

# The Provident FRIEND

June 14, 2023

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

## Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship

with a Concern for Business

11th of Sixth Month, 2023

### Minutes

Providence Monthly Meeting gathered at the Providence meetinghouse and via Zoom at 12:00 PM. During the opening worship the clerk read the following queries drawn from NEYM's Interim Faith and Practice (2011):

*Do you look for opportunities to deepen your understanding of the history and testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends?*

*Do you inform yourself about the diversity of Friends' theology and practice?*

*The space within Quakerism is graciously large. Where are its boundaries?*

### Announcements:

First Day School ended for the school year. Children coming to meeting will be invited to go to the MB playground or do indoor crafts supervised by two rising MB seniors.

The peace ship Golden Rule is in Providence today and will stay anchored at India Point through June 13.

A Clearness Committee has been created to work with newcomer Heather Meehan, who is seeking to transfer her membership to our meeting from Westbury (NY) Monthly Meeting and to begin plans for her wedding under the care of our meeting.

The Southeast Quarterly meeting is scheduled for Sunday, June 18, and will take place at the Smithfield meetinghouse. The agenda has been circulated.

### MEETING CALENDAR

Meeting for Worship is 10:00 AM at Providence (Indoors and Zoom), 10:30 AM at Saylesville (Indoors), and 9:30 AM at Conanicut (Indoors)

**Sunday, June 18**, Southeast Quarterly Meeting, 9:00 AM (Smithfield Meetinghouse, Indoors and Zoom)

**Sunday, June 18**, Meeting for Worship (3 locations as listed above)

**Sunday, June 25**, Meeting for Worship (3 locations as listed above)

**Sunday, June 25**, CPR Training (Indoors at Providence, Multipurpose Room)

**Sunday, July 2**, Meeting for Worship (3 locations as listed above)

**Sunday, July 9**, Meeting for Worship (3 locations as listed above)

**Sunday, July 16**, Meeting for Worship (3 locations as listed above)

**Sunday, July 23**, Meeting for Worship (3 locations as listed above)

**Sunday, July 30**, Meeting for Worship (3 locations as listed above)

Note that Meeting for Worship will continue as above throughout the summer. The next issue of The Provident Friend will be in September.

Registration for NEYM Sessions at Castleton, VT, August 4-9, is now open. Fees are pay-as-led. Information is available at neym.org.

1. Treasurer Peter Swaszek presented his year-end report for the fiscal year ended May 31, 2023. He noted that he completed the transfers approved by Meeting for business in May to create a temporary designated "Golden Rule" Fund (MFB May 2023) of \$2,500, to cover potential expenses for this week's events, with any residual returning to General Fund. The total annual outturn shows a surplus of about \$11,000, which will be transferred to the General Fund.

2. The budget lines for several items were adjusted by previous business meetings, and are items that are largely beyond our control. However, the website expense is over-budget by slightly more than the Treasurer and Finance Clerk are permitted to authorize. Peter noted that the billing and expenses for the website are opaque, and he has little control over or insight into it. He hopes that the Communications Committee can address this long-term. We approve the Treasurer's paying the total amount currently due.

A concern was raised that there is no expense shown during the fiscal year for testing the fire alarm system; we ask the Providence Building Committee to make sure the inspection and testing is done timely.

We note that the building expansion does not seem to have had the negative impact on our overall finances that we had feared. The Treasurer clarified that some of the surpluses over the past two years have been due to non-recurring items, including Moses Brown renting space during their construction (which was possible due to the new all-purpose room), and some generous contributions from families that have had memorial meetings in the building. Contributions from members and attenders have also increased somewhat.

We accept this report with gratitude to the Treasurer and the Finance Committee for their careful work.

3. Saylesville Slave History Medallion Report: Betsy Cazden reported briefly on the progress of the Slave History Medallion project. Several meeting members have offered suggested edits to the long text. In addition, we accepted an offer from three Roger Williams University history students, under the guidance of Prof. Charlotte Carrington-

Farmer, to assist with research, as they have for several other Medallion sites. They found a good deal of new information, which has yet to be incorporated into the text. The Saylesville Management Committee hopes to proceed with an installation in the fall, possibly late September. The Committee met earlier this week, and requests authorization from meeting for business to finalize the text, determine the exact location of the medallion, and plan an appropriate and Quaker-ly installation event, in full consultation with the meeting clerk and clerk of Ministry & Counsel. We approve delegating decisions on these details to the Saylesville Management Committee.

4. Penny Jackim and her daughter Robin Jackim donated a number of Penny's cards, shirts, and other graphic design items to the meeting, with the intent that they be sold to benefit the meeting's peace and social concerns and indigenous rights. About \$300 has already been raised through items sold at her recent memorial service, and more is expected. At the Treasurer's request, we authorize and direct the Treasurer to create the Penny Jackim Memorial Fund to house income earned by the sale of these items, with disbursements to be as directed by the Peace and Social Action committee, to be equally divided between peace activities and Aquetuck's work with the Tomaquag Museum and other local indigenous initiatives.

5. The Peace and Social Action Committee has requested that the meeting send a letter to the Rhode Island Senate Judiciary Committee concerning pending gun safety laws, duplicating a letter that the committee recently sent. They have circulated a proposed letter. No one from the committee was available to speak to it.

We share the committee's deep concern about gun violence and the prevalence of gun ownership. Small incremental changes are not enough, but they can be helpful in reversing the past trend toward increasing violence.

We have questions about the current status of bills in the RI Legislature. We have been informed that the matter is no longer pending in that committee, and will not be coming forward before the end of this legislative session. At present there does not seem to be any urgency about this request, and we prefer to wait until we have accurate and complete information about bills actually pending.

We also would much prefer a letter that is deeply grounded in our Quaker faith.

We do not unite with the letter as proposed, and would consider looking at legislation on

gun safety again at a later time. We also clarified that the monthly meeting for business should approve statements sent out on behalf of the meeting, not solely an individual committee using the meeting's name and letterhead, as that distinction may not be clear to outsiders and risks misrepresenting Friends' views. Individual Friends are of course free to write letters, individually or in small groups, as long as they do not represent or imply they are acting on behalf of the meeting community.

The meeting closed at 1:05 PM with a period of worship.

Victoria Ekk, clerk

Betsy Cazden, recording clerk for the day

## **Southeast Quarterly Meeting at Smithfield June 18**

Smithfield Monthly Meeting (108 Smithfield Road, Woonsocket, RI) will host the Southeast Quarter's upcoming meeting starting at 9:00 AM on Sunday June 18. The meeting will be both in-person and online via Zoom. The Meeting for Business will begin at 9:00 AM, followed by Meeting for Worship at 10:30, announcements and monthly meeting updates at 11:30, lunch at 12:15, and a presentation at 1:00 PM.

Members of the [Stop Torture RI Coalition](#) will speak in-person about the issue of solitary confinement and their work to end the use of extended solitary confinement by passing the Reform Solitary Confinement Act. Marcel St Germain of Smithfield Monthly Meeting has connected the meeting with the alliance. How and for how long solitary confinement is implemented varies by state, but each of our three adjacent states utilizes it in one form or another. Coalition speakers will include Eddie Franco, Brandon Robinson, and other individuals active in this work.

Friends attending in-person are encouraged to bring a brown bag lunch and fruit or cookies to share, plus a no-spill travel mug or water bottle for your beverage. If you bring food for others, please indicate ingredients for allergies and whether vegetarian or vegan.

For Friends wanting to participate via Zoom, the link is

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83423294260?pwd=Q2tWV3BZaWUwMXZzR2pFTDYwV3BhZz09>

### **CPR Training Sunday June 25**

Lifespan will again be offering CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation) training at the meetinghouse at noon on Sunday June 25. Marianne Stepaniak, a nurse at Miriam Hospital, will be leading the course, which will take place in the multipurpose room and will last about an hour. Marianne needs to know how many will be there, so if you're interested in attending, please contact Dan Lederer ([dleder1@verizon.net](mailto:dleder1@verizon.net)).

### **Play Supervision During Meeting for Worship**

*From Religious Education Committee*

The Religious Education Committee has arranged for two Moses Brown rising seniors, vetted by NEYM, to be play supervisors for our children on Sundays during worship. We hope this setup will help families be able to attend Meeting for Worship and have their children cared for and entertained.

When you come to meeting on Sundays, please bring your children to the worship room to stay until 10:15, when they will be led out by the play supervisors. Depending on the weather, they will either enjoy the Moses Brown playground or go to the multipurpose room to draw, paint, do crafts and read.

For any questions, contact Vicky Ekk ([clerk@providencefriends.org](mailto:clerk@providencefriends.org)).

### **Locking the Meetinghouse**

As activity at the Providence meetinghouse increases, please make sure that the front and back doors are locked and securely shut before leaving.

## Clerk's Corner: The Gift of Community

*From Vicky Ekk*

We all grow spiritually in a variety of ways - through experiences at Meeting for Worship, worship sharing, attending workshops or NEYM Sessions, going on retreats, and reading the words of Friends who've achieved great wisdom. Life provides us with daily opportunities for spiritual growth in every experience if we are open to growth and change. We can create opportunities through gatherings focused on a specific spiritual purpose because we understand the importance of moving towards greater understanding and openness towards Continuing Revelation.

*As Friends, we know that the quality of our unprogrammed worship is enhanced, and our care of one another is more effective, the better we come to know and understand one another. We grow closer to one another as a worshipping community develops through regular attendance at meeting for worship, through working together physically or mentally, and in meeting with one another informally. Meeting together in small groups may have its part to play in this process, and may be valuable in helping us to explore and share our spiritual experience. Study and discussion groups provide well-trying opportunities, as do more informal social gatherings. (Faith and Practice, Great Britain, 5th ed.)*

This quote from the British Faith and Practice states that simple events can give us an opportunity to "explore and share our spiritual experience," understanding that every time we meet in community is an opportunity to grow spiritually so we can answer to that of God in each of us. Gatherings help us to support one another as we work towards that better world we seek. As Quaker and abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892) wrote: "I'll lift you and you lift me and we'll both ascend together." And we can lift each other in many ways, including informal times when we plan to have a good time together!

As I am writing this Clerk's Corner, a small group of new attenders are working with PMM veterans to get ready for a Make Your Own Pizza gathering. It seems like a pretty

informal affair! Although it's been announced for a couple of weeks, the group is not large, but we are all looking forward to the event, hoping to get to know one another better and build friendships among Friends. And that is the gathering's main purpose: to become friends among Friends.

My hope is that these gatherings will continue to help us support one another as Friends who are also friends. We can then be what George Fox (1624-1691) asked for:

*Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you go, so that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one.*

Thank you to the newbies and oldies that put this potluck gathering together. May there be many more opportunities to build community!

Presiding Clerk: <b>Vicky Ekk</b> <a href="mailto:clerk@providencefriends.org">clerk@providencefriends.org</a> Newsletter: <b>Jen McFadden and Dan Lederer</b> <a href="mailto:providentfriend@providencefriends.org">providentfriend@providencefriends.org</a> Website: <b>Sam Schifman</b> <a href="mailto:webclerk@providencefriends.org">webclerk@providencefriends.org</a> Questions and Information: <b>Steve Schwartz</b> <a href="mailto:info@providencefriends.org">info@providencefriends.org</a>
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## **Address for Contributions:**

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c/o Peter Swaszek  
Box 1787  
Kingston, RI 02881**

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