

The Provident FRIEND

April 18, 2023

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

Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business 16th of Fourth Month, 2023 Minutes

Friends gathered by Zoom technology at 12:15 with 19 present.

Presiding clerk Victoria Ekk began the period of silent worship by reading the following queries taken from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's General Queries in *Faith and Practice*, 2002.

Am I temperate in all things?

How do I demonstrate in my way of living that love of God entails acknowledging "that of God in every person"?

What steps are we taking as a meeting to assure that our meeting and the committees under our care are respectful of the earth and its people?

The clerk read announcements concerning the life of the meeting:

- Alternatives to Violence Project volunteers will speak Monday, May 8, at 3:30 pm at the Bethel AME Church in Providence and online about their work with internally displaced people in Ukraine. RSVP at avpri21@gmail.com.
- The youth retreat planned for this month has been postponed to the fall.
- On Monday, April 17 at 7 pm, Aquetuck will host a presentation by Executive Director Loren Spears of the Tomaquag Museum. Registration is required.
- Pastoral Care needs Friends to visit with a Quaker resident at the Scandinavian Home in Cranston. If you are able to visit Friend Rhoda Mowry, please contact our Clerk.

The following items of business were brought forward:

1. The Finance Committee brought a proposed budget for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, including the requested information about our expenses this year so far. Friends approved the budget, noting with thanks that this format is easier to understand. (Budget attached)
2. Nominating Committee requested approval to add Erin Biebuyck to the Adult Religious Education Committee and Dan Potts to the Peace and Social Action Committee. Friends approved.
3. Ministry and Counsel Committee brought a revised memorial minute for Dave McNab. Friends approved and will forward the minute to our Quarter. (Minute attached)

CALENDAR

Sunday, Apr 23, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship (Indoors and Zoom)

Sunday, Apr 23, 12:15 PM, Called
Meeting for Business (Zoom)

Sunday, Apr 30, 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship (Indoors and Zoom)

Sunday, May 7, 10:00 AM, Meeting
for Worship (Indoors and Zoom)

Monday, May 8, 3:30 PM, Talk on
AVP in Ukraine (Bethel AME Church
and online)

Sunday, May 14 10:00 AM,
Meeting for Worship (Indoors and
Zoom)

Sunday, May 14, 12:15 PM,
Meeting for Business (Indoors and
Zoom)

4. Ministry and Counsel brought a draft State of Society report. Friends approved the report with minor changes. (Revised version attached)

5. Peace and Social Action Committee made requests regarding the ship *Golden Rule*. Bob Watt explained the history of the ship, which was sailed by a group of Quakers in an attempt in 1956 to hinder nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands, and which was restored in recent years by a Veterans for Peace group in order to offer educational programming concerning the dangers of nuclear weapons as well as more general topics of peace and social justice. The ship is expected to visit Providence in Sixth month of this year and dock at India Point Park for a series of as-yet-to-be determined events.

Friends felt clear to express our unity with the ship's purpose.

The committee asked that Providence Meeting become the lead sponsor for the ship's visit. Bob Watt expressed willingness to be the chief organizer. Friends expressed concerns about the level of legal, financial, and logistical responsibilities involved and asked for more information about how they would be handled and who would handle them. We agreed to hold a called meeting next First Day for further discernment on this matter.

6. Erin Biebuyck reminded us that the nursery is currently staffed by one paid member of our Meeting along with an informally rotating group of parents. She asked that thought be given to making a more formal schedule and expressed willingness to help with organization. Dan Lederer said that the matter would be brought to Ministry and Counsel and a proposal brought back to a future Meeting for Business.

No further business appearing, we closed with a period of silent worship at 2:00 p.m., intending to meet next on the 23rd of this month for discernment about the *Golden Rule* and on the 14th of Fifth month for our regular business.

Respectfully submitted,
Victoria Ekk, Presiding Clerk
Rebecca Smith, Recording Clerk

Allen David McNab

January 26, 1941 – December 21, 2022

Late in 2022 we lost a valued member of Providence Monthly Meeting, Dave McNab. Dave had been a member of Meeting for decades and served on Communications and Ministry and Counsel Committees. Despite the long distance from his home in Kingston, RI, he attended Meeting for Worship faithfully, and he was always a model of a cheerful and friendly presence while advocating for peace and social justice. When needed, he would provide rides for Friends living in the southern part of RI.

Dave graduated from Belmont (MA) High School and Bates College (Lewiston, ME), and he received a master's degree in chemistry from the University of Alaska (Fairbanks). He taught at Moses Brown School for 35 years, initially science and then technology/computers. He was passionate about his support of LGBTQ youth, and for many years he worked for PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) and YouthPride.

The words of family, F/friends, colleagues, and students provide the best sense of Dave as a person:

At the heavy brown door of Ross House entrance stands a beefy man. He has chubbiness and charisma. Long, gray hair tied at the back of his head gives him a hippie look. His glasses let me see big rolling eyes that seem synchronized with each sentence that comes out of his mouth lost in the forest of hairs that one would call mustache and beard.

Dave McNab was one of the first Friends I met at Providence Monthly Meeting. His cheerful greeting at the front door made me feel welcome right away. He was always ready to regale us with a story from his years at Moses Brown and it was clear that his career there had been a joyful experience. He made our time at the meetinghouse a joyful experience as well. The Light Within him was always visible. His wise and peaceful voice was an anchor whenever decisions were difficult. We will miss him, but his spirit will stay with us!

Our daughter marched to a "different drummer" a little too often in middle school, putting her in the position of being teased or at least not appreciated. With Dave McNab as her teacher, however, all of a sudden she had reason to be excited about getting ready for school in the morning as he was overseeing her project of making a traditional dulcimer. They may have started from a kit, but it was real and it played in key and it made her year. I'm sure she was not the only student whose happiness and success could be attributed to Dave with his easy warmth, sense of sympathy, and humor.

Dave's care and affection for every student came through each day on campus, and certainly on the countless team trips in which he participated. Dave truly enjoyed his time at Moses Brown and will be remembered for regaling everyone with his stories.

One of my favorite neighbors from South Kingstown! Dave, you were one in a million. From numerous conversations we've had you always found a way to leave the discussion with me learning

at least one fact. Wisdom and kindness like yours is becoming harder to find.

He was a true advocate for his students and a proud grandfather when his grandson, Doug, entered 5th grade at MB.

Dave was a wonderful and welcoming guy ... brilliant, kind, and interesting to speak with always. The world could use many more Daves and kids would be blessed to have someone like Dave as their teacher.

Whenever I made a foray to Middle School, Dave greeted me with unfailing good cheer and silly humor, and was always ready to help. I smile whenever I think of him.

Dave was an embodiment of cheerful kindness in Providence Meeting and a grounded presence in discernment.

Dave's Quakerism was not limited to the redundancy of a slogan or a poster on a classroom wall. In his lab or classroom, during faculty meetings, in his daily interactions with others, he lived it, experimented with it, and shared it.

We loved that Dave always had engineering jokes for us.

Dave was the kindest soul and most welcoming partner to work with. I recall his wisdom frequently and pass it along to younger colleagues often. When I am struggling with some challenging kids, I remember one of Dave's beliefs that you can always find the goodness in someone. You have to look harder in some people than others, but it IS there.

Dave was a wonderful colleague, always humble and positive in his demeanor and approach. I remember being in hundreds of faculty meetings with Dave, and Dave, with his Quaker roots, always made sure we stuck to our guns regarding Quakerism. He always looked for the good in kids and was positive in all his endeavors. He made everyone pause and think, are we on the right track and does our decision mesh with our Quaker philosophy? I also remember Dave telling me that, at Christmas time when he was out and about, young children would ask him if he was Santa Claus. He certainly looked the part and I'm certain any child, after talking with Dave, would really think that he/she had actually met Santa! Finally, I remember after Dave retired, he would come back to our Middle School Quaker meetings in the meetinghouse. He would sit quietly at our meeting, and one

by one, after the meeting, kids would come up to Dave and say hi while greeting him with hugs. He was a special man who was an anchor at Moses Brown for so many years. Dave had the ability to keep everything in perspective, and in his quiet way, let you know that everything, in the end, would be okay. I will miss him.

I served with Dave on a committee for many years, and always noticed his unusually welcoming persona. At his memorial service, I learned just how unusually welcoming he was.

Dave was always a joy to have when he joined us for Meeting in Saylesville. His appreciation of and respect for the building was exceeded only by his expressed love of worshiping in the quiet of the meetinghouse.

He was a great teacher and a very good man.

Dave is survived by his wife Elizabeth, his son Allan and his wife Sidney, his daughter Deborah and her husband Warren, and four grandchildren. We at Providence Monthly Meeting will certainly miss him.

The Alternatives to Violence Project in Ukraine May 8

Two Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) volunteers will speak Monday, May 8, from 3:30 to 5:00 PM about their work with internally displaced people in Ukraine. Their focus is on Trauma Resilience and Recovery, a variant of typical AVP training.

The talk will be at the Bethel AME Church, 30 Rochambeau Ave, Providence, or one can attend online via Zoom. Please contact avpri21@gmail.com by May 5 to RSVP for in-person or online attendance and to obtain the Zoom link.

Providence Friends Meeting: State of the Society 2022

In 2021 our reflections centered around a scattering of seeds. As we now reflect on 2022, we are reminded of the lessons taught to us about gardens. In particular, the Garden Song teaches us that we must take things “inch by inch and row by row.” Through all the challenges of 2022, we do see buds of hope and love.

Friends reported finding renewed strength in worship. We still held both on-line and in-person

worship sessions, and Friends expressed appreciation for both. We experimented with hybrid meetings, in which both on-line and in-person share the same vocal ministry, even if not the same physical space or visual presence. These experiments produced mixed results, with some finding them challenging to the gathering of the Spirit and others finding it a welcome renewal of the community. Over the next year we plan to continue to seek the guidance of the Spirit in how best to worship as a collective community.

We are grateful for the hard work of our meetinghouse management committees, who kept everyone in our community as safe as possible while still allowing us to gather. However, the business of the Meeting was still being conducted on-line.

Among the buds we saw blossoming were the return of our nursery and in-person First Day School. The joy of children being present lifted many hearts. In a continued environment of caution, our First Day School discovered the joy of walking together outside. They found that fresh air had more to offer than just safety from COVID-19.

In addition to the return of children, we had new Friends join us and others return after a prolonged absence. Many of these Friends expressed their appreciation of the openness of our community. At the same time, we lost some dear members of our community over the year. While this report leaves the particulars to their individual memorial minutes, we were assured that the bright Light of their lives and their service to others led them to a better place, and we knew that the reflection of that Light would call all of us to do what we can in love for all.

As a community of Friends, we continued in 2022 to share the Light as best we could, in hopes that the Light might bring growth to other gardens. We continued to support Camp Street Ministries and other local charities that strive to improve conditions for those with limited resources. We also continued our commitment and communication with Friends in Cuba, including a Friend from our meeting who was traveling there. Friends additionally were active in Alternatives to Violence Project and in seeking right relations with native people of the land that supports and nourishes us. Friends also contributed funds and time to the efforts of FCNL to ensure that our government is working towards peace and the responsible distribution of resources.

In and amongst this good work, we found time to strengthen our community. We gathered for our annual Christmas Eve candlelight service at our Saylesville meetinghouse. We also returned to gathering after Meeting for Worship for coffee, tea, and other refreshments. Friends found that this time helped them connect with one another and reflect on the worship at a deeper level.

The last few years have been exceptionally difficult. In 2022, Friends found community and worship even more important than before. This is not to say that we grew stronger out of adversity. We have a long way to go before we can say that, and many are still suffering. But we do see the seedlings starting to sprout, and any sign of returning Light warms our souls.

Clerk's Corner: Talking About the Weather

from Vicky Ekk

One of the quickest ways to break the ice when talking to someone new to me or someone I have not seen in a while is to talk about the weather. That can be interesting in New England, since our weather is normally very changeable. We all know that the weatherman in our region has a difficult time “getting it right” for the week’s forecast. But for me lately, talking about the weather doesn’t produce an easy, comfortable feeling.

After the “winter without a winter” this past week we’ve been visited by 90 degree weather while my west coast family, who experienced March with 2 feet of snow in Portland, Oregon, is still wearing their parkas! So, talking about the weather has me fraught with concern about what is next, and can we really do something about climate change? Will we continue to see these changes affect not just our expectations for each season but also how we plant our flowers and vegetables and how we take care of our homes? What about droughts, failed crops, tornadoes and... When I think about these possible disasters, I feel like we are trying to walk on Jello.

Feeling shaky about our future can make me feel frustrated and disappointed. It’s hard to be friendly when I’m not grounded, when I’m not at peace within. And I know I am not alone in feeling unsure about our future. So much is happening in our nation and the world to make us worry rather than hope about what happens next! Change of any kind is always tricky. It can make us feel insecure and maybe even paranoid. But change is inevitable and learning how to work with it towards a vision for a better future is essential. Dealing well with the unknown requires being at peace within.

One of this month’s queries for Meeting for Business asks: “Am I temperate in all things?” I know I listen better when I am “temperate” or grounded. It’s easier to be present to that of God in everyone when I take time to be at peace within. I am, this spring, challenging myself to seek the Spirit’s guidance to be temperate, to be able to still the concerns and the noise so I can listen to the wisdom around me.

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Newsletter of
Providence Monthly Meeting of the Religious
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<http://providencefriends.org>

**Current activities are listed
on the Calendar on page 1.**

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