

**Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship
with a Concern for Business
13th of Second Month, 2022
Minutes**

Friends gathered by Zoom technology at 12:15 with 18 present. Presiding clerk Victoria Ekk began the period of silent worship by reading the following queries taken from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice*, Section on *Deepening Our Faith: Meeting for Worship*:

- *Do I faithfully attend meeting with heart and mind prepared for worship, clear of any predetermination to speak or not to speak, expecting that worship will be a source of strength and guidance?*
- *Does worship enhance my capacity for attentive, non-judgmental listening to others?*
- *How does participation in meeting for worship contribute to my life-long spiritual journey?*

The clerk read announcements concerning the life of the meeting.

The following items of business were brought forward:

Finance Committee Report. For the Committee, Steve Thomas reported that the Meeting's internal financial audit has been completed by Bruce Carlsten and Matt Hackman, who found no concerns. The Meeting's investments are held at Friends Fiduciary. The Finance Committee met with a representative of that company last month and was satisfied in terms of the safety of the investments, the attention to social responsibility, and active communication between the company and investors. Steve brought a proposed budget for the coming fiscal year. He noted that it was somewhat challenging to create a balanced budget for the coming year as we anticipate somewhat decreased paid use of the Providence meetinghouse along with, we hope, increased activity by our Meeting Committees. Most figures are unchanged from last year. Friends expressed concern about the fact that the Meeting's contribution to New England Yearly Meeting has not been increased in the proposed budget. We ask the Finance Committee to consider ways of increasing the contribution. A question was raised about investment in fossil fuels. Steve reported that Friends Fiduciary does not invest in fossil fuels. Our checking account is at Citizen's Bank, which does, but changing to another bank might not be feasible.

CALENDAR

Sunday, Feb 20, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship (Zoom and
Indoors)

Wednesday, Feb 23, Video *White
Fatigue* (Zoom)

Sunday, Feb 27, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship (Zoom and
Indoors)

Fri Mar 4 to Sun Mar 6,
Alternatives to Violence Workshop
(Zoom)

Sunday, Mar 6, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship (Zoom and
Indoors)

Sunday, Mar 13, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship (Zoom and
Indoors)

Sunday, Mar 13, 12:15 PM,
Meeting for Business (Zoom)

Thursday, Mar 17, 7:00 PM,
Aquetuck Meeting (Zoom)

Peace and Social Action Committee Report: For the Committee, Steve Schwartz brought a report. There are several items for which Friends' participation is invited. The report is attached.

Seeking Racial Equity. The Anti-Racism group has adopted this new name. Vicky shared a video called "White Fatigue," which will also be shown to the public on the 23rd.

Jeanne Theis Whittaker Memorial Minute proposal. Rebecca Leuchak brought a proposed minute remembering the life of our member Jeanne Whitaker. Friends approved. The minute is attached.

Meeting for Worship format proposal. The working group which has been considering the form or forms which Meeting for Worship should take brought a proposal to continue, for the time being, the current experiment of holding a hybrid in-person/Zoom meeting on alternate First days, with separate meetings on the other weeks. (This applies to worship at the Providence meetinghouse only.) The working group notes that there are widely differing views within the Meeting about the acceptability of remote participation in worship, and that further discernment will be necessary. Friends approved the plan for the time being and determined to revisit the question at our Meeting for Business in Fifth month. To prepare for this, we ask Friends to try to experience the combined Worship format beforehand, and we will schedule a worship sharing on this topic before May.

No further business appearing, we closed with a period of silent worship at 1:40 p.m., intending to meet next on the 13th of Third month 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Ekk, Clerk
Rebecca Smith, Recording Clerk

To see the Memorial Minute for Jeanne Whitaker, go to
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gqpU3XkcwKt3LBx6ub-doLnEIVyz1fr/view?usp=sharing>

To see the Report from Peace and Social Action Committee, go to
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wH3f7iqxgBs7prfNhBYI-Asl6huTURNI/view?usp=sharing>

The Work of Staffing Our Committees Begins

from Communications Committee

It's never too early to get started, so Nominating Committee is now beginning its work of staffing our various committees for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins June 1. We are again focusing on Friends who are currently on no committees, so those of you in that category may be receiving a call from us.

As everyone is aware, Meeting has no paid staff. Instead, the task 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 (dlederer1@verizon.net) soon since the committee hopes to bring a report to Meeting for Business in March. If we don't hear from you, which is fine, we'll take that to mean that you are willing to continue on your present committee or committees.

If you're not currently on any committees but would consider joining one and would like to hear more about the many opportunities to serve Meeting that committees provide, please contact Dan so that he can go over the possible choices with you.

Seeking Racial Equity February 23

The Anti Racism dialogue group has changed its name to Seeking Racial Equity. The group will launch this year's discussions and projects with a showing of the video *White Fatigue*, which is only a little over three minutes long, on Wednesday, February 23. There will be an opportunity for small group discussions after the show. Further information, including the time, will be forthcoming over the Meeting Email List.

Alternatives to Violence Project Basic Workshop March 4-6

The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) provides workshops of a transformational justice program focused on anti-violence skills. This program has been successful in training people across the US and several other countries. AVP is offering a basic workshop the weekend of March 4-6, facilitated by several members of Providence Monthly Meeting. The training will be online so you can be safe and comfortable in your own home while learning effective skills to make a more peaceful world! More information on AVP and the registration form for the upcoming workshop will be attached to the announcements email. For questions, contact Em McManamy (mmcmanamy3@gmail.com).

Aquetuck Meeting March 17

The next Aquetuck meeting is Thursday, March 17, at 7:00 PM on Zoom. Aquetuck is focused on building right relationship with local indigenous people through a variety of interactions and projects. For more information, contact Evan McManamy (evan.l.mcmanamy@gmail.com).

A Quaker Phone Tree

from Pastoral Care Committee

Are you interested in joining a phone tree to have regular contact with other Friends? Early in the pandemic, we had a successful operation that gave comfort to many during those uncertain days. You may not know this, but the original idea for the phone tree in March 2020 came from our dear friend John Gaffney.

Pastoral Care would like to restart it in a simplified manner. We especially encourage the elderly or housebound to participate in this Meeting activity, but all are welcome. We will break the phone tree into smaller groups, maybe only three or four members in a group, who will decide their own

schedule for calls. The groups may want to make phone calls in seriatim like a classic phone tree or set up a Zoom meeting for all to have a friendly fellowship hour (or 40 minutes on a free Zoom account). If enough members participate, we can reshuffle the groups every couple of months. The goal here is to make sure that all Friends feel connected to our wonderful community.

If you would like to be put on the list, the information needed is your name, telephone number, email address, and an indication of whether you can be a small group organizer, a job that will require very little time. Send your response to Zona Douthit (zona.c.douthit@gmail.com). Zona will assemble the initial list.

Food Pantries

Rhode Islanders in need are making use of the local food pantries. Please consider donating to your local food pantries. We will keep a box to collect items for Camp Street Ministries in the Meetinghouse lobby each First Day. To find food pantries near you, go to <https://rifoodbank.org/find-food/>

The Saylesville Light Year Display

Thank you from Saylesville to all of our sponsors, neighbors of Great Road, and Friends of Friends for your generous participation in the Light Year Display! It was a beautiful sight to see all the individual lights flicker into the evening as a single statement of love and remembrance. Among the lovely sentiments we were reminded of mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, family, friends, beloved pets, and the hope of "World Peace".

We raised \$1,002.00 during the Light Year Display 2021-2022. This year celebrated the 318th year of the Saylesville Meetinghouse. Thank you for making this part of Friends history.

Those held in the Light included Grandchildren, Family Members, Sage and Julie, World Peace, Jeanette and Walter Leuchak, Virgilio Castro and Jose and Maria Faria, Ed Turco and Connie Hicks, Leo and Martha Prive, Alice Prejean Jones, Rosalee Parks Bagby, Remi, The Gareau and Moore Families, Patricia, Kathleen, Cheryl, Ruthann and Jeanne, Parents, the Arnold Family, Miles and Rocky, Family and Friends, James Durant and William Willis, Christina Mendes and Eleanor Gardner Arnold.

Meeting for Worship During COVID: In-Person Worship Continues

Friends are continuing to gather for in-person Meeting for Worship in the Providence and Saylesville meetinghouses, with safety protocols approved at Meeting for Business In November. In addition, we continue to hold our online Meeting for Worship, also at 10:00 AM on First Days, with the Zoom link sent to our Providence Monthly Meeting members and attenders via email on Fridays and Saturdays.

First Day School

First Day School continues to provide packets for families to work with their children, and the 10 years and older group holds discussion with Wendy Virgadamo and guests two Sundays a month.

Walking Sunday continues on the first Sunday of the month to give students a chance to meet in person.

Musings on the Bible

from Zona Douthit

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is: but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25 KJV

My favorite quote from Margaret Fell Fox, “Provoke one another to love,” was clearly based on the 17th C King James version of *Hebrews*, which was written before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE by an unknown author. I would like to consider the meaning of this passage so that we can better understand what the author and MFF are demanding of us. Modern translations of the Bible have softened the KJV of this passage, making it more palatable for our pampered age, as if we need the bran taken out of our soul food.

First, let’s look at modern interpretations of the eighth word in the sentence, *παραξυσμὸν*. The KJV translated it as *provoke*. The New Living Translation uses *motivate*. The New International Version turns it into *spur on*. The New American Standard Bible employs *stimulate*. I like MFF’s word “provoke.” “Spur on,” “motivate,” and “stimulate” are pleasant suggestions. Provoke connotes irritation. Provoke is like a poke in the ribs, maybe even a kick in the behind. It calls for action. Words like motivate and stimulate can too easily be put off. Provoke is in your face. Do this and do it now.

The original KJV also requires that we *exhort* one another to love and charity. Most of the modern versions translate the original Greek work as *encourage*. Synonyms for exhort include urge, push, insist. Synonyms for encourage include nurture, foster, help. We should nurture, foster and help children but insist, urge, and push each other, including children, toward love and helping the needy.

The KJV reminds the reader not to *forsake* “the assembling of ourselves together.” All the modern translations emphasize the importance of actually meeting in person, most often urging the reader not to *neglect* attendance at meetings. The first-generation Christian who wrote *Hebrews* knew the importance of face-to-face interaction just as many of us have learned it in these pandemic times. Why is being together such a part of this passage? Because you can’t poke somebody in the ribs on Zoom. The energy of human interaction makes provocation and exhortation immediate and undeniable.

The passage ends with a reminder that Judgment Day is approaching. While modern Quakers don’t put a lot of emphasis on a day of final reckoning that may be close at hand, don’t stub your toe on dogma. We have all learned in the past two years how precarious life can be. I think a more meaningful translation today might be “Don’t put off your good deeds and love for some undefined later. Do them today while you still can.” In short, we are asked by this ancient author and Margaret Fell Fox to push each another right now toward love and helping those less privileged than ourselves.

Clerk's Corner: What is Normal in New England?

from Vicky Ekk

Today, temperatures will reach close to 60 degrees, but tomorrow is likely to bring a little snow. That's New England for you! In these climate change times we are dealing with even more seesaw weather!

When I think about it, the weather seems to reflect my own thoughts about the state of our world today. I am grateful for the sense of 'normalization' from news about COVID numbers dropping; a kind of sunshine between clouds of uncertainty about variants and masking. But there are disturbing news reports of 'saber rattling' between nations and our own fractured nation's difficulties over the meaning of democracy.

It seems that people are fatigued by the pandemic, the economy, the news! We all need the sunshine and hope that all will be well and that there are still ways to build that better world Friends envision. So here is some 'sunshine' for PMM Friends:

- Our Meeting's finances are solid despite the pandemic.
- Despite COVID, two active groups were born out of Peace and Social Action: Aquetuck and Seeking Racial Equity (formerly the Anti-Racism dialogue group).
- A Friends apartment setup posse dove into helping refugees have homes in Providence.
- Pastoral Care helped keep people in touch through two years of severe isolation.
- Religious Education found ways to continue FDS online, in home packets and even walking lessons!
- We all learned to be more flexible and find ways to worship together and meet!
- Our Meeting's statistics report to NEYM shows that we still have a strong community!

Here are the "stats" of attendance at Meeting for Worship so far this year:

JAN 9 - 39 in person, 28 online

JAN 16 - 28 in person, 25 online

JAN 23 - 37 in person, 27 online

JAN 30 - 3 in person (snow), 24 online

FEB 6 - 15 in person, 26 online

As we look forward towards a “new normal”, I am reminded of a quote from Jane Goodall's *Book of Hope* (2020): "Only if we can understand, can we care. Only if we care, will we help. Only if we help, shall all be saved." (p.128).

So here are opportunities to understand, care and be part of the Quaker vision for the world:

- FCNL invites us to help discern what legislation Friends will advocate for this year—after MFW Feb. 20.
- Join a PMM committee and give your time and effort to our Meeting life. Contact Dan Lederer (dlederer1@verizon.net).
- Consider participating in movie and discussion events to voice your thoughts on current issues:
 - Watch the 3+ minute documentary *White Fatigue* and chat in groups on Wed. Feb. 23 at 7:00 PM.
 - Human devastation in Yemen calls for action. Please mark Feb. 27 at 3:00 PM on your calendar to see the documentary *Hunger Ward* and hear what needs to be done.
- Contact Pastoral Care Committee clerk Zona Douthit (zona,c,douthit@gmail.com) to be part of a Phone Connection Tree.
- Join us at Meeting for Worship.

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.**

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