



FORT MYERS MONTHLY MEETING

OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

Newsletter, Third Month, 2021

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Meeting for Worship During the Pandemic

Friends are now meeting for hybrid worship every 1st day at 10:30AM. Friends may meet physically outdoors (weather permitting) under the roof of the Chickee Hut on the Orange River in Buckingham. Social distancing protocols are observed as well as wearing masks.

Friends who prefer to meet via Zoom instead may do so. Each Friday an invitation to Zoom worship is sent to our entire e-mail list, identifying the hyperlink and meeting number. People may join early either physically or via Zoom at 10:00 a.m. for conversation and fellowship.

For directions to the Chickee Hut, call 239-313-6201 or e-mail the e-mail address above for directions.

QUERIES & ADVICES from Faith & Practice of Southeastern Yearly Meeting

What is the state of our meetings for worship and business?

3. Harmony Within the Meeting Community

Queries:

- Are love and unity maintained among us?
- When differences arise, do we settle them in a spirit of love and humility?
- Are we careful not to hold an idea too firmly, knowing that another may bring us closer to the truth?
- Are we patient and considerate towards those we find difficult to understand or like?
- Do we demonstrate a forgiving spirit?
- Do we have concern and respect for the reputation of others?
- When people are hurt, do we take care to hold them up with a tender heart?
- Do we respect that of God in each person, though it may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or may be difficult for us to discern?

Advices:

- *Maintain love and unity by avoiding talebearing and detraction.*
- *Settle differences promptly, in a manner free from resentment.*
- *When we have a difference with another person, speak to them in private “in the love and wisdom that is gentle and pure.”*
- *Be aware that verbal violence can be as destructive as physical violence.*
- *Be careful that our language does not incorporate violence, consciously or unconsciously.*
- *Listen patiently, and seek the truth another person’s expressions may contain for us.*
- *Be willing to seek and willing to receive counsel and help from one another.*
- *In our daily lives, seek to know one another in the things that are eternal and to enter with ready empathy and sensitive discretion into the joys, sorrows, and needs of each other.*
- *Be mindful that everyone is included in the life and activities of the meeting.*

Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Minutes of 3rd Month 14, 2021

1. The Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met online on the 3rd month 10th day via Zoom conference with 22 Friends present. The Meeting opened with a period of silent centering. Richard Frechette, Clerk, read from Faith and Practice of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, Chapter 3:

Our business meetings begin and end with worship, framing the work at hand with centered awareness of the divine presence. Although the business to be addressed requires attention to facts, details, and varying options, we seek to remain spiritually grounded throughout the discernment process. Our decisions do not rely on majority rule, but rather on a unity found through calm attention to the Light Within. The Spirit may speak through anyone present, and it is our task to listen and speak with humility and to trust in the Spirit’s guidance.

2. The Clerk introduced the main topic of the Meeting today: continued discernment about a future location for Friends. He asked Treasurer Paul Davis for his comments, which follow.

Paul summarized the general agreements we have come to during the two threshing sessions:

- We want to continue to be a giving organization
- We need a new spiritual home as the Ionia house is no longer meeting our needs

- We have an opportunity to be part of a larger faith community by building a Meetinghouse on the Unitarian Universalists' property but are concerned about how a land lease or sale could be arranged to protect both the UUs and the Meeting
- There are fears that the cost of the building and operating expenses would be too great with our current savings
- We will most likely continue with a hybrid worship model and need to consider how to make that work
- There is fatigue among those who have been through this process in previous years. Will we get a sense of the Meeting and finally decide what we want to do?

Paul then announced the receipt of a major anonymous gift of up to \$300,000 which comes with the following note:

The donors wish to promote the growth and well-being of the Fort Myers Friends Meeting Spiritual Community through a financial gift. This gift is to be used for two purposes: 1) expenses incurred in establishing a long-term (ideally 50 years or more) agreement with the Unitarian Universalists at Shire Lane, Fort Myers, for construction and occupation of a Meeting house on their property, 2) Construction of a Meeting house that is built to last for many years with minimal maintenance costs.

This gift is intended to supplement the Meeting funds already available for these purposes. It is hoped that others who indicated they might contribute toward these ends will do so. The amount the donors will contribute is up to a total of \$300,000. Regarding purpose 1): this money could be used, in part, to hire a lawyer to help in establishing the long-term relationship mentioned above and/or negotiating more favorable long-term arrangements for the meeting with higher up-front costs. Regarding purpose 2), we hope this contribution will assure that A) the Meeting house is constructed on filled land that is higher than the nearby septic drain field to decrease the risk of flooding; B) that large, high quality windows with the lowest likelihood of subsequent problems that require replacement are integrated into the construction, C) that a skylight and an outside porch that encircles the building be built, D) that long-lasting modern synthetic flooring of the highest quality be used, and E) that electronics and communication equipment be installed that provide a large, full view of remote attendees and that project the people at the meeting and that focus on someone who is speaking.

We would like our contribution to remain anonymous at least until negotiations have been settled to everyone's satisfaction and we are proceeding with construction. Also, we want to clarify, unless it is already obvious, that the full donation would be contingent on the Meeting coming to unity and the negotiations being successful.

Paul continued: "What I cannot convey is the spirit in which this donation was offered. These specifics are not meant to direct our decisions but help us come to a decision without worrying about money. This gift would enable us to weigh our options and our risks. The donors did not come initially to us with a prescriptive list. It was only our request that they listed these items."

The Clerk asked for questions and comments about this gift and its implications. Many Friends offered their thanks: "It's very generous." "I'm grateful." "Profound thanks." "It is extremely touching that someone is this committed to the Meeting." "It's a tremendous relief for me that as a consequence of this generosity we're not taxing our ability to be generous in the world."

A Friend asked: "Is the gift contingent on constructing a building on the UU property specifically?" The Clerk answered: "If I heard rightly, the gift is an invitation to the Meeting to fully explore the possibility of building on Shire Lane. Assuming we can work out the logistics, the new Meetinghouse would be constructed on the UU property. If the negotiations with the UUs don't work out, we could approach the donor about other possibilities."

Other Friends offered:

- As I understood the terms, this gift would be added to the roughly \$100,000 we have saved and that Friends have suggested they might be able to give. That would give us \$400,000, which would give us plenty of options.
- This gift would provide us with a home, a nexus for the work we want to do in the world and continue to be generous to the community
- When I give money to the Meeting, I'm not interested in our giving to other organizations. I can do that on my own. The Quaker Meeting is supposed to be a light in the community, to have influence in the community. Giving money to local charities is not the important thing.
- I've been lucky enough to go down to the UU church to work on the grounds with several of the people who attend. The site is outstandingly beautiful, but even more important than that, all the people I worked with were so compatible with us. When I mentioned the possibility that we might be coming there, they were excited. This could be a way to invigorate both our groups.
 - I don't want to lose our Quaker identity as we are building relationships with the Unitarians.
 - I guess my feeling is we would honor the spirit of this monetary donation by moving forward to explore all that we've talked about. It would be an exploration, period. We don't know if we can maintain our identity, for example. But I'm for moving ahead to see how it feels. Physically visiting the site will be important as well as having legal counsel. Meeting and socializing with the Unitarians will be an initial step, but we'll be in our own houses of worship, so I don't see an identity problem. We're not talking about merging the communities.

The Clerk asked Friends whether they were prepared to accept this gift and its implications.

In response, a Friend offered the following: "Not yet. Because something has troubled me deeply that I've been thinking about all week. I'm thrilled by this gift. But if we are to join the UUs I believe we are called to do it with parity and equality. In the threshing sessions heard a lot of arrogant comments directed at the UUs. We all do that by accident. But I don't believe we've been thoughtful enough at this point to be a good partner. We need to develop a relationship with the UU's by getting to know

each other and worshiping together. We need to make sure we're good enough to be with them, not the reverse."

Another Friend added that if we're not fully comfortable with the interpersonal and spiritual aspects of the relationship we might consider renting space from the UUs for a year or so.

Friend Suzanne Frechette added information about the time it would take to begin building on the property: "Building doesn't happen overnight. A lot of preliminary things need to be done. When I asked one company ("Smiling Wood Yurts") in January of this year when we would be able to get on their calendar, they said they could deliver the materials for construction in February 2022. Recently, I asked again, and now, we're looking at May 2022. So their calendar is filling up quickly. Also, getting on their calendar would require a \$6000 deposit, the majority of which would be refundable if we changed our minds before they started building."

Friend Suzanne Frechette then said: "I would like to personally offer to make that deposit out of my checkbook and accept the \$400 cancellation penalty should we decide not to go forward. I would donate the \$6000 to the Meeting, so it would be in the Meeting's name."

After more discussion and discernment, Friends approved the following Minutes:

- ◆ **Minute2021-MM07:** Friends accept with gratitude the generous contribution of up to \$300,000 from an anonymous donor towards expenses related to the construction of a new Meetinghouse.
- ◆ **Minute2021-MM08: Legal Relationship Committee.** Friends approve the establishment of an ad hoc committee whose role will be to seek legal counsel and, with such legal counsel, to initiate negotiation with the Board of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Myers (UUCFM) regarding the relationship of FtMMM and UUCFM as it relates to shared used of physical resources, both for the short term and long term, for a period of at least 50 years. The following persons are approved to serve on this committee: Paul Davis, Jim Koopman, Tom Miller, Pat Iyer.
- ◆ **Minute2021-MM09: Social and Spiritual Relationship Committee.** Friends approve the establishment of an ad hoc committee whose role will be to explore and cultivate opportunities for social and spiritual relationships between the communities of FtMMM and UUCFM. The following persons are approved to serve on this committee: Donna Anderton, Susan Oehl, Chris Ruhnke.
- ◆ **Minute2021-MM10: Meetinghouse Construction Committee.** Friends approve the establishment of an ad hoc committee whose role will be to continue investigation already begun regarding the construction of meetinghouse on the UUCFM land. The following persons are approved to serve on this committee: Paul Davis, Suzanne Frechette, Vicki Scott.

- ◆ **Minute2021-MM11:** We accept with gratitude Suzanne Frechette’s offer to advance \$6,000 to the company Smiling Wood Yurts as a refundable deposit for a yurt package.

The Clerk added the following: It is expected that each committee will name its Clerk. Others interested in participating on any of these three committees can contact these committee members. It is expected that each of these committees will report back to the Meeting when appropriate.

3. We briefly discussed and agreed to allow donations to FtMMM on Amazon Smiles, a service of Amazon.com that sends a certain percentage of each Amazon purchase to the charity of the buyer’s choice.
4. Since the discussion of the Meetinghouse took a great deal of time, the Clerk asked that the following reports appear in the March newsletter: Treasurer’s Report, Ministry & Counsel Report, Religious Education Report, and Peace and Social Concerns Report.
5. A question was raised about limiting the number of after-worship discussion sessions, moving them to times other than Sunday afternoons. We agreed that each committee or group that plans such a discussion should schedule dates at their own convenience, keeping in mind the problem of “Zoom overload” that some Friends are experiencing.

We closed in silent worship.

Respectfully Submitted,
Helen Fox
Recording Clerk

FMMM Funds Report 2/28/2021

General Funds

Checking	7,093
Gen Fund Savings	40,386
Gen Fund Fr Fiduciary	29,066

Total General Fund 76,545

Meeting House Funds

Savings	90,207
MH Funds Fr Fiduciary	13,525

Total Meeting House Funds 103,732

FMMM Total Funds 180,277

Feb 2021 Income vs Expenses

Feb	Income	2,393
Feb	Expenses	1,600*

*Fair Housing, Cultivate Abundance, Quaker House, QVS, Immokalee Workers, Mission Peniel

Zoom Workshop with FCNL's Bobby Trice to be held in April

*The Peace and Social Concerns Committee has accepted an invitation from Bobby Trice to attend a Zoom workshop entitled, "The Roots and Branches of Quaker Advocacy" to be held Sunday **April 18 at 1 PM**. Bobby will join us at 10 AM to meet us and join us for Meeting for Worship. He will then lead the workshop at 1 PM. At his suggestion we have invited Miami Friends Meeting to join us. Here is an overview of the workshop and some information about Bobby Trice, the facilitator:*

The Roots and Branches of Quaker Advocacy

Quakers have worked to influence the government almost as long as there have been Friends. Why has Quakerism and advocacy been so intertwined? What do the experiences of past Friends have to offer Quakers today concerned about our government's decisions and actions? The Quaker writer and speaker Margery Post Abbott offers some thoughts in [A Theological Perspective on Quaker Lobbying](#), published by FCNL and newly revised in 2020. Using this resource as a lens to approach these questions, we will explore the roots of Quaker advocacy, share our own experiences of inspired action, and reflect on how Spirit is leading us to witness today. Additionally, this session will include updates, recommended actions, and discussion of FCNL and Friends' work to address systemic racism and policing.

OPTIONAL: For reflection and thinking in advance, Friends can [download or request free physical copies of A Theological Perspective on Quaker Lobbying here](#).

Facilitator: [Bobby Trice](#), Quaker Engagement Associate at FCNL

As the Quaker Engagement Associate, Bobby cultivates relationships with Friends and other FCNL constituents. He supports Quakers' spirited advocacy on Capitol Hill and around the nation. Bobby worships with Friends Meeting of Washington, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, and carries a concern for drawing connections between Friends' faith, history, community, and witness in the world. Bobby comes to FCNL from Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting where he realized he had been a Quaker all along.

Read, View, Act Challenge for March, 2021

READ: Continue reading [The New Jim Crow, Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness](#)

by Michelle Alexander

If you prefer, here is Michelle Alexander on youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gln1JwDUI64>

And a New Yorker interview with Michelle called Ten Years After the New Jim Crow

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-new-yorker-interview/ten-years-after-the-new-jim-crow>

VIEW: Thanks to John Tusa, we recommend watching
The PBS special: The Black Church with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

The first 2 episodes can be found on YouTube-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BijAOYktT4k>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnT3cTNU-ZI>

ACT: Participate in our second discussion about racism on **Sunday, April 4 at 1 PM on ZOOM.**

Part I centered around the book, "White Fragility" and the online lecture by the author. In Part II we'll talk about how racism has pervaded our criminal justice system, and the effects of mass incarceration on both communities of color and white liberals – and how it has shaped common beliefs about why poor communities of color are so dysfunctional.

You can read all about it in Michelle Alexander's book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. Or watch this wonderful, one-hour lecture by the author at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gln1JwDUI64> Please come, regardless of whether you attended Part 1.



Reader's/Writer's Corner

Most of us are avid readers, and some of us are writers, as well. Submit any essays, poetry or book reviews (400 words or less—about one newsletter page) that witness to the testimonies of Quaker life. Please email: debwhitenfl@gmail.com

Take Your Joy for a Gallop



In time, bells can change souls..
Once I rang a cast iron school bell.
It fell from its steeple
And nearly killed me.
I was an angry kid.

In 50 years of thinking of it,
Defiance faded away.
Not long ago I rang a bell
In the Shwedagon Pagoda
Timidly, afraid to disturb
The peace of the place,
But it was there to be rung.

Two years later, I rang another.
At a clinic. Patients ring it
At treatments' end .
I yanked its cord — again, and again —
With the exhilaration
Of riding a horse full gallop.

They came out to see,
With IV poles and masks;
Their nurses videoed the moment
I let go my joy and gave it to them.

Joy is sweeter even as
The end time approaches.
Let the bells peal to the world.
Can you hear them?
Can you feel the joy?

© Theron White December 2020

Southeastern Yearly Meeting
2021 Gathering & Annual Sessions
online on zoom
March 31 – April 11, 2021

Join Friends from all over the SEYM region and beyond for retreats, workshops, worship-sharing, the Walton Lecture, Intergenerational fun, Youth activities, and our Yearly Business Meeting Sessions.

For more information and to register, go to seymquakers.org, then click on Events, then on Yearly Meeting Gathering.

True silence ... is to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment.

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR FRIENDS

http://seymquakers.org	<i>Southeastern Yearly Meeting</i>
www.fcni.org	<i>Friends Committee for National Legislation</i>
www.fgcquaker.org	<i>Friends General Conference</i>
www.afsc.org	<i>American Friends Service Committee</i>
http://fwcc.world	<i>Friends World Committee on Consultation</i>
www.quakerspeak.com	<i>QuakerSpeak: A Quaker YouTube Channel</i>
www.quakerhouse.org	<i>Quaker House, Fayetteville</i>
www.quakervoluntaryservice.org	<i>Quaker Voluntary Service</i>
www.guno.org	<i>Quaker United Nations Office</i>

MEETING CALENDAR

<i>1st Days (Sundays)</i>	<i>Meeting for Worship in a hybrid format: in person at Buckingham Chickee Hut or via Zoom. An informal conversation time begins at 10:00 am</i>	<i>10:30 am</i>
<i>Sun 4/4/21</i>	<i>Second discussion on racism held by PSC.</i>	<i>1:00 p.m.</i>
<i>Sun 4/11/21</i>	<i>Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business</i>	<i>1:00 p.m.</i>
<i>Mon 4/12/21</i>	<i>LIFE Rally via Zoom</i>	<i>7:00 p,m.</i>
<i>Sun 4/18/21</i>	<i>Zoom workshop by Bobby Trice (FCNL) "The Roots and Branches of Quaker Advocacy"</i>	<i>1:00 p.m.</i>



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Address Correction Requested