

Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business 10th of First Month, 2021 Minutes

Friends gathered by Zoom technology at noon with 21 present. Presiding clerk Rebecca Leuchak began the period of silent worship by reading the following queries taken from *Iowa Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice* (2018)

<https://www.iymc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Faith-and-Practice-with-links.pdf>

- *Are our Meetings for Worship held in a spirit of expectant waiting and communion with the Holy Spirit?*
- *How do we prepare our hearts and minds for worship?*
- *How does the vocal ministry of the meeting contribute to its spiritual life? In what ways do we recognize and nurture vocal ministry and other spiritual gifts?*

The following items of business were brought forward:

Transfer of membership. Ministry and Counsel committee brought a request from our member Mike Minarik that we approve transferring his membership to the Meeting in Princeton, New Jersey and that our Presiding Clerk write him a letter of recommendation to that Meeting. Friends approved.

Religious Education committee report. The First Day School is studying peace this month, including conscientious objection to war. The students have undertaken a project of making greeting cards for residents of nursing homes.

CartwheelRI. We received requested information from Evan McManamy about CartwheelRI, a pay-as-you-can grocery-delivery company founded last spring to serve Providence residents who, for a variety of reasons, lack access to grocery stores. It is a registered non-profit organization, licensed by the R.I. Department of Health, and approved as a SNAP/ Food Stamp retailer. Moneys donated by Providence Meeting have been used to buy food for

CALENDAR

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

Wednesday, Jan 13, 10:00 AM,
Meeting Social Hour (Zoom)

Sunday, Jan 17, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship (Zoom and Outdoors*)

Wednesday, Jan 20, 10:00 AM,
Meeting Social Hour (Zoom)

Sunday, Jan 24, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship (Zoom and Outdoors*)

Wednesday, Jan 27, 10:00 AM,
Meeting Social Hour (Zoom)

Wednesday, Jan 27, 7:00 PM,
Quakerism 101 Class (Zoom)

Friday, Jan 29 – Sun Jan 31,
NEYM Young Friends Retreat

Sunday, Jan 31, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship (Zoom and Outdoors*)

Wednesday, Feb 3, 10:00 AM,
Meeting Social Hour (Zoom)

Sunday, Feb 7, 10:00 AM, Meeting
for Worship (Zoom and Outdoors*)

Sunday, Feb 7, 1:00 PM, Called
Meeting: Southeast Quarter (Zoom)

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

Sunday Feb 14, 10:00 AM, Meeting
for Worship (Zoom and Outdoors*),
then **Noon,** Meeting for Business
(Zoom)

*weather permitting

recipients who were unable to pay for it. We thank Evan for his report.

Bus ad. The design for RIPTA bus ads providing information about the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was provided. We are clear to endorse this and thank Peace and Social Action for bringing it to us.

Additional worship opportunities. Friends considered whether we would like an additional opportunity for worship during the week. If the Brown University Wednesday noon worship is revived via Zoom, this could be an option for us; Bill Monroe will get information to us. Friends are also concerned to find a way to bear public witness in response to the events of this past week, perhaps in conjunction with other religious organizations. Em McManamy, Zona Douthit, Vicky Ekk, Rebecca Leuchak, and Bill Monroe will be a committee to explore the possibilities for both of these and report to our Meeting community.

No further business appearing, we closed with a period of silent worship a little before 1:00 p.m., intending to meet next on the 14th of Second month.

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

Quakerism 101 Class January 27

The next Quakerism 101 class will be held on Wednesday, January 27, from 7:00 to 8:30 PM. The topic will be "Meeting for Worship: What is happening?" and the advance reading assignment is chapters 4 and 5 in *Friends for 350 Years* by Howard H. Brinton. If you are interested in participating, please contact Carl Bogus. He will send out a Zoom link a day or so before the class so that, when it you need it, it'll be near the top of your inbox.

NEYM Young Friends Mid-Winter Retreat Jan 29-31

New England Yearly Meeting Young Friends Coordinator, Maggie Smith announces that the annual Mid-Winter Retreat will be a virtual gathering on January 29th to the 31st. High school age youth are encouraged to attend. For more information and to register go to the Yearly Meeting's website: NEYM.org

Called Meeting: Southeast Quarter February 7

On Sunday, February 7 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. there will be a called meeting for the Southeast Quarter to consider New England Yearly Meeting's Letter of Apology to Native Americans and NEYM Earthcare Witness Committee's Call to Urgent, Loving Action for the Earth and Her Inhabitants.

Program:

- From 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. Listening Session and Worship Sharing Seasoning the NEYM Letter of Apology to Native Americans – facilitated by Andy Grant, Mount Toby MM, member of the NEYM Right Relationship Resource Group
- From 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Call to Urgent, Loving Action for the Earth and Her Inhabitants - PowerPoint presentation by members of the NEYM Earthcare Witness Committee – Friends Gail Melix, Steve Gates, and Beth Morrill.

Nominating Committee Begins Its Work

Nominating Committee is now beginning its work of staffing our various committees for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins June 1. This year we'll again be focusing on Friends who are currently on no committees, so those of you in that category may be receiving a call. As everyone is aware, Meeting has no paid staff; instead, the work of maintaining Meeting's activities and infrastructure is the responsibility of our 18 committees, and participation on committees is essential to the life of our Meeting.

Nominating Committee's hope is that those of you who are already serving on one or more committees will agree to continue to do so during the upcoming fiscal year. If you want to make a change, such as adding a committee or switching to a different committee, please contact Dan Lederer (dleder1@verizon.net) soon if possible, and definitely before the end of February, since we hope to bring a report to Meeting for Business in March. If we don't hear from you, which is fine, we will take that to mean that you are willing to continue serving on your present committee or committees.

Outdoor In-Person Worship

Outdoor in-person worship will continue as weather allows. Look for an announcement via email on Friday or Saturday and then a confirmation on Sunday morning before 9:00 a.m. The al fresco meeting for worship may be cancelled due to inclement weather.

Friendly Phone Calls

In the new year we will restart Friendly Phone Calls for all members and attenders who would appreciate receiving or giving a phone call on a daily basis. If you are interested in brightening up someone's day with a simple, friendly call, please contact Vicky Ekk at victoria.ekk@gmail.com.

Saylesville Light Year Display

Thank you to everyone who has made the Saylesville Light Year Display possible again this year. We are pleased by all the sponsorships we received and the enthusiasm for the project in general. Much to our surprise we more than doubled the proceeds from last year. The idea of representing our history through light seems relevant when we realize that there have been years of trial and heartbreak as well as years that have been fruitful and joyous, demonstrating our ability to persevere by allowing our inner light to shine. Friends who worship at Saylesville thank you again for your support and look forward to bringing back the Light Year Display for a third year in November 2021.

Financial Support of Meeting

Friends' support of our Meeting in the form of financial donations is always welcome. 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.

Thinking About January 6

from Dan Lederer

On January 6 our President's seditious message to his followers and the subsequent attack on our nation's Capitol was cause for alarm, outrage, and sadness. In the interest of justice, there seems to be general agreement that those responsible should be held accountable and face consequences, although it's unclear what form that will take.

While the President can and should be condemned for his actions, it may be that he's done us a service by exposing some painful truths that are worth considering. First, a sizable number of our citizens are willing to be led by a demagogue, believe blatant lies he tells, and dutifully follow his instructions. Second, there's a lot of fear and hatred out there, and a leader who's able to exploit these emotions can go far. And third, our democracy is a fragile institution that requires diligent maintenance in order to survive.

How can we make sense of all this? It may help to remember that when we were youngsters we acted on impulse. As we matured, we gradually accepted constraints on our impulses in the form of propriety, legality, morality, and perhaps a code of ethics. These constraints could feel burdensome at times, so it's not surprising that there are people who admire and are willing to follow someone who seems to wield power as he chooses, with few constraints or adverse consequences. It's also understandable that the rapid changes occurring in our country and world engender fear, which can lead to anger and, given a scapegoat, even hatred. And there's not much question that, at least

up until now, it's been too easy for all of us to take the durability of our democratic institutions for granted.

Given that there are no easy solutions to these problems, how are we to proceed as citizens and as Friends? Certainly there are things we can do. For example, we can support means of communication that convey truth, and educational measures that promote civic responsibility and respect for our democratic form of government. And if we look for other opportunities to act beneficially, we will eventually find them. But in the meantime, we can try to set an example for others by how we conduct our lives, taking into account the constraints detailed above but also being led by our Quaker values and our relationship to God or whatever you choose to call that which is the source of life and light. By seeking to find God's will for us, we will do the right thing, and it's important that, as Friends, we help and encourage each other in that pursuit.

Meeting's COVID-19 Relief 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.

A Sharing Garden

from Eugenia Marks

At the Billy Taylor City Park on Camp and Cypress Streets grows a sharing garden that members of the Meeting have supported as a part of our community outreach and social action. Founded by Dannie Ritchie, M. D., the garden is based on the labor-in, produce-out model of MacArthur Fellow and former basketball player Will Allen to help those without resources in cities to access fresh vegetables. Set up four years ago with 11 raised beds behind the bleachers (so as not to usurp other recreation at the park), the garden also has a tool shed and a cold frame, thanks to the efforts of David Bourns, Bruce Downing, Bob Elliott, Steve Schwartz and Eugenia Marks. In addition, young adults from New England Yearly Meeting last year did a service project in the garden, as well as constructing a winter nest for

pollinators, which they aptly named Air Bee 'n' Bee. Currently at the garden we are experimenting with winter growing under plastic and are able to supply a variety of greens for anyone who puts in a little time to water, bring compost, and do other gardening tasks. Thanks for your support.

Nuclear Disarmament Placards

Pax Christi is seeking support to place nuclear disarmament placards on RIPTA buses, based on the 2017 United Nations treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons worldwide, which takes effect January 22, 2021. A coalition of Rhode Island peace groups is working to place promotional placards on RIPTA buses to encourage public support for the treaty. To pay for the placards, a \$10,000 GoFundMe campaign has been enabled. Any amount will help raise awareness about this urgent existential threat. The link is: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/raise-awareness-of-treaty-to-ban-nuclear-weapons>

Clerk's Corner: Nature's Ways

from Rebecca Leuchak

So often I find life's lessons in the natural world around me. Other creatures that inhabit this earth – birds, insects, reptiles, and animals - are “patterns and examples” of being from which I find inspiration. Likewise, the flora all around me is communicating truths, if we just observe and listen. I experience this quite literally. The rhythms of existence in nature are obvious if we turn our attention away from our artificially constructed, man-made environments and focus instead on what has always been here, predating human existence. This intimate understanding and humbling connection of living with nature was much more the practice of people before our time, the reality of cultures other than mine. And it is a practice that still exists in some parts of the world far distant from my home in Providence, Rhode Island.

In this time of pandemic, I wonder to what extent many of us are waking up to the subtle lessons of nature – a kind of rediscovered literacy? Bill and I have been out walking much more than usual during this year of Covid-19. We are incredibly fortunate to have many parks, nature preserves, and protected wildlife areas in this Ocean State and to have the means to access them. (I am well aware that it is the technological intervention of the car that allows us to connect with those landscapes we are drawn to that are miles from our home.) Once arrived, I find it comforting and thought provoking in a deep way to reconnect to the wind and clouds and sun and the creatures large and small in thick woodland, grassy plain, long stretch of ocean beach, wetland bog.

That continuity of truth that I find in the natural world is a balm for the turmoil of feelings that arise in thinking of our human condition these days. Yes, we have the challenges in many, many ways of current circumstances, whether the health crisis, political issues, human-caused environmental change. But the longer-term life-cycle challenges – loss of loved ones, aging, dying – are also well met by what we can learn from the natural world, beyond humankind's troubles.

What strikes me most powerfully is the interconnectedness of all existence. No one element, NOTHING of the natural world can exist in isolation. And in some societies that is exactly how humans recognize and celebrate and ultimately venerate their reality. In flora and fauna there is no attempt to construct systems of segregation and control over elements of the world. Working with natural rhythms rather than attempting to interrupt them leads far more often to success. And the only way to work with nature is to truly understand nature. Here I think of our deep rifts of American society and wonder – how much more successfully we could coexist if we truly KNEW one another! Finding our common natural rhythms, identifying where the needs that we all have are, and meeting them successfully so that competition for survival is no longer the driving divisive force. That is when we truly thrive!

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 Schiffman** 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
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