

Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Minutes of 6th Month 14, 2020

The Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met online on the 5th month 10th day via Zoom conference with seventeen Friends present. The Meeting opened with a period of silent centering. Joan Culver, Clerk, read the following Advices from Faith & Practice on Home, Family & Relationships:

- Live in love, and learn from one another
- Try to live simply
- Remember the value of beauty in all its forms.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Paul Davis presented the financial report for the Month ended 5/31/2020

General Fund:

Checking	4,826
Gen Fund Savings	40,368
Gen Fund Fr Fiduciary	24,255
Total General Fund	\$69,449

Meeting House Funds:

Savings	84,110
MH Funds Fr Fiduciary	11,287
Total Meeting House Funds	\$95,397

FMMM Total Funds **\$164,846**

May 2020 Income vs Expense	
Income	600
Expenses	*2049
*Zoom, Misión Peniel, Harry Chapin	

Paul noted that we are in good shape financially. Our bills are being paid as well as the \$3,000 in additional non budgeted contributions to Misión Peniel and the Harry Chapin Food Bank. We were also able to pay \$624 to enable us to Zoom in the time of Covid-19. We made the entire yearly contribution to SEYM.

Our donations have not equaled our contributions for the last few months, so we have been drawing down our checking account funds.

Our funds in Quaker Fiduciary have rebounded for the time being.

Paul read thank you notes for our contributions to Friends Peace Teams and Quaker Voluntary Services. The QVS letter included a statement by one of their volunteers.

Meeting Space: Joan reminded Friends that, several months ago, an ad hoc committee (Joan, Paul Davis, Kathy Hale, Deb White, Richard Frechette) was formed to create a process by which Friends could consider what we want in a meeting space in the future. That committee created a series of Queries that Friends were asked to consider. Deb White reported that we received 20 responses to the queries. She went through

some of the queries and the responses. All responses will be made available to everyone to review via the newsletter. Joan noted that a new committee will be formed to conduct research relating to these ideas and in response to the pandemic. Please email Joan if you wish to be on that Committee: joanculver@gmail.com

We talked about current plans. Do we want to make arrangements related to physical worship for the short term (June July August)? Do we want to meet at the Nature Center outside? It was noted that there is a summer camp run by the Woodland Montessori School, who mostly meet outside and go indoors in adverse weather. Some noted that Friends have been invited to meet physically outside at the Frechettes place in Buckingham. We discussed the implications of our continuing \$100/month payment to CNCP, which will serve as a contribution to CNCP during our absence.

The sense of Friends is that:

- We should continue to meet over Zoom at least through September; that
- We should inform the Nature Center that we will not use their facilities over the Summer.
- We will discern the future (Fall and thereafter) later this summer.
- We will not discuss with CNCP our contract until the end of the year.

It was suggested that, when we are back to having physical meetings for worship, we establish a way of providing a Zoom connection for those who cannot come to physically gather because of distance or health or safety concerns.

“Zoom Corner”: Joan asked Friends to notify Richard Frechette of ideas of both practical advice on how to use Zoom as well as personal experience finding community and ability to worship online. These can be included in the newsletter to be of help to others.

Nancy Fennel gave an update on Tom Dudley who went into the hospital on Saturday with a lung infection and high fever. Fever has lowered and she is able to visit hi at a distance.

“No Way to Treat a Child”: Friends expressed interest in participating in a special webinar focused on AFSC’s “No Way to Treat a Child” initiative associated with the incarceration of Palestinian children. This workshop had been planned for the SEYM Yearly meeting in April but was cancelled and is being offered online. Joan will make arrangements for this.

Statement regarding our Native American Precursors: Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have been delayed in producing the plaque acknowledging our indigenous predecessors that was to be hung in Iona House and, of course, we have not met at Iona House in some time. It was suggested that we include the statement in the newsletter this summer on a separate page so it could be printed. Helen will look for an appropriate image. It was suggested it be read occasionally at business meeting, and be placed on our website. Friends also asked that we should start with a printed framed version prior to having a plaque made. Nancy Howell will donate a frame.

Peace & Social Concerns: Caroline Stanley reported on the L.I.F.E vigil at Centennial Park yesterday to mourn the lives lost to racism and to grieve the realities of systemic racism that exist today. There were about 100 persons present. She thanked those who played various supportive roles, including the signs made by the Ashe/Poltzer family. Carolyn's presentation at that gathering will be printed in the newsletter.

We closed in silent worship.

Richard Frechette
Recording Clerk

Statement regarding our Native American Precursors

Let us begin by acknowledging, with humility, that for nearly two thousand years, the land where we meet today was the home of the Calusa people. We ask the spirits of the Calusa to welcome us into this space, and to allow us to feel their presence in the earth and the living things upon it. We open our hearts and minds to the ancient understanding that all things in the natural world are connected: animals, plants, water, stones, celestial bodies, geological formations, and sacred spaces, and that all these things can be felt and experienced as spirits with whom we can enter into a relationship. We thank the ancestors for this wisdom and ask that it guide us to a deeper appreciation of the world as we address today's challenges.

Approved by Ft. Myers Friends 12/8/2019

What Kind of Meeting Space Do We Want? Responses to Queries sent out to Fort Myers Friends

Query: What can we do to insure we make a spirit-led decision?

- With these queries, Spirit-led decision-making has already begun. Pray and search for discernment out of the silence.
- Be kind and respectful in the stressful process of decision-making; listen with a fully open heart to all.

Query: What values should we consider?

- Community. Decisions should enhance the building of our community as a meeting.
- Simplicity. Practicality and Sustainability. Clean, spare, and light-filled.
- Stewardship decisions should reflect our Earth Care Witness; earth sensitive and earth friendly — — as Green as we can make it.
- Financial stewardship. Within our means, without undue debt.
- Frugality.
- Environmental. Green space.
- Peace—conducive to quiet reflection.
- Serves all ages and abilities according to their needs.
- Spiritual growth and education.

Query: What are our unmet needs in our current situation?

- Dedicated space for First Day School.
- Storage.
- Larger kitchen, dishwasher, better acoustics
- Larger library space
- Quiet and efficient heating and cooling
- More parking spaces
- Comfortable chairs
- Meeting rooms and a larger all-purpose Sanctuary room in case it is ever needed.
- A space we can use 7 days a week and flexible hours.
- Security
- Audio-visual system
- Our current location doesn't provide adequate engagement with a diverse community.

Query: What information do we need to make a wise decision?

- Financial clarity: What new responsibilities, costs, and challenges would be added if we bought our own building? We need a budget, projected costs, taxes, insurance, upkeep, etc. Realistic appraisal of current real estate market.
- Do we want to zero out our funds or create a fund-raising program, or both?
- Is there an affordable option available that meets our needs? Gather Information on possibility of sharing a building/property as well as Information on building or improving Iona House property so that our present location would meet our needs.
- Be sure to get responses from 50% of Meeting.
- Availability of public transportation

Query: What do we have that we don't want to lose?

- Beauty of Iona House and its environment
- Reasonable costs. Simple, economical space
- Feeling of being in nature Financial freedom Centrally located We won't lose anything. Acceptance and trust.
- A loving and welcoming community that doesn't exclude or marginalize. We are not in debt.

Other Comments:

- Thank you for these pertinent questions. (many said this)
 - What is our vision for the Meeting 50 or 100 years from now?
 - Don't count on more children. It doesn't happen in Meetings I know.
 - Country house with room for Friend in Residence.
 - We should pause often to consider Spirit's leading..
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Lifting The Knee: Vigil Against Racism

As part of the L.I.F.E. (Lee Interfaith For Empowerment) organization's June 13, 2020 **Lifting The Knee: Vigil Against Racism**, the following speech was given by Carolyn Tuttle Stanley, representing the Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of Friends.

Good morning. Thank you for showing up for justice. To all of you wearing masks and practicing social distancing - we thank you for keeping yourself and your neighbors safe.

I am here because of my faith; my belief that there is the light or spirit of God in EVERY human being. I have a message today to white allies who are here because we see how our black and brown brothers and sisters are facing struggles and having their lights extinguished.

We who identify ourselves as white must own it. We benefit from our whiteness - it is a fact. Our privilege allows us to feel safe inside and outside our homes. It allows us a disproportionate amount of policy making power. White people are too often making decisions that black people pay for. Our privilege allows us easy opportunities to attend resource rich schools, get loans for home ownership and to vote conveniently. White privilege often allows us to be presumed innocent rather than assumed guilty. There are many other examples of white privilege. I am still learning all the ways my whiteness enables me to live the life I know.

I am not saying this to shame or blame. I did not ask to be born white anymore than someone was asked to be born black. However, we cannot remain silent. Silence and complacency allows our racist society to continue treating people of color unjustly, allowing police and others to get away with murder. We in the white community must end our silence and become proactive, outspoken allies to our black brothers and sisters. We must proclaim Black Lives Matter!

It is not enough to say, "I'm not sure what to do". It is not enough to shrug our shoulders and say, "It's not my problem", when racism is taking so many lives. Systemic white apathy and privilege has a huge influence on our society. It is maintaining social injustices and systemic racism.

Instead

**We must listen to our brothers and sisters of color who are being treated so unjustly. We must learn from you how best to support you and show our solidarity.*

**We must repent our part in American racism that has led to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and all the African American people, Indigenous people, and people of color in recent months and across centuries whose lives have been taken by the violence and domination of white supremacy.*

We must Learn about policies right here in Fort Myers, in Florida and all over the country that support racism and work to change these policies. We have to question all our

government officials. We have to call them, email them, write to them and most importantly we have to VOTE out those who don't join us in supporting policies to end systemic racism.

We should call out others when they make a racist statement, especially when candidates running for public office do so.

We can act with our wallets, boycotting businesses that support systemic racism, purchasing from those that are willing to speak out against it. And we can contribute to and join organizations that work for policy change and justice.

If you want to be a part of a listening process that happens every year in this community with people from different backgrounds than your own, and participate in working for justice here in our community, - reach out to the LIFE organization's office and learn how you can engage. There is contact information at the table.

As we stand with protesters throughout the country, calling for social transformations that begin to end systemic racism and injustice in our nation, we must learn to confront racism in ourselves and in the institutions we care about—our faith communities, our schools, our neighborhoods, our families, our government.

It is not good enough to show up every once in a while when our black brothers and sisters are killed in the street. We must show up daily by engaging in the work to dismantle racism.

This is not easy But with spiritual guidance, hard work, a commitment to work together for justice, and a belief that there is that of God in everyone, we CAN make a difference.



The 2020 FGC Gathering is going virtual!

This summer, Friends General Council invites you to enter into community in a new way with the 2020 Virtual Gathering from FGC! Join us June 28th to July 4th at a computer or mobile device near you. There we can Sink Down To The Seed Sown In The Heart together.

For more information, go to FGCQuaker.org, then click on 2020 FGC Gatherings.



**Friends Meeting of Fort Myers
Religious Society of Friends
c/o Richard Frechette, Editor
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Address Correction Requested

New York Times Picture Article about Quakers Worshipping via Zoom:

Several Friends have noted an article that was posted in the New York Times entitled "Can You Gather With God Over Zoom?: Quakerism goes virtual, offering an intimate window into silent worship." It includes a writeup and quite a few pictures of Friends from several Meetings in worship over that medium. You can [Click on this link to access the article](#). *(Note: Rest assured, a picture of you in worship over Zoom has not been taken and certainly will not be taken without your approval.)*