

The Provident FRIEND

February 16, 2021

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

Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business 14th of Second Month, 2021 Minutes

Friends gathered via Zoom technology at 11:45 a.m. with 16 present.

Presiding clerk Rebecca Leuchak began the period of silent worship by reading the following queries taken from North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) Faith and Practice, 1983, p.33:

Do you prepare your heart and mind for meeting for business?

Do you seek the leadings of the Light in meeting for business as you do in worship?

Do you make an effort to maintain your awareness that God is with us as we work and proceed in a peaceable spirit with forbearance and warm affection for each other?

The following items of business were brought forward:

Religious Education Committee proposal: As part of their First Day School education, our youth learn about the possibility of and legal requirements for applying for Conscientious Objector status in reference to a possible military draft. Students are encouraged to develop and understand their own beliefs about military participation. The Meeting minutes its support for this process. We commit to supplying letters of support for our young Friends as appropriate, and to creating and maintaining files for them during the years before and after they are affected by the requirement to register within 30 days of their 18th birthdays.

A slide presentation on this matter is available at

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1gMp_8i5TTCts_SwE3KaCz4HSIAFgjbG8s1oprFAg_s/edit#slide=id.p1

Peace and Social Action concern: The committee has considered a minute from Northeast Kingdom Monthly Meeting expressing concern for Palestinian children detained in Israeli military prisons. A question of supporting a related AFSC campaign will be addressed at New England Yearly Meeting sessions this year. Northeast Kingdom Meeting has asked local Meetings to

CALENDAR

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

Wednesday, Feb 17, 10:00 AM,
Meeting Social Hour (Zoom)

Sunday, Feb 21, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship (Zoom and Outdoors*)

Mon, Feb 22, 7:00 PM, Anti-Racism
Dialogs Meeting (Zoom)

Wednesday, Feb 24, 7:30 PM,
Meeting Social Hour (Zoom)

Saturday, Feb 27, 7:30 PM,
Memorial Service for John Gaffney
and Bill Brown (Zoom)

Sunday, Feb 28, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship (Zoom and Outdoors*)

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

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

Wednesday, Mar 10, 7:30 PM,
Meeting Social Hour (Zoom)

Sunday, Mar 14, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship (Zoom and Outdoors*)

Sunday, Mar 14, 11:45 AM,
Meeting for Business (Zoom)

*weather permitting

learn about the issue and to consider support. Peace and Social Action proposes to provide Friends with more information and to bring a request for action to our Third month meeting for business.

Reflections on our year as a community in the time of COVID: Many aspects of life have changed greatly due to the ongoing pandemic. Friends spent some time discussing our experiences during the past year.

No further business appearing, we closed with a period of silent worship at 1:15 p.m., intending to meet next on the 14th of Third month.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Leuchak, clerk
Rebecca Smith, recording

Anti-Racism Dialogs Meeting February 22

The Anti-Racism Dialogs continue with our next meeting on Monday February 22 at 7:00 PM. All are welcome. Contact Rebecca Leuchak or Em McManamy for more information.

Memorial Service for John Gaffney and Bill Brown February 27

A Memorial Service for John Gaffney and Bill Brown will be held via Zoom meeting on Saturday, February 27th at 7:30 PM. The service will be conducted in the manner of Friends and there will be opportunities for people to briefly share ways that John and Bill touched their lives.

Please RSVP to myager52@gmail.com to receive a Zoom link, and please let us know ahead of time if you need help using Zoom. Once you have the link, feel free to share it with others who might want to join us. It will not be posted publicly but can be shared among friends and colleagues.

Seeking Comments for Our State of the Society Report

from Ministry and Counsel Committee

This is the time of year when we normally gather to reflect on the state of our religious society during the previous calendar year. Like many practices, this is being done differently this year.

It would be helpful if you would send us a few sentences about how your spiritual life has fared during 2020. However you have participated – or not participated – in gatherings for worship, we would like to hear from you.

Below are some queries to help guide your response, but do not feel obligated to answer each one. If you want to write a single sentence about your year, that will be just as welcome.

- How has your worship experience been affected by changes made in response to Covid-19? Have you joined in online worship/ outdoor worship/ family worship/ another faith tradition/ no connection to group worship? Have you felt either enabled or excluded by the changed options?

- What is the quality of ministry among us, and how has it been affected?
- How do you feel about the quality of your own spiritual life? How has God's work flourished in you – or not?
- How have you responded to deaths and lost opportunities among family, friends, and communities? In what ways can the Meeting be helpful in processing the challenges of the past year?
- How is religious education faring, both for adults and for children?
- How are we being led to do God's work in the world? How have we succeeded or fallen short during the last year?
- What are we grateful for?

Responses should be sent to Betsy Cazden at bcazden@verizon.net.

An Interfaith Vigil

from the Vigil Subcommittee - Rebecca Leuchak, Em McManamy, Zona Douthit, and Vicky Ekk

On the afternoon of Tuesday, January 19, 2021 more than 160 participants attended an interfaith vigil for peace and unity, sponsored by Providence Monthly Meeting and supported by the New England Yearly Meeting and the Rhode Island State Council of Churches. The vigil was born out of a need to unite in prayer for a peaceful transfer of administration on January 20, 2021 at the Inauguration of Joseph Biden and Kamala Harris.

The vigil consisted of an introduction by PMM's Presiding Clerk, Rebecca Leuchak, with a candle lighting ceremony, an invocation by Reverend Howard M. Jenkins, Jr., Bethel A.M.E. Church, and then a selection of prayers, readings, and songs offered by (in order):

- Rabbi Sarah Mack, Temple Beth-El,
- Janet Cooper-Nelson, Chaplain Brown University,
- Dr. Umer Akbar, President of AHOPE (Americans Helping Others Prosper) and member congregant at Islamic Center of Rhode Island,
- Reverend Jamie Washam, First Baptist Church in America,
- The Venerable Panha Sum, Wat Thormikaram, Buddhist Temple,
- Madeline Labriola of Pax Christi Rhode Island, member of the International Catholic Movement for Peace,
- Margie and Paul Smith, Baha'i Community,
- Dr. Holly Taylor Coolman, Professor of Theology, Providence College, and
- Reverend Chontell Nelson Washington, Interim Director, Rhode Island State Council of Churches.

The speakers shared prayers, read inspirational texts, spoke their thoughts on unity and peace, and one sang a song about peace. All spoken offerings were simultaneously translated in American Sign Language. Participants were guided through a few moments of silence between speakers. The tone was thoughtful, warm, and hopeful. The vigil closed with the invitation to settle into closing moments of silent worship followed by a virtual recessional hymn, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" in a YouTube

video performance by the a capella group "Committed."

Participants were invited to post comments and prayers in the Zoom chat during the recessional song. Many chose to use this opportunity to speak from their hearts. Below are some of their comments:

- Thank you for giving me an hour of peace, fellowship, and hope. Someday soon we will be free to enjoy and share each other's faith, love and hope. Big kisses!
- Grateful So very grateful!
- Peace To All.
- I have been blessed. Thank you to all.
- So glad you were here!
- And Hope, food for the journey ahead.
- Thank you for having an ASL interpreter to make this vigil accessible.
- Thank you for giving us these moments.
- Thank you more than words can say!
- Hear us O Lord, help us, hold us, heal us. Amen
- Very thoughtful and calming gathering. Thank you.
- Thank you for the hope.
- Mahalo! Aloha Nui Loa.
- Very special and much-needed spiritual space....love the recessional hymn group...tears in my eyes....
- Thank you so much for hosting this beautiful vigil.

To view a recording of the vigil, go to
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItCWDulP9R8&t=20s>

Update from Nominating Committee

Nominating Committee has begun its work of staffing our various committees for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins June 1. The committee's hope is that those of you who are already serving on 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 (dlederer1@verizon.net) soon if possible, and definitely before the end of February, since we plan 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. Those of you who are not currently serving on any committee may receive a call asking if you are willing to join a committee, but even if we don't reach you, if you're interested in serving just contact Dan. We hope you see this as an opportunity to help Meeting thrive.

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.

Action Regarding the Treatment of Palestinian Children

from Peace and Social Action Committee

Northeast Kingdom (VT) Monthly Meeting forwarded a document as a call to support HR 2407 concerning imprisoned Palestinian children. Peace and Social Action has made a preliminary determination that it is worthy of support, and is pursuing further details in preparation for presenting an action for Meeting For Business' approval at the March meeting. Following are summaries of HR2407 and the note from Northeast Kingdom Monthly Meeting:

H.R. 2407 Promoting Human Rights for Palestinian Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act (April 2019)

- This bill prohibits the use of certain foreign-assistance funds to support the military detention, interrogation, abuse, or ill treatment of children in violation of international humanitarian law. The bill also prohibits such funds from being used to support certain practices against children, including torture, sensory deprivation, solitary confinement, and arbitrary detention.
- The bill also authorizes the Department of State to provide funding to nongovernmental organizations to (1) monitor and assess incidents of Palestinian children being subjected to Israeli military detention, and (2) provide treatment and rehabilitation for Palestinians under 21 years of age who have been subject to military detention as children.

October 2020 Message from Northeast Kingdom Quaker Meeting

We continued our ongoing discernment to work for the liberation of all imprisoned children—those held in Israeli detention centers as well as others along the U.S.-Mexico border. We invite your Monthly Meeting to extend our Yearly Meeting's current Calls to Action by accompanying AFSC's well-established pursuit of human rights for the indigenous people of Israel/Palestine.

Thank You Letter

from the East Bay Community Action Program

On behalf of the East Bay Community Action Program and the clients we serve, we want to express our deep appreciation for your donation of gifts to the Adopt-A-Family Program.

There's no denying that 2020 has been a very difficult year for us all, but particularly for families in need. The Covid-19 pandemic has and will continue to create many challenges for struggling families in every community throughout Rhode Island. That is why this year, more than ever, we are truly grateful for kind and generous donors like you. Thanks to you, hundreds of families will have a brighter holiday, filled with the excitement of their children opening presents and enjoying this special

time of year!

Please know that your cooperation, follow-through, and enthusiasm were essential ingredients to the success of our program. By embracing the true spirit of the holiday season of giving back, giving thanks, and offering help, you have made a difference in the lives of so many. We hope you have found the program rewarding and look forward to working with you in the future.

Best wishes for a joyous New Year!

Your friends at East Bay Community Action Program, Office of Volunteer Services

Where We Place Our Faith

from Dan Lederer

The “insurgency” on January 6 was inspired by the claim, despite the lack of supporting evidence, that the presidential election was stolen from the rightful winner. This raised a question: How could all those people who participated in the rally and the attack possibly believe that misinformation?

The words “belief” and “faith” are often used interchangeably, but I see them as having different meanings. To me, belief requires observations verified by our own personal experience. Belief defined this way can often provide a solid basis for decision-making, although it’s not perfect, since our observations may be inaccurate, and we may misinterpret what we observe.

Even if our recollections are accurate, we can’t rely solely on what we’ve experienced firsthand. In order to proceed with our everyday activities, we also have to exercise faith, a collection of assumptions that we can’t prove but which provide us with guidance for action when there’s inadequate verifiable information. An example might be getting on an airplane. There’s no way we can be sure that the structure of the plane is sturdy, that the mechanics have all done their jobs correctly, and that the crew is competent and unimpaired. We have to assume that all this is the case or we would never get on the plane. In other words, we have to take it on faith that it’s safe to proceed.

I would contend that the people who attacked the Capitol on January 6 were acting not on belief but rather on faith. They apparently had placed their faith in one man, what Senator Ben Sasse referred to as “the weird worship of one dude”, and were willing to accept his utterances as truth and do his bidding. History has taught us that placing one’s faith in a single person is a dangerous practice (think back to Jim Jones), and this was no exception.

Many of us feel a need for religious faith in order to find answers about such mysteries as why we’re here, what our purpose in life should be, and the nature of our existence before conception and after death. Many are born into or choose a particular religion and accept its teachings, while others may be drawn to a cult of one kind or another, at times with unfortunate outcomes. This may be a good time to examine our own choices.

Quakerism asserts that there is that of God in every person and an Inner Light that can serve as our guide. It asks us not to accept dogma but rather to seek truth on our own. In that sense, Quakerism urges us to have faith in ourselves. In this time of multiple crises that test our faith, things may get worse before they get better. Quakerism is only one of many options to which we can turn, so where do we choose to place our faith?

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Clerk's Corner: Now as Then/Then as Now

from Rebecca Leuchak

As our First Day School teen group prepares to study the issue of Conscientious Objection, I am reminded that it was in the midst of the violent political turmoil of mid-17th century Britain that early Quakers formulated their testimony of peace. In 1660, after years of violent civil war, Margaret Fell carried a petition to London intended for the newly enthroned King Charles II and Parliament. This document, *A Declaration and an Information from Us, The People called Quakers, to the Present Governors, The King and Both Houses of Parliament, and All Whom It May Concern*, explained Quaker principles. It stated that Friends “bear our testimony against all strife, wars, and contentions that come from the lusts that war in the members ...”

Shortly following, in 1661, this key tenet of our faith was disseminated to the wider world when George Fox and Richard Hubberthorne composed and signed, along with ten other leading Quakers, *A Declaration from the harmless and innocent people of God, called Quakers*, which included this statement:

“Our principle is, and our Practice have always been, to seek peace and ensue it and to follow after righteousness and the knowledge of God, seeking the good and welfare and doing that which tends to the peace of all. We know that wars and fightings proceed from the lusts of men (as Jas. iv. 1-3), out of which lusts the Lord hath redeemed us, and so out of the occasion of war. The occasion of which war, and war itself (wherein envious men, who are lovers of themselves more than lovers of God, lust, kill, and desire to have men's lives or estates) ariseth from the lust. All bloody principles and practices, we, as to our own particulars, do utterly deny, with all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretense whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world.”

As we watched the storming of the Capitol building in Washington D.C. on January 6th and then again relived those events in video footage played during the Impeachment trial on the floor of the Senate this past week, I am reminded of the historical circumstances in which these early Quakers bore witness of their faith. Now as then, it is clear that human emotions of lust and anger rage unchecked in our nation. Aggressive actors overtaken by passions are indulging in violence to the point of killing, not only in our Nation's Capital, but across the land.

Now is the time that we may take example from early Friends to speak our truth and live by example our faith. Our spiritual brothers and sisters who founded Quakerism during turbulent times would recognize what is happening in our society today. They so clearly set the path for us in those early days so that we may bring the message of love and compassion and peace and the possibility of a better future to those souls so drawn to hate and violence.

Presiding Clerk: **Rebecca Leuchak** clerk@providentfriends.org
Newsletter: **Jen McFadden and Dan Lederer** providentfriend@providentfriends.org
Website: **Sam Schifman** webclerk@providentfriends.org
Questions and Information: **Steve Schwartz** info@providentfriends.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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