

The Provident FRIEND

Sept 16, 2021

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

Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business 12th of Ninth Month, 2021 Minutes

Friends gathered via Zoom technology at 11:45 a.m. with 18 present.

Presiding clerk Victoria Ekk began the period of silent worship by reading the following queries taken from NEYM *Faith and Practice 2014* Chapter 11: Advices and Queries:

13. *Do you use your time, energy, resources, gifts, and material possessions*

in the service of God's love?

14. *Are you ready to respond to any concern God may lay upon you, large or small?*

15. *Do you maintain an appropriate balance among work, service, worship,*

family, and recreation? Are you ready to rest if God asks it of you?

16. *What does love require of you?*

The clerk read announcements concerning the life of the meeting.

Victoria Ekk is the new Presiding Clerk of Providence Monthly Meeting and has asked Rebecca Leuchak, Em McManamy, and Dan Lederer to act as her elders during the coming year.

Friends are reminded to contact the Pastoral Care Committee clerk, Hans-Dieter Gomes if they know of someone in the PMM community who is ill or needs a helping hand. His contact information is in our meeting directory.

The NEYM newsletter was just forwarded to the Meeting e-mail list by the Communications Committee. Please take a few moments to review it and consider participating in one of the great offerings for spiritual growth. There is something at NEYM for everyone!

Indoor worship at Providence is taking place only outdoors at present. The Providence Meetinghouse Management Committee invites Friends to contact Committee clerk Nina Berry with their thoughts about whether or not the worship room should be re-opened.

We have received communications from the clerk of our Quarter about matters arising at the recent Yearly Meeting Sessions.

Friends are informed of the opportunity to participate in two vigils at the Rhode Island State House; the first on the 25th of this month, in observance of the International Day of Peace, and the second on the 26th, in support of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. Each is scheduled to take place from noon to 2:00 p.m.

The following items of business were brought forward:

CALENDAR

Sunday, Sept 19, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship (Zoom and
Outdoors)

Saturday, Sept 25, 11:00 AM,
Great Road Day at Saylesville
Meetinghouse

Sunday, Sept 26, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship (Zoom and
Outdoors)

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

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

Sunday, Oct 10, 11:45 AM,
Meeting for Business (Zoom)

Resignation: The Meeting clerk reported that Liberty Goodwin, after long discussion with Ministry and Counsel Committee, has resigned her membership in Providence Monthly Meeting.

Treasurer's report. Meeting Treasurer Peter Swaszek presented the first Quarterly report of the fiscal year. The year has gotten off to a good start with member contributions ahead of last year. He noted that almost \$8,000 has been received to make up for the unbudgeted \$10,000 that was donated for Covid relief last year, and that the accounts are balanced.

Hospitality Committee report. Eugenia Marks reported that the Committee is active, although with somewhat reduced membership. They are successfully finding hosts for the in-person meetings. Several newcomers have recently attended the outdoor meetings.

Peace and Social Action report: Bob Watt reported that the Committee has participated in several peace-related actions, including meeting with the Rhode Island Congressional delegation to advocate for the ending of the Authorization for the Use of Military Force, and participating in demonstrations and meetings opposing nuclear weapons. He noted that the U. N. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has taken effect but has not been signed by the United States.

Religious Education Committee report. Eugenia Marks reported that the Committee has been determining the numbers and ages of students likely to participate in First Day School this year. There will be three age groups. The older ones will meet periodically by Zoom and the younger group will receive packets to use with their families. All groups will be studying relationships with indigenous peoples of this area. The Committee is exploring the possibility of taking the students on some walks through the neighborhood and of engaging in musical and other activities. First Day School will begin this week.

No further business appearing, we closed with a period of silent worship at 12:45 p.m., intending to meet next on the 10th of Tenth month.

Respectfully submitted,
Victoria Ekk, clerk
Rebecca Smith, recording clerk

Meeting for Worship During COVID

During this COVID Delta surge, Friends are holding in-person meeting for worship in the grove behind the Providence Meetinghouse at 10:00 AM, weather permitting. Please bring your own chair. Mask wearing is at your discretion, although strongly encouraged during the current upsurge. Access to the downstairs restroom is through the utility door at the back of the building. In addition, we continue to hold our online Meeting for Worship also at 10:00 AM on First Days. The Zoom link is sent to our Providence Monthly Meeting members and attenders via email on Fridays and Saturdays.

Great Road Day at Saylesville September 25

The Saylesville meetinghouse will be open to the public on Saturday, September 25, from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM as part of Lincoln's Great Road Day program. Any Friends interested in volunteering some time for this opening can contact Rebecca Smith at acelinebarrett@aol.com or 508-252-5767.

Report on New England Yearly Meeting Sessions

from Bruce Neumann, NEYM Presiding Clerk

Friends gathered during our business meetings at our annual sessions in August engaged deeply with a number of weighty concerns. Our time together was challenging, but blessed by much wisdom, insight and grace.

The following actions which occurred at business sessions are of interest or have some significance for monthly meetings. Several points need further follow-up, but I wanted to get a first communication in your hands about some of the things we approved.

Most of you are aware that NEYM has a long-standing relationship with Cuba Yearly Meeting. Over recent months we have had some correspondence with Cuban Friends that reveals the significant challenges posed by the combination of embargo and COVID. Friends approved a minute (attached) from the Puente de Amigos Committee encouraging the Biden administration to lift the blockade against Cuba and rescind executive actions which are harmful to the Cuban people. Individuals and Monthly Meetings are encouraged to consider how they might engage in lobbying for change for the well-being of our F/friends in Cuba. You may forward the minute to your congresspeople, copy the text and put it on your meeting letterhead, or use it as inspiration for other action.

The Yearly Meeting Secretary and the Presiding Clerk presented a denominational letter they had signed on our behalf, also encouraging the Biden administration to a series of actions to benefit the Cuban people. The letter can be found on the NEYM website.

Letter of Apology: Friends approved the Letter of Apology to Native Americans, with some changes that had been suggested during open discernment. We recognize that, while significant, approval of the letter is not an end to this work, it is a step on the road. Friends approved the offer of several members of the Right Relationship Resource Group (RRRG) to shepherd how the letter is distributed and made public. Given recent news about boarding schools which leaves many Native people feeling tender about non-natives, and our (those of us who identify as white) tendency to center on our own needs and feelings, **I ask that Friends not rush into delivering this letter to a local tribe. Please wait for a final copy, and some guidance from the RRRG, which includes individuals who are more well-versed than myself in native concerns.**

Faith and Practice: Friends gave preliminary approval to a chapter on "Personal Spiritual Practices." Friends are encouraged to use and engage with this text, which is available, along with other chapters which have received preliminary approval, on the NEYM website. Final approval will occur when the whole of Faith and Practice is ready.

Earthcare Ministry: Friends approved forwarding a minute from the Earthcare Ministry Committee. The minute (attached) recognizes the escalating crisis to our planet and encourages a number of actions, including getting involved in public policy and supporting those led to direct action.

On behalf of the Yearly Meeting, I was asked to write a letter to the General Board of Friends United Meeting (FUM), again asking them to consider and delete the discriminatory part of the personnel policy, and sharing our deep belief in how this policy is wrong. I will share the letter and any response we get at some later date.

Bayard Rustin Fund: Friends approved a proposal from the FUM committee to establish a fund which would receive money from individuals and monthly meetings. The money accumulated in this fund would be distributed annually to organizations working towards LGBTQIA+ justice and well-being. A small group of Friends will be appointed to discern which organization(s) will receive these funds. (Note that a few Friends observed that there is an existing fund with the same name at FGC. Permanent Board will consider whether to re-name this fund, which will not affect its approval or function). More information will be forthcoming on how to submit to this fund.

Recognizing the pain that continues to be felt about our continuing relationship with FUM, and recognizing the enormous disparity of viewpoints about that relationship, not just around the Yearly Meeting, but within many monthly meetings, Friends recognized the importance of a mechanism that would allow Friends to divert the portion of their donations which would otherwise go to FUM as part of NEYM's annual contribution to that organization. Friends approved a new mechanism which does not withhold, but which directs those funds to the new Bayard Rustin Fund. Two additional points about this mechanism: the mechanism has no end date; it will "remain in effect until the Personnel Policy changes, or until Friends find a new way forward." Also, the minute approved does not include establishment of a separate fund where those Friends who are interested can contribute to make up the difference in what is sent to FUM. Please note that any Friend who is so led may donate directly to FUM. Once the final language of the minute is approved by Permanent Board, I will send more information on how to engage with this mechanism.

Collaboration with other Yearly Meetings: Friends approved a second proposal from the FUM committee, which asks our FUM Board Representatives to convene a meeting of open and affirming Yearly Meetings "for the purpose of mutual encouragement, support, strategy building, and development of a plan for wider intervisitation." A few Friends, while supporting this initiative, pointed out that conferring with like-minded Friends does not go far enough—we need to spend time with those with whom we disagree. Our work here is far from done; perhaps this consultation will result in a plan we can engage with.

No Way to Treat a Child: We were presented with two minutes from quarterly meetings asking the Yearly Meeting to endorse AFSC's No Way to Treat a Child program and U.S. bill HR2407. We heard deep concerns about the AFSC program and deep concerns about the wellbeing of children, not only in Palestine but in the U.S. and around the world. We did not find unity to approve these minutes, but monthly meetings are welcome to consider whether or how they are led around these concerns. We were reminded of Minute 2017-46 (re-affirmed in 2019), which encourages Friends to individual and corporate action, including learning about the Israel-Palestine conflict and working towards the end of military aid to all involved parties. Please be aware that a working group under the oversight of Permanent Board has been formed to help Friends live into this work. Expect to hear from them this year.

Internalized Homophobia and Transphobia: A third proposal from the FUM Committee invites us "to examine the ways that homophobia and transphobia lives in the broader culture, in our meetings, and in us." As much as cisgendered straight people like myself would like to deny it, I have heard enough comments revealing lingering homophobia that I am convinced that this is important work. In the company of seemingly more pressing concerns, this proposal did not receive enough attention during open discernment to approve it, but I mention this as it remains on my heart.

The Meeting Directory *from Communications Committee*

The next edition of the Meeting Directory will come out next month. If you've had a change in your contact information since the last edition (April) or if you aren't listed in the directory but would like to be, contact Dan Lederer (dlederer1@verizon.net).

Communications Committee maintains several other means of communication for Friends: We have two email groups, one being the Meeting Email List, often referred to as "the listserve", which functions as our electronic bulletin board via notices of upcoming events and other items of interest to Friends, and the second being the Meeting Social List, which is for more personal messages and for back and forth dialog.

Yet another means of communication is our newsletter, The Provident Friend, published ten times per year. And finally there's our website, accessible to all at www.providencefriends.org. In order to engage fully in the life of the Meeting, it's helpful to be listed in the Meeting Directory, to be on the email lists, and to receive the Meeting newsletter. If any one of these is not happening for you, please contact Dan.

Note from Debi Gorman (Jen Giglio's mother)

Sending a little prayer that this finds you all happy, healthy, and feeling blessed. Thank you for all your help and prayers when Jeni passed. You are a blessing. And Zona you are an Earth Angel. You went above and beyond for my grandsons and I appreciate it all.

Jordan did not graduate but has a full-time job (fast food), a car, and a license. He is living with his girlfriend's family for a year-and-a-half now. Oh yeah, he even has a dog and has health insurance.

The boys are doing well also, both adopted, now Corey and Caleb Rau. [The Raus] own and work in seal coating. Grandpa owns a bakery and Corey loves to bake. They have a giant vegetable and flower garden, two cats, one dog, one fish, and a lizard named Speckles. Corey is thirteen and Caleb is fifteen. Corey's voice squeaks and Caleb's voice is deep and manly. They are happy and at peace.

Caleb (left) and Corey Rau



Clerk's Corner: Finding Hope

from Vicky Ekk

When I first came to the Providence Meetinghouse in the fall of 2013, I was searching for a spiritual home that spoke to my condition. It only took two visits to convince me that I had finally found a community where I could learn and grow to be a better human being. My decision to seek membership was strong and clear, and soon I was actively involved in a host of activities. Today, I am glad to be of service to the PMM family.

It's September 2021 and the nation and our world as a whole is reeling from many challenges: a continuing pandemic, a nation divided by fear and distrust that threatens a fragile democracy, violence at home and abroad, and an almost daily reminder that our climate is rapidly changing. It would be easy to be pessimistic, depressed, angry, or simply bewildered, but we are called to a different perspective. We are asked to seek that of God in everyone around us and to find hope in our world. Even our RI flag reminds us of our need to hope!



Where do we find hope? I suggest that we look first inside ourselves, grateful for the blessings of family, friends and our PMM community. Gratitude leads to hope. All around us there are examples of resilience and perseverance despite great difficulties. Affirmation of one another's strengths also leads to hope. The pandemic required all of us to have time for reflection and I often heard Friends talk about the benefits of slowing down life's pace. Finding the good in the unexpected also leads to hope.

From Faith and Practice Britain, advices and queries

Be aware of the spirit of God at work in the ordinary activities and experience of your daily life. Spiritual learning continues throughout life, and often in unexpected ways. There is inspiration to be found all around us, in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our work and friendships, in our sorrows as well as in our joys. Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come? Do you approach new ideas with discernment? *Quote of the Week from Lansdowne Friends Meeting, PA, August 30, 2020*

Let's take time to reflect on where we find the kind of hope that refreshes our spirit and fuels our willingness to be part of the solution to the many challenges facing us!

Address for Contributions

The address for contributions to Meeting is as follows:

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

Presiding Clerk: **Vicky Ekk** 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.**

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Providence Monthly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends
99 Morris Avenue
Providence, RI 02906