

The Provident FRIEND November 12, 2024

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

MEETING CALENDAR

Saturday, Nov 16, 10:00 AM to noon, Saylesville Book Swap (Saylesville Meetinghouse)

Sunday, Nov 17, Meeting for Worship: at Providence, 10:00 AM (Indoors and Zoom); at Saylesville, 10:30 AM (Indoors); at Conanicut (Norman Bird Sanctuary), 10:30 AM (Indoors)

Sunday, Nov 24, Meeting for Worship: at Providence, 10:00 AM (Indoors and Zoom, Hybrid*); at Saylesville, 10:30 AM (Indoors); at Conanicut (Norman Bird Sanctuary), 10:30 AM (Indoors)

Sunday, Dec 1, Meeting for Worship: at Providence, 10:00 AM (Indoors and Zoom); at Saylesville, 10:30 AM (Indoors); at Conanicut (Norman Bird Sanctuary), 10:30 AM (Indoors)

Sunday, Dec 8, Meeting for Worship: at Providence, 10:00 AM (Indoors and Zoom); at Saylesville, 10:30 AM (Indoors); at Conanicut (Norman Bird Sanctuary), 10:30 AM (Indoors)

Sunday, Dec 8, noon, Meeting for Business (Indoors at Providence and Zoom)

*Hybrid = the in-person and online meetings are combined.

**Providence Monthly Meeting for Worship
with a Concern for Business
10th of Eleventh Month, 2024
Minutes**

Friends gathered at the Providence meetinghouse at noon with 17 present. Presiding clerk Ariana Steele began the period of silent worship by reading the following queries taken from the *Advices and Queries* of Britain Yearly Meeting:

Be honest with yourself. What unpalatable truths might you be evading? When you recognise your shortcomings, do not let that discourage you. In worship together we can find the assurance of God's love and the strength to go on with renewed courage.

When you are preoccupied and distracted in meeting let wayward and disturbing thoughts give way quietly to your awareness of God's presence among us and in the world. Receive the vocal ministry of others in a tender and creative spirit. Reach for the meaning deep within it, recognising that even if it is not God's word for you, it may be so for others. Remember that we all share responsibility for the meeting for worship whether our ministry is in silence or through the spoken word.

The following items of business were brought forward:

1. For the Religious Education/ First Day School Committee, Wendy Virgadamo reported that FDS has continued discussion of indigenous people this fall. Plans for the spring are to focus on peace and conflict resolution. They are conducting a Thanksgiving food drive and, later this month, they will coordinate gifts to three families through the East Bay Community Action Program. They express thanks to Bob Elliott and Kim Wiegand from Property Committee for the new bookcases.
2. For the *ad hoc* committee dealing with the funds from the Carla Dowben estate sale, Zona Douthit reported that the committee felt led to donate the proceeds to the Southern Poverty Law Center, whose activities align with Carla's concerns. Friends approved. We note that more funds may be realized through further sales, and the committee will bring additional recommendations at that time.
3. For Finance Committee, Zona reported that Finance is working with the Fundraising

Committee and an appeal letter will go out before the end of the year.

4. Ministry and Counsel Committee brought a proposed letter of introduction, which was slightly edited by the business meeting, for Bob Watt. Bob intends to travel to Cuba, where he will join with Cuban Friends at the Cuba Yearly Meeting and at our Sister Meeting in Floro Perez in order to explore ways of expanding our spiritual connections. The minute will be translated into Spanish, signed by our Clerk, and forwarded to Cuba in both languages. Friends approved. [To see the letter of introduction for Bob Watt, click [here](#).]

No further business appearing, we closed with a period of silent worship a little before 1:00 p.m., intending to meet next on the 8th of Twelfth month at the Providence meetinghouse.

Respectfully submitted,
Ariana Steele, Presiding Clerk
Rebecca Smith, Recording Clerk



Reflections on Our November 2 Extended Worship Session

[This letter is from Michael Wajda, Bennington VT Monthly Meeting, and Jean Rosenberg, Middlebury VT Monthly Meeting, organizers of the extended worship session that was held on November 2.]

We arrived home safely. It was a very meaningful day at your meeting. The worship was deep. The afternoon reflections provided valuable insights to everyone's experience. All of us visitors were so warmly welcomed and cared for in every way.

I counted 25 Friends from 9 different monthly meetings: Beacon Hill, Bennington,

Cambridge, Harford, Middlebury, Providence, Westerly, Worcester, and Swarthmore (from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting). There were 15 of your members and attenders present, which was a very strong turnout.

We were deeply impressed by the every-two-week sessions your meeting held on silence prior to the extended worship. It added a richness, we are sure, to the day.

Please tell your meeting how much we appreciated all who helped with home hospitality, morning refreshments, lunch food, (including delicious homemade soup) and all the logistical arrangements that you handled so caringly.

Jean and I continue to feel uplifted by the meaningful experiences that Friends around the yearly meeting are expressing about these extended worship days. We hope that some Providence Friends will join us at other upcoming extended worship opportunities around the yearly meeting. [To see the schedule of extended worship sessions that will be happening around New England in 2025, click [here](#).]

It was a joy to be with Providence Friends today.

In God's care, Michael and Jean



Thoughts on Our Travels Across America

from Mike Hirtle

Two years ago, Judy and I drove from Rhode Island to California. We took a circuitous 23-day route stopping at a LOT of interesting places to see what there was to see. We made sure that our route included North Dakota and Idaho so I can now say that I have visited all 50 of these United States. This year we meandered from Rhode Island to Florida, this time taking 19 days, driving down the Shenandoah Valley, through Tennessee, over to Little Rock and then back through New Orleans, across Florida's panhandle then down to our place in Venice.

We are especially interested in museums, both art and history, and in visiting the natural wonders along the way. I don't think that you can really understand America without driving across it at a pace that allows you to savor what it has to offer.

Now, I don't want to get TOO political, but I will dip a toe into that water. One of the parties in the current presidential campaign calls for Making America Great Again. I have given a lot of thought to what that actually might mean.

One possible era that has been suggested recently is the 1890's, or the Gilded Age, as an example of America's Greatness. One could argue that was the apex of the industrial revolution. The oil, fur, transportation and mining magnates amassed amazing wealth. Evidence of that can be seen in our own home state in the "Summer Cottages" along the cliff walk in Newport. If, unfortunately, you were not one of the precious few extremely rich, old white men, it was not so great for you. Workers were paid almost nothing for working long, often dangerous hours. You don't even want to think about what it was like for minorities, immigrants or women. Not so great, I think.

Let's get back to our most recent trip. A goal of ours for a while has been to visit the World

War Two Museum in New Orleans. "Fortunately," we were stuck in New Orleans for an extra couple of days because a hurricane was bearing down on our Florida property. We joined the museum and spent a part of five days touring it. While I was a little disappointed at how US-centric the presentation is, it is well organized and the wonderful, extensive exhibits are handsomely presented. Of interest in the present train of thought was the final part about the end of the war and the post war period.

A lot of people, I think, consider the late 40's and early 50's to be America's greatest time. You can make a very strong argument for this point of view. America was the arsenal of Democracy and had played a critical part in defeating Nazism and Japanese aggression, but her actions after the war were, perhaps, even more special. The Marshall Plan, contributing billions of dollars to rebuild the war's devastation, not just for the allies but for our enemies as well, and the excellent job that MacArthur did in governing and rebuilding Japan made America's prestige around the world as high as it has ever been. (We visited MacArthur's birthplace and museum in Little Rock).

Now consider the post war economic boom and how men returning from the war were taking advantage of the GI Bill, buying homes and having babies at an astonishing rate. Everyone was buying cars, appliances, TV sets and more. Technological advances in manufacturing and medicine were happening at unparalleled rates. Wow! Has America ever been greater?

But now, I am reminded of some earlier parts of our trip. We visited the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee. As we drove into the parking lot, we were greeted by the sight of the balcony of the Lorraine Motel. You have all seen the photo of Martin Luther King lying shot on the balcony with some of his entourage pointing at the window from where the shots came. That building and window are still there too, by the way. I had no idea that they had been preserved. This is an excellent museum and a must see. It is an emotional presentation of the experience of African Americans from the time of the Civil War through Reconstruction, the Jim Crow south, and finally, at long last, the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Bills.

The next day we visited Little Rock Central High School and the National Historic Site Museum next door. This commemorates the nine students who integrated the school after the Brown vs. Board of Education decision. I don't have to tell you that it didn't go smoothly.

So, how great were the 40's and 50's? Not so great if you were Black. I don't think that other minorities, immigrants or women would think of it as that great either. Do you remember the ads for appliances in the 50's showing women vacuuming in high heels and a dress?

I don't think that America has ever been greater than it is today. While there is still a lot of progress to be made in civil and equal rights for all, in the words of MLK, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." We are at peace. More people are out of poverty than ever before. We have more leisure. While there is a lot of room for improvement, our health care is still better than ever.

The thing that is dragging us down and detracting from our "Greatness Score" is the terrible political divisiveness that is being brought on mostly by those who want to return to another time. Maybe they should take a drive across the country.

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99 Morris Avenue
Providence, RI 02906