

The Provident FRIEND

September 12, 2023

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

Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business 10th of Ninth Month, 2023

Minutes

Friends gathered at the Providence meetinghouse at noon with 19 present and 7 additional Friends on Zoom.

Presiding clerk Victoria Ekk began the period of silent worship by reading the following queries taken from New England Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice* of 2011:

Do we as a community desire to take hold of every opportunity to lessen the distresses of the afflicted?

Do we seek to turn all the treasures we possess into the channel of universal love?

Do we seek to live in affection as true Friends in our meeting, in our families, in all our dealings with others?

The clerk read this announcement: *Friends will be encouraged to greet each other at the rise of Meeting for Worship in whatever manner they choose, including shaking hands.*

The following items of business were brought forward:

1. Treasurer Peter Swaszek brought the report for the first quarter of the fiscal year. Income and expenses were fairly close to even and there is ample money in the bank. The expenses for Nursery and Childcare and Peace and Social Action committees are noted as having been unusually high during this quarter. He noted that the temporary fund created for the visit of the *Golden Rule* ship is still shown in the report pending confirmation that all expenses from the visit have been met. We received the Treasurer's report with thanks.
2. Nominating committee proposed that Erin Biebuyck, D. B. Richardson, and Priscilla

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, Sept 17, Meeting for Worship (3 locations as listed above)

Monday, Sept 18, 6:00 PM, Wedding of Heather Meehan and Felix Hagen (Providence Meetinghouse)

Sunday, Sept 24, Meeting for Worship (3 locations as listed above)

Sunday, Oct 1, Meeting for Worship (3 locations as listed above)

Sunday, Oct 1, 11:30 AM, Potluck Honoring Vicky Ekk (Prov. Meetinghouse)

Sunday, Oct 8, Meeting for Worship (3 locations as listed above)

Sunday, Oct 8, Noon, Meeting for Business (Prov. Meetinghouse and Zoom)

Goldey be added as members of the Nursery and Childcare Committee. Friends approved.

3. Ann Durant requested that title to two burial lots in the Arnold section of the Saylesville Burial Grounds, which were purchased by the late Ralph Arnold, be transferred to his daughter Linda Arnold Fabre. There being still some information to be gathered about these lots, we defer discussion to the next Meeting for Business with a request that the Burial Grounds Committee will follow up on this and bring a recommendation.

4. Heather Meehan and Felix Hagen have requested marriage under the care of our Meeting and Ministry and Counsel Committee recommends approval. Friends approved. We appoint a called Meeting for this purpose on Ninth month 18 at 6pm. Betsy Cazden, Elaine Meyer, Paul Graseck, and Martha Yager will have the oversight.

5. Ministry and Counsel Committee reported that Presiding Clerk Victoria Ekk will be moving away from Rhode Island and recommended that Ariana Steele be chosen as the new Presiding Clerk and Jules Burrowes as Assistant Presiding Clerk for Providence Monthly Meeting, effective at the close of this business meeting. Friends approved, with expressions of gratitude for all who serve our Meeting.

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

Victoria Ekk, Presiding Clerk

Rebecca Smith, Recording Clerk

Meehan/Hagen Wedding September 18

Heather Meehan and Felix Hagen will wed under the care of Meeting at 6:00 PM on Monday September 18 at the Providence meetinghouse. All are invited to attend.

Potluck Lunch Honoring Vicky Ekk October 1

Our tradition is to have a potluck lunch after the rise of Meeting for Worship on the first First Day of each month. Next month's potluck will honor our outgoing presiding clerk Vicky Ekk, who is moving to Oregon. Vioky has been a wonderful presence at our Meeting, and we will miss her! (See Vicky's Clerk's Corner column in this issue for her reflections on her time as presiding clerk.)

First Day School Update

First Day School regular class meetings will begin in October. Children will continue to be supervised in the nursery and in the First Day classroom and outdoors during September. For more information contact Wendy Virgadamo (virgadamo.wendy@gmail.com).



Messages at Meeting for Worship

From Dan Lederer

An interesting feature of Friends' manner of worship is that, especially in regard to messages, one never knows what will take place. One of our brochures introduces the topic of messages as follows:

In our unprogrammed Meeting for Worship, vocal ministry takes the form of spoken messages. The spoken word has always had an important place in bearing witness to the faith of Quakers. Vocal messages can be as effective in a few halting but spiritually filled words as in the most learned and articulate message. In vocal prayer even broken and imperfect words springing from a deep place in the heart may wonderfully draw those present into communion with God and with one another.

We ask that Friends come to Meeting for Worship neither intending to speak nor intending not to speak. So even though we encourage spontaneity, we also urge Friends to be mindful of the following guidelines:

- We try to listen for that still, small voice within that can lead us to speak, and act, in ways that benefit our Meeting community.
- We ask that messages be suitable for the group, and that language be respectful of everyone in attendance, without the use of derogatory or offensive words, even though some of these may be heard commonly outside of Meeting.
- We encourage messages that are simple, clear, and brief, and ask Friends to speak only once. Messages ought not be seen as an opportunity to announce upcoming events or promote political or social action agendas. Also, Meeting for Worship is not the place for discussions, debates, arguments, or lectures.
- Finally, we ask Friends to stand and speak loudly enough so that all can hear, and to allow a period of time between messages to reflect on what has been said.

I think most of us who have attended Meeting for Worship over the years have found that the messages expressed there have often been sources of inspiration and comfort. I hope we will each find ways to do what we can to strengthen our Meeting and preserve our unique manner of worship.

Revised Meeting Directory

From Communications Committee

Communications Committee will be publishing an updated edition of the Meeting Directory next month. If you've had a change in contact information since the last edition, which was in April, or if you're not currently listed in the Directory but would like to be, please contact Dan Lederer (dlederer1@verizon.net).

In order to engage fully in the life of the Meeting, it's also helpful to be on the Meeting Email List, often referred to as "the listserve", which functions as our electronic bulletin board, providing upcoming event notices and other items of interest to Friends, including links to Zoom meetings. If you're not receiving these notices but would like to, contact Dan.

Clerk's Corner: Looking Back at the Clerkship

From Vicky Ekk

Yesterday, while reorganizing my electronic files, I found my first Clerk's Corner letter, dated September 16, 2021. In it I had included a graphic of Rhode Island with the Hope symbol in the center. That was my view forward as everyone, including our Meeting, waded through the COVID 19 pandemic. While COVID is still with us— I had my fourth bout in July— we are well into a more “normalized” way of living, and I am personally transitioning out of the PMM clerkship as I prepare to move to Oregon.

Being Clerk is not easy. As Clerk, I tried to be a facilitator, a listener, and a collaborator with committee clerks and members/attenders. It's not what the Clerk wants for PMM but how they assist Friends to discern what the community is being led to do. Sometimes we got there and we achieved what we set out to do, and sometimes we only got part of it accomplished, or maybe we learned that we are not there yet. Not to worry, because we are only called to be open to the Truth that we see and do our best until we come to the next point in our pathway.

What are my impressions as I look back to that start in 2021? I can tell you that I experienced a rollercoaster of emotions as I carried out the day to day work of the Meeting. I worried, problem solved, discussed, agreed, disagreed and mediated trying to keep Hope foremost in every small and large crisis. Most importantly, I learned so much!!! I rediscovered that most times what I feared would happen did *not* happen, or that the negative effects were much milder than my dark expectations. For example, we struggled to come to agreement on online worship, but we found a way for folks who are unable to to come to agreement on online worship, but we found a way for folks who are unable to come to Meeting for Worship in person to join those in the meetinghouse every other First Day.

I also learned that our fortune is in our community. I gained so much by getting to know Friends well

beyond brief conversations during coffee hour. Knowing what brought them to Meeting, their areas of interest, and family circumstances enriched my appreciation of our community. And while we sadly lost several of our veteran Friends, we gained several new young families!

I learned to make peace with the fact that change is inevitable and that flexibility and a good sense of humor are essential! Sometimes we take ourselves so seriously that we forget what it takes to make good community decisions. Last week in a Zoom meeting, Friend Benigno Sanchez Eppler provided queries to assist in discernment: "What does Love ask me to do?" "What does Love ask us to do?" Answering those queries with positive action, and acting on hope and love is bound to provide good results!

Thank you for all your good wishes. I will hold you all in the Light!

Presiding Clerk: Ariana Steele 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

Address for Contributions:

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**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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the Religious Society of Friends
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