facing a variety of challenges during this strange and stressful time.

Clerk's Corner: Awaiting the Dawn

from Rebecca Leuchak

As you well know, we are in the season of solstice, the time known as mid-winter, when on December 21st we experience the day with the shortest period of daylight and longest night of the year. It is the time when the Sun is at its lowest daily maximum elevation in the sky. We all usually note this moment in the astronomical cycle with some attention. In the past our family has given it lots of attention, as for many years we hosted Solstice celebrations. But this year our family tradition is suspended, like so many other activities that involve in-person gatherings.

While we may miss and mourn the sharing in-person with others of this planetary event and many other experiences, we would do well to affirm that we have in this moment the opportunity to fully live into our Pandemic plight. The Pandemic allows us to be acutely aware of life around us, particularly perhaps in new and heightened ways. With so much of our usual busy-ness on pause, we may find ourselves quieter and more contemplative. We have the chance to be more highly sensitized, to deepen our self-awareness. Joys and Sorrows, Laughter and Tears, Light and Dark – these seem more pronounced somehow. I must say that I appreciate that!

This year I feel in quiet reflection the importance of the shift of season more deeply and sense

more poignantly its meaning for our human condition. Dark and the Light are the two fundamental realities of our world. They are physically experienced but also are the fodder for our supra-physical drive to make meaning out of the phenomena of our world. Light and Dark, Sun and Moon, Rising and Falling, Good and Evil, Action and Rest, Life and Death.

Solstice time also is the clear marking of a turning. We have reached, on the 21st of this month, the furthest tilt of the earth's axis that puts our northern hemisphere most distant from the Sun. And in days to come that axis inexorably shifts in the opposite direction to bring us closest to the Sun by the Summer Solstice on June 21st. A turning point of the seasons may also be a major turning point in our collective condition.

For I think of our current moment in the arc of the Pandemic story as perhaps, dare I write this – a turning point as well? With the news that shipments of rapidly developed vaccines are on their way to communities world-wide, there seems all about me a collective shift of attitude, lifting of spirits, that we have in fact perhaps turned a corner, that we are with this new medical development starting out on a path towards the light! Just as the days will be getting longer between sunrise and sunset, so too will our collective hope grow that we will someday soon be able to look back upon this dark time. And it is thanks to the many who devoted themselves in those dark days to quiet reflection in research and development of scientific response to the illness that we are now emerging into the New Year!

May we all hold each other in the Light at this time and always, dear Friends! May we have faith that even in the midst of darkness, the Light is with and within us!

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

Providence Monthly Meeting Contact List

Presiding Clerk: **Rebecca Leuchak** clerk@providencefriends.org

Newsletter: **Jen McFadden and Dan Lederer** providentfriend@providencefriends.org

Website: **Sam Schifman** webclerk@providencefriends.org

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>

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

The Provident FRIEND
Newsletter of
Providence Monthly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends
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Providence, RI 02906