

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

Friends gathered via Zoom technology at noon with 18 present. Presiding clerk Victoria Ekk began the period of silent worship by reading the following queries taken from New England Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice* 2014, Chapter 11: Advices and Queries (approved by NEYM)

4. *Is every aspect of your life open to the transforming power of God? What stands in the way?*
5. *Are you open to the many ways Spirit may speak to you?*
6. *Do you recognize divinely inspired insight? Can you distinguish between divine leadings and your own needs or desires?*

The clerk read announcements concerning the life of the meeting. The following items of business were brought forward:

1. Saylesville Meetinghouse Management Committee –Slave Medallion Proposal:

For the committee, Ann Durant reported that we have been asked to allow the Saylesville meetinghouse to be included in the Rhode Island Slave History Medallion Project. This project maintains a website linked to plaques at sites connected with the history of slavery in Rhode Island, and we have been asked to participate. The Saylesville committee recommended that it be authorized to pursue planning and research for such participation, with the condition that any plan developed with the Medallion Project organizers be brought back to the Meeting for Business for consideration. Friends approved.

2. Saylesville Piano: The committee also reported that it is seeking a new home for the ca. 1880 piano at that meetinghouse. Anyone in our Meeting community who is interested is asked to contact Ann Durant (508-514-9397) before the next Monthly Meeting, after which it will be offered elsewhere. Friends approved.

3. Saylesville events. Saylesville meetinghouse was included in Lincoln's Great Road Day tour of historic buildings in September and received about 70 visitors.

The Light Year Project is again underway, a fundraiser that aims to place a light during the month of December for each year the meetinghouse has stood. The requested minimum donation is \$10 per light. Checks should be made out to "Providence Monthly Meeting" with "Light Year Project" in the memo line, and mailed to Denise Turco at 199 River Road, Lincoln, R.I. 02865.

The Christmas Eve candlelight service will once more take place primarily by Zoom, with limited in-person attendance by invitation only.

4. Proposed letter concerning R. I. Act on Climate Change: Peace and Social Action Committee proposed that our Presiding Clerk write to Rhode Island Governor McKee on our behalf,

CALENDAR

Saturday, Oct 16, 12:30 PM, Tour of Tomaquag Museum

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

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

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

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

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

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

encouraging his efforts related to the state's Act on Climate Change. The committee brought a draft letter, which was accepted with several suggestions for editing. Friends approved sending the letter.

5. Transfer of Membership: We have received a letter of transfer from Amesbury Monthly Meeting for Martha (Em) McManamy and her adult children Evan, Laura, and Conor McManamy. Ministry and Counsel recommended that we accept them as members of our Meeting. Friends approved.

6. Proposed handbook revision for Ministry and Counsel Committee. Dan Lederer brought proposed new wording for Ministry and Counsel's description in the Providence Monthly Meeting Handbook. Friends approved. (See below for the text)

7. Meeting Records. There was some discussion of the fact that Friends are not always easily able to locate information from the Meeting Handbook, Directory, or Business Meeting minutes. Making these things available through the meeting website would be helpful, as would providing printed copies of the handbook and directory to new members. We ask Communications Committee to consider this issue and report.

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 Eleventh month.

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

The new section on Ministry & Counsel Committee in the Providence Monthly Meeting handbook is as follows:

Revised Description of Ministry & Counsel in the Meeting Handbook

MINISTRY AND COUNSEL COMMITTEE

Mission: To oversee and advance the spiritual well-being of the Meeting.

Background & history:

Early Friends began a practice of having a smaller body within the meeting community who met separately to worship together, discuss the emerging Quaker approach to faith, and hold the meeting and its members in prayer. The Friends in these meetings who were known for the power of their vocal ministry began to be named as ministers; some traveled extensively to spread the Quaker message. Those Friends who were 'most grown in the Power and the life, in the pure discerning in the Truth' (Dewsbury, Works, 1689) were named as elders. These were Friends most alert to the spiritual and physical needs of the community and who nurtured its life, organization, and business practices; some also provided spiritual accompaniment to traveling ministers.

In New England these bodies of ministers and elders evolved into what is usually called Ministry & Counsel. While all Friends have a responsibility for ministry and for caring for one another as members of a meeting, Ministry & Counsel is charged with giving particular attention to nurturing ministry and being alert to the spiritual life and physical needs of the entire meeting community. Caring for the vitality of worship, pastoral care, clearness, encouraging ministry, spiritual nurture and the promotion of individual spiritual practices, and conflict resolution — all are loving manifestations of a functioning Ministry & Counsel.

(from Draft NEYM Revised F&P, 10/2021)

Responsibilities:

- Oversee and care for meetings for worship, including practical arrangements such as assigning facing bench responsibility.

- Observe quality of vocal ministry, offering encouragement or informal guidance when called for.
- Receive and consider all applications for membership, transfer, and discontinuance, including naming clearness committees, and make recommendations to Meeting for Business for approval.
- Shepherd marriages under the care of the meeting. (See separate Handbook section.)
- In the event of a death within the meeting, work with Pastoral Care and Burial Grounds Committees to assist the family, including having oversight of an appropriate memorial meeting. (See Handbook section on Funerals for details.)
- Prepare memorial minutes for deceased members, to be forwarded to Meeting for Business.
- Prepare the annual State of the Society report for consideration by Meeting for Business.
- Assist members or attenders in times of personal need in whatever way seems appropriate.
- Select members of the Pastoral Care Committee, some of whom may be members of Ministry and Counsel.
- Assist members and attenders who request clearness committees on matters of personal discernment, whether informally or by referral from Meeting for Business or another committee.
- Administer the Deborah Jenks Fund and the Ruth Arnold Kellam Fund.
- Nominate monthly meeting Presiding Clerk and Assistant Presiding Clerk.

Detailed descriptions and guidance for these functions can be found in NEYM's Faith & Practice (Draft Revision, 10/2021) and elsewhere in this Handbook.

Ministry and Counsel must be careful to respect and protect the confidences and trust of all matters brought before the committee.

Membership of committee:

The committee is composed of 12 seasoned members of Providence Monthly Meeting. Formal membership in the meeting is required. Members are appointed for up to two 3-year terms; they may be reappointed after one year off the committee. New committee members are approached and approved by the current committee, which recommends them to Meeting for Business for approval. In addition, the Presiding Clerk of Providence Monthly Meeting is an ex officio member of this committee.

Meeting members who are appointed to Ministry & Counsel are Friends with a deeply rooted commitment and experience of paying attention to the Inward Guide. Their lives give evidence of spiritual wisdom, discretion and compassion. They are faithful in attendance at meetings for worship and for business. Their own active spiritual lives and grounding in Quaker tradition are resources that inform their decision-making.

Draft NEYM Revised F&P, 10/2021

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.

Tour of Tomaquag Museum October 16

The Aquetuck group has sent an invitation to members and attenders to participate in a tour of the Tomaquag Museum, an exhibit of Narragansett and Pokanoket artifacts and cultural history in Exeter, Rhode Island on Saturday, October 16. Folks are invited to bring a lunch and blanket to the museum grounds between 12:30 and 2:00 pm. Tours will require masks and social distancing. RSVP is requested. Contact victoria.ekk@gmail.com.

First Day School

First Day School children ages 5 to 10 have been sent an October "First Day School At Home" packet through their parents' email address. First Day School tweens and teens are meeting online on the first and third Sundays of each month at 10 am. Interested young Friends receive a Zoom link the week before each meeting. For more information, contact Wendy Virgadamo at virgadamo.wendy@gmail.com or Eugenia Marks at emarks66@gmail.com.

World Quaker Day

Quakers from around the world celebrated the 8th Annual World Quaker Day on October 3. At Providence we worshipped online and in The Grove next to the meetinghouse (see photos below).





Light Year Display at the Saylesville Meetinghouse

Saylesville is getting ready for our Light Year Display this winter (see photo below). We will be trying a new layout and hope everyone gets a chance to stop by for a look. The setup will take place November 21st! If you would like to sponsor a light this year, please make out a \$10.00 (or more) check to Providence Monthly Meeting, with the memo Light Year Display, and send it to Denise Turco, 199 River Road, Lincoln, RI 02865.



The Meeting Directory

from Communications Committee

The next edition of the Meeting Directory will come out later this 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).

Clerk's Corner: Listening to Spirit

from Vicky Ekk

I hesitate to use the word “always”, but I find that I am *always* challenged by the queries for Meeting for Business. The queries for this month, from NEYM's Faith and Practice, 2014, are: *Is every aspect of your life open to the transforming power of God? What stands in the way? Are you open to the many ways Spirit may speak to you? Do you recognize divinely inspired insight? Can you distinguish between divine leadings and your own needs or desires?*

What stands in the way? Often it's easier to see the obstacles in someone else's life than my own, but that is just a distraction. What stands in my way to transformation is being comfortable right where I am, even if I know that moving beyond my comfort zone will help me be part of the solution rather than the problem.

How does Spirit speak to me, to us? For me the answer is that the divine constantly prods me out of my comfort zone through the words and experiences of others. There are so many ways to seek that of God in the wisdom found in a variety of writings and within the gatherings of those who care about our world. There is joy in finding wisdom among us.

During COVID time, I've reconnected with friends from my undergraduate years. Our group meets on Zoom Thursday nights and we've looked at anti-racism and pro-Indigenous books as well as some Parker Palmer writing. The discussions have forged strong relationships and a desire to address inequities. Looking at what is wrong with our world can be depressing, so our latest book is *The Book of Joy*, by the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Tutu and journalist Douglas Adams. Here is something to ponder from the wise words of this trio:

Now we are in the twenty-first century. We are improving on the innovations of the twentieth century and continuing to improve our material world. While of course there are still a lot of poor people who do not have adequate food, generally the world is now highly developed. The problem is that our world and our education remain focused exclusively on external, materialistic values. We are not concerned enough with our inner values. Those who grow up with this kind of education live a materialistic life and eventually the whole society becomes materialistic. But this culture is not sufficient to tackle our human problems. The real problem is here ... and here.[] Mind and heart. Materialistic values cannot give us peace of mind. (DL, p.29-30) There are going to be frustrations in life. The question is not: How do I escape? It is: How can I use this as something positive? (AT, p.39)

So here is a challenge for all of us. How do we use the frustrations about what is wrong with the world around us to prod us into positive action?

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 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
99 Morris Avenue
Providence, RI 02906