



Iona House
Calusa Nature Center

FORT MYERS MONTHLY MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS NEWSLETTER, FIFTH MONTH, 2019

Worship: In the Iona House at the Calusa Nature Center
Mailing Address: 117 East Mariana Ave. North Fort Myers FL 33927
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Clerk: Joan Culver (joanculver@gmail.com)
Recording Clerks: Kathy Hale / Richard Frechette
Treasurer: Paul Davis

- 1st Sunday of the Month: Pot Luck Lunch
 - 2nd Sunday of Month: Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
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QUERIES & ADVICES *from Faith & Practice of Southeastern Yearly Meeting*

How do Friends care for one another? 5. Education

Queries:

- Do we share our deepest beliefs and values with each other and with our children, while leaving them free to develop as the Spirit may lead them?
- Does the meeting give the children loving care and promote their spiritual life through religious education and other activities?
- Do we encourage our children's participation in the meeting's work and cultivate their desire for service to others?
- How do we educate our members and attenders about the Bible (especially the teachings of Jesus), other spiritual literature, and the history, principles, and practices of Friends?

Advices:

- Seek for ourselves and for our children the full development of God's gifts, which is true education.
- Realize that education should continue throughout life and that all should share its opportunities and privileges.
- Make time for regular personal prayer and worship and for reading the Bible, Friends literature, *Faith and Practice*, the queries and advices, and other sources of spiritual value.
- Seek truth together in our families and among Friends in shared worship and discussion.
- Teach by being teachable. Be open to new ideas and approaches.
- Reach out to that of God in everyone, and endeavor to live out the testimonies of Friends in all the expected and unexpected circumstances of daily life.

**MINUTES OF THE FORT MYERS MONTHLY MEETING
OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
5th Month 12, 2019**

The Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met in Iona House on 5th Month 12th day with 16 Friends present. The meeting opened with a period of silent centering. Clerk Joan Culver read from two queries from Faith & Practice on the subject of Education:

- *Do we share our deepest beliefs and values with each other, and with our children, while leaving them free to develop as the Spirit may lead them?*
- *Do we encourage our children's participation in the meeting's work and cultivate their desire for service to others?*

A Friend mentioned differences between parents and grandparents and that it is sometimes easier as a grandparent to share beliefs and guide children.

Clerk's Report: We discussed a proposal to formulate a statement of the relationship of Friends to the lands which we occupy, to express respect for the indigenous peoples who occupied this land before us. We will send a separate email to Friends describing the background of this question, and some drafts of statements composed by Friends in our meeting, to begin a consideration of the statement that would be appropriate for our Meeting, and welcome opinions from Friends.

Treasurer's Report

General Funds:	
Checking	9,214.17
General Fund Savings	40,301.84
General Fund Fr Fiduciary	23,443.86
Total	72,959.87

Meeting House Funds	
Savings	78,458.60
Friends' Fiduciary	10,909.08
Total Meeting House Funds	89,367.68

FMMM Total Funds 162,327.55

April 2019 Income vs Expenses:

Income	3,324.63
Expenses	256.41

A Friend asked which of the above categories is used when a contribution is made to the Meeting. Unless indicated for the Meeting House Funds, all contributions are deposited in the checking account of the General Funds. At the recommendations of the Finance committee monies may be moved to the interest-bearing savings account.

There was discussion as well about our meeting process of responding to perceived needs in our community. There are a variety of ways this is handled. Friends are on occasion asked to take the issue to the appropriate committee first. M&C has a budget line to provide aid under their discretion. We have, however, called a business meeting after worship and designated a contribution to a community in need. We have also on occasion received a donation from another meeting. When a hurricane hit Ft Myers for example, we received such a donation and felt led, after a called business meeting, to send that money to those we discerned had a greater need.

Ministry and Council Committee:

Nancy Howell reported for the Committee that a meeting of the Clearness Committee for the membership of Tom Jacobs to our Meeting was held on Thursday April 4, 2019 at the Jacobs' home. The Clerk read out the conclusions of that Committee, and the recommendation of the Ministry and Council Committee that Tom Jacobs should be welcomed into membership.

The Clearness Committee for Tom Jacobs and the Ministry & Counsel Committee are united in recommending that Tom be accepted into membership in our Meeting, and propose this minute, which was adopted by the Meeting for Business:

- ❖ **Minute 2019-MM09:** Fort Myers Monthly Meeting welcomes Tom Jacobs into membership in our Meeting and into the Religious Society of Friends. We are appreciative of his presence with us.

The Committee shared reactions to re-reading the section on Clearness Committees for Membership in SEYM's Faith and Practice and discussed whether we need to make any changes in our procedures. The committee decided to consider this further over the summer and make any recommendations to the Meeting in the fall.

The Committee also decided to delay responding to the Clerk's request that we consider if we need to limit announcements of activities to those in which the Meeting has a direct connection, in the interest of speeding up the Announcement section of Meeting. Several members of the Committee brought in statements of the procedures of other meetings, and we discussed these alternatives. The Committee will meet over the summer as needed.

Adult Religious Education - Roxy Jacobs reported that Jeannette Botha has

taken the clerkship of the committee, and that the Committee intends to meet during the summer to initiate programs for the fall.

Peace and Social Concerns Committee

Carolyn Stanley reported on their recent meeting, and will be meeting over the Summer. The Environmental Working group will also meet during the summer months.

The upcoming Life Celebration meeting will be noted in the newsletter. This meeting celebrates achievements and reviews the work for the season. This is also usually an opportunity to raise funds for next year.

A group of 11 Friends went to Immokalee last week and a report on their very interesting experience will be in the Newsletter.

The Peace Day working group announces that they are planning to present a Quaker table at the September Peace Fair, which will be held at the Alliance for the Arts campus in Fort Myers. The group intends to have several Friends at the table throughout the day, and will be cooperating with the group World Beyond War who may be working with us to present a petition and some of their literature. The meeting expressed approval of liaisons with other groups and inclusion of ideas of alternatives to violence and gun control. With the support of the Outreach Committee, the Meeting approved offering simple invitations to be on the table at the Peace Fair to learn more about Quakerism from web sites, and to join us for worship services to experience silent worship.

Hospitality Committee: Deb White reported that she and Bob will be opening the Iona House over the summer, and she asked that those who bring snacks focus on healthy snacks.

Outreach Committee: Nancy Howell reported that the committee held a phone meeting last week. The Committee has been considering changes and updates to the Meeting's web site, and many of the changes proposed have been incorporated into the web site, including changes in photos, profiles of individuals, rewording of text, the directory (available only to those with passwords), and access to Newsletters. Clerk Pat Iyer will be away most of the summer, and meetings will usually be by phone or Zoom.

Properties Committee: No report

Library Committee: Our librarian, Susan Oehl, reported that a review of our resources is underway, with the goal to be online with our collection.

There was no new business introduced. Friends were reminded to contact the Clerk before Meeting for Business, when they want to suggest a topic for the Agenda.

The minutes of today's meeting were read and approved. We closed in silent worship.

On Vocal Ministry

There are criteria for vocal ministry, which were clearly outlined by the practical Howard Brinton. Messages should deal with the kingdom of God, which is not of the world. (John 18:36). Hence, political, social or economic commentary is appropriate only if it is related to the realization of divine purposes in worldly affairs. Messages should never deal with business, even Quaker business. They should be objective, for although the opening comes to an individual, the speaker is only a transmitter of a truth that is open to all." So it is that a Friend after meeting may say to a speaker "you were favored" rather than "I appreciated your message." They should be audible to all, not mumbled but clear. In a large meeting Friends find that the speaker can be heard more easily if he or she stands. Messages should be simple and brief and expressed in the speaker's own words. Finally, they should not be argumentative, for when persons argue, God retires.

- excerpt from the Pendle Hill pamphlet "What Is Quakerism" by George T. Peck:

Friends, remember to bring to Iona House on 1st days...

- Non-perishable foods (for both humans and pets) or financial contributions for the **Harry Chapin Food Bank**.
- Clothing and shoes for farm workers migrating to the north to follow the work **(being distributed by Misión Peniel)**

Visit to Immokalee

On May 1, 2019, after a morning appreciating the natural world at Corkscrew Wildlife Sanctuary and an unforgettable lunch at Juanita's Authentic Mexican Restaurant, a group of twelve F/friends (and friends of friends) from Fort Myers Meeting attended a conversation with Pastor Miguel Estrada of Misión Peniel on the immediate need for affordable housing for migrant workers and the efforts of a newly formed group, the Immokalee Fair Housing Alliance (IFHA), to address the problem.

Here is a summary of Pastor Miguel's presentation:

The effects of Hurricane Irma in 2017 exacerbated the already deplorable living conditions for farm workers, especially migrant workers, as many of their trailers were badly damaged and federal money meant to repair them ended up in the pockets of the landlords. Members of wealthier communities that surround Immokalee have offered to repair and replace damaged items, but the landlords take the upgrades as an opportunity to charge ever-higher rents. The trailers remain unsafe, unaffordable, overcrowded, and frightening for families and children.

Although some affordable housing is available for farm workers in Immokalee, notably Farm Worker Village (FWV), it has not been suitable for this population for several reasons. First, the FWV, constructed many years ago, is located far from basic services (grocery store, pharmacy, laundromat) and over three miles from the parking lot where workers are picked up at 4:30 every morning. There is spotty (or no) public transportation available, and workers often have no cars, which requires them to either pay someone for transportation or walk to and

from the housing in the morning and evening dark. In addition, the application for the FWV requires that the prospective renter as well as each individual family member declare their citizenship status and social security number. Since around 40% of the migrant workers is estimated to be undocumented, this requirement prohibits many from taking advantage of the available low-income housing. There is also the problem of security at FWV; houses are broken into with impunity since most stand empty during the day. These and other problems have resulted in many of the FWV units remaining unoccupied.

Efforts to ensure that owners of the trailer parks charge affordable rent and provide decent living spaces have been unsuccessful. So, workers and organizers decided to employ the same model used by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers to pressure growers into treating their workers fairly and with dignity. The idea is to provide enough attractive, affordable housing to lower the demand for the decrepit trailers, forcing landlords to reduce their rent and repair their property responsibly.

The Immokalee Fair Housing Alliance was formed in order to raise funds and supply expertise for this community-driven affordable housing project. Their intent is to acquire land on which would be built low maintenance, hurricane resistant, energy efficient housing units at affordable prices for migrant workers. The housing would be close to basic services and the pick-up point for workers, and would incorporate a community center, a sorely needed daycare center, spaces for children to play and do homework, and green space for a community garden – the idea being to create not just housing but a pleasant, safe community. The design was created by a pro-bono

architect who listened closely to community members' ideas and dreams. The project will be financed by grants and donations, and once it's constructed, the two-bedroom units will be available at current monthly rents of \$600-\$800, which is affordable for this population.

Financing this project has presented the FWV with a major challenge. The total price for the ten acres is \$450,000, a portion of which must be raised in the next 90 days. Once the land is secured, the Peace River Presbytery, which oversees Misión Peniel, may be able to contribute substantial funds for constructing the buildings, but their status prevents them from contributing to the purchase of the land.

Currently, the Fort Myers Monthly Meeting is contributing to the Immokalee community by supplying clothing and hot meals through the efforts of Friends Tom and Roxy Jacobs and others. As the Florida tourist season ends, fewer volunteers are



available for these tasks. In the past, FMMM has contributed to the Coalition of Immokalee Workers as they were establishing their organization and plans to continue to discern how to contribute .

For more information about the Immokalee Fair Housing Association, please see www.ifha.info

*Helen Fox,
Peace and Social Concerns Committee*

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

A Personal Account by Tom Miller

In February 1972, I refused induction. In June 1972, I was arrested by the FBI. In August 1972, I was acquitted in a draft trial in Denver, Colorado. Refusing induction wasn't easy. It took a long time. It was a long, hard process. I would rather have been married. I would rather have had academic success. I did not want to endanger other people in that process.

I grew up in Laramie, Wyoming, home to railroad families, rancher families, business families, and university families. In the 1960's the state population was about 250,000 people with 50,000 in Casper, 50,000 in Cheyenne, and 25,000 in Laramie. I received a BA in History and Economics from the University of Wyoming.

I had requested Conscientious Objector Status in 1971, but I was denied the request by the local board of Selective Service. The local board included a clerk, a pharmacist, a rancher, and two others. They said I had not declared CO at age 18. They said I did not belong to a peace church, since my parents were Presbyterian. One said that an Eagle Scout could not be a Conscientious Objector and that I could not do alternative service. Another said that I was insincere. One said that I was political, because I mentioned Vietnam. Was I against all war? I was troubled by Japanese American discrimination prior to Pearl Harbor. And I wondered what I would have done as a German citizen. The rancher was angry: "This isn't Nazi Germany. Send him to jail." My CO request was denied.

L.I.F.E Update

Thank you all for helping to make the 2019 LIFE Nehemiah Action a success. Fort Myers Friends Meeting is an active, supportive member of Lee Interfaith For Empowerment and we are looking forward to celebrating our accomplishments together on **Tuesday, May 28 at 7 PM at Mount Hermon Ministries**. Please join for food, raffles, and important issue updates.

Within our meeting, most Team Members who made a financial commitment at the beginning of the season, have made their \$200 investment. Those who haven't are encouraged to pay all or some of that commitment at or before the L.I.F.E Celebration May 28. If anyone who has not been able to be an active Team Member (attending the 4 assemblies and/or attending 'research' meetings) would like to make an investment to the L.I.F.E. organization, your contribution of any amount is welcome and greatly appreciated. We are working towards raising enough money to hire a second employee to grow the organization so that we can address even more serious systemic problems. Investments can be given to Carolyn Stanley or mailed to:

L.I.F.E.
PO Box 62692
Fort Myers, FL 33906

Be sure to include a note saying you are from Fort Myers Monthly Meeting (Quakers) so that it will be counted towards our goal. With our support LIFE continues to work for justice in Lee County.

Rachel Held Evans (1981-2019) on Scripture:

If you are looking for verses with which to support slavery, you will find them. If you are looking for verses with which to abolish slavery, you will find them. If you are looking for verses with which to oppress women, you will find them. If you are looking for verses with which to liberate or honor women, you will find them. If you are looking for reasons to wage war, you will find them. If you are looking for reasons to promote peace, you will find them. If you are looking for an out-dated, irrelevant ancient text, you will find it. If you are looking for truth, believe me, you will find it.

This is why there are times when the most instructive question to bring to the text is not "what does it say?", but "what am I looking for?" I suspect Jesus knew this when he said, "ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened." If you want to do violence in this world, you will always find the weapons. If you want to heal, you will always find the balm.

