



FORT MYERS MONTHLY MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

Newsletter, Fourth 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 Meetin*

How do Friends care for one another?

4. Mutual Care

Queries:

- How do we foster a spirit of community among the meeting's members and attenders?
- How does the meeting keep in contact with all of the meeting's members and attenders?
- How does the meeting assist couples and families to communicate, grow together, and rear children in a loving environment?
- Does the meeting community nurture the meeting's children?
- How does the meeting care for those who live alone, the sick, the aging, the widowed, the separated or divorced, and others with families affected by disruption?
- Do we assist Friends in need as their circumstances require?
- How do we labor with and care for those whose conduct or manner of living gives grounds for concern?
- How are visitors to our meeting made to feel welcome?

Advices:

- *Be truthful and sincere, and thus encourage these qualities in others.*
- *Through example and education, help each other to recognize and follow the voice of God both in our spiritual lives and in joyful and willing service.*
- *Watch with tenderness over the opening minds of children. Seek to awaken in them the love and understanding of the life and teachings of Jesus and a sense of security in the love of God.*
- *Remember that there is a unique potential in each human being as a beloved child of God and that the Holy Spirit may lead children to give wise counsel to listening adults.*
- *Young people, too, have responsibility to care for the meeting and to participate in meetings both for worship and for business. Faith is needed as a vital part of our living.*

Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Minutes of 4th Month 11, 2020

The Fort Myers Monthly Meeting for Worship with attention to Business of the Religious Society of Friends met via Zoom. Conference on 4th month 11th day with 17 Friends present. The Meeting opened with a period of silent centering.

Queries and Advices: Clerk Richard Frechette read selections from SEYM's 4th month Queries & Advices regarding mutual care:

- *How does the meeting keep in contact with all of the meeting's members and attendees <especially during this pandemic period>?*
- *Do we assist Friends in need as their circumstances require?*
- *How do we labor with and care for those whose conduct or manner of living gives grounds for concern?*

In response one Friend noted that aging is a challenging problem for both the providers and receivers of assistance from the Meeting. Another Friend said we can only do the best we can. A Friend recalled her acceptance and gratitude for the love and care she received from other Friends when she was very ill, and another noted that "the best we can" is often pretty good, and much appreciated.

The Clerk noted that Helen Fox, our Recording Clerk, had a conflict today and could not attend this gathering. Nancy Howell agreed to serve in her stead.

SEYM Gathering:

Richard reported that the Gathering occurred via Zoom this year. He attended most of the Plenary sessions. Of note is that the Youth & Young Adult coordinator position has been reactivated. Nancy Howell and Donna Anderton discussed their impressions of the Walton lecture, given by Emily Provance, from New York Yearly Meeting, a young adult friend who spoke on the topic of "What's Next?; How we are adjusting to and being changed by the COVID Pandemic". It was a thoughtful and stimulating lecture, which will appear as a pamphlet eventually.

Treasurer’s report. Our Treasurer, Paul Davis, provided the following financial report for the period ended March 31, 2021:

| | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|------------------|
| General Funds | | Meeting House Funds | |
| Checking | 6,856 | Savings | 93,299 |
| Gen Fund Savings | 40,388 | MtgHse Funds Fr. Fiduciary | 14,048 |
| Gen Fund Fr Fiduciary | 30,189 | Total Meeting House Funds | \$107,347 |
| Total General Funds | \$77,433 | | |
| FtMMM Total Funds | | \$184,780 | |

March 2021 Income vs Expenses

| | | | |
|--------------|----------|-----------------|----------|
| March Income | \$11,080 | March Expenses* | \$11,275 |
|--------------|----------|-----------------|----------|

*Transfer to Meeting House Fund (\$3,000), Calusa Nature Center (\$250), Deposit on Yurts (\$8,000)

Paul also provided us with an explanation of our Meeting’s Legal and Tax Status:

- We are a **Nonprofit Florida Corporation** created December 28, 1998. This legal structure creates our purpose, allows us to collect funds, establishes a governance system, provides that if we dissolve our assets would transfer to SEYM. Once a year we elect Officers. We must file a report once a year with the State of Florida and pay a small fee.
- We are entitled to not pay sales tax as a **Religious Institution with a physical place of Worship** We have recently filed with the State of Florida an “Application for a Consumer’s Certificate of Exemption” and should receive an exemption letter soon.
- We are entitled to **Federal 501(c)(3)** status as a Religious Organization This exempts us from Federal Income Taxes and allows our donors to claim a Federal deduction on their Income taxes. We have technically claimed this status under the law but have never filed the paperwork. If we complete the paperwork now we can file a streamlined application for \$275, and received our notification within a month. If we wait when our budget is larger it will cost \$600 and require a much more intensive application. We would need to file a report once a year and would lose our status if we missed filing three years in a row. An additional benefit of becoming a 501(c)(3) is that we would be eligible for grants from Foundations.
- ◆ **Minute 2021–MM12 The Meeting approved the proposal to complete the paper work to obtain our Federal 501(c)(3) status and a State sales tax exemption certificate, and approves the cost of approximately \$275 to carry this out.**

A Friend suggested applying for a corporate charge card for the Meeting for purposes of convenience and eligibility for discounts as we prepare for a new meeting house, but the meeting suggested waiting until we are farther along the process of completing the paper work mentioned above.

Ministry & Counsel Committee: The committee is working on a Memorial Meeting for Worship for Tom Dudley Fennell. The date has been set for Saturday, April 24 at 1 p.m. via Zoom.

Peace and Social Concerns Committee:

Carolyn Stanley, Clerk, reported that the Committee has recently focused on the work of the LIFE organization to get over a thousand people to attend the Nehemiah Action on Zoom to show support for affordable housing and improved training of police officers in dealing with mental health issues. They also held a second discussion on Racism. They hope to be further educated and inspired at next Sundays workshop titled “The Roots and Branches of Quaker Advocacy” with FCNL’s Bobby Trice (April 18).

The Committee is strongly committed to continue their racism work, even though it may be tiring and discouraging. The nation is now consumed with the murder trial of Derek Chauvin, the police officer who kneeled on George Floyd’s neck for over nine minutes, disregarding his pleas and those of onlookers. If Chauvin is acquitted or given “a slap on the wrist” for his behavior, we agreed, no black man will be safe in America. In addition, Florida and other states are currently considering legislation that would make it dangerous for protesters to peacefully demonstrate. They agreed that the following related issues are important for us to take up or continue:

- The poorest people of all ethnicities continue to be ignored and vulnerable.
- There are unmet mental health needs at all levels.
- The courts are imperiled by the number of federal judges appointed by the previous president.
- The environment, which underlies and connects to every other issue, needs attention.

Decisions that were made by the Committee were:

- to invite the Environmental Working Group Sub Committee to meet with P&SC at its May 4 meeting.
- If they hear from the organizers that there will be another Peace Day Festival at the Alliance from the Arts in September 2021, they will then decide whether to participate.
- Though they have been meeting every other week, they will meet once a month from May through August.

Technology Committee: The Committee recommends that the Meeting purchase a sophisticated audio/visual aid for hybrid (Zoom & physical) worship called the Meeting-Owl Pro. It provides 360-degree views and audio of those in the physical location to those connected via Zoom. It includes an automatic zoom-in that responds to who’s speaking in the physical setting. It’s an ideal tool for hybrid worship, both in the chick-eehut situation and in our eventual physical location. The purchase cost of the item is \$999. The committee recommends we also purchase a 3-year extended warranty (Owl Care), for \$200. But it’s purchase might be delayed until the Meeting has obtained State sales Tax exemption.

- ◆ **Minute 2021–MM13: Friends moving ahead with the purchase of the Owl Pro device for transmitting Zoom meetings as soon as we have our exemption of sales tax.**

Religious Education Committee: Tom Miller reported that the Committee is still working on the curriculum for Quakerism 101 to occur over the summer. They are also planning an artistic retreat for this Fall, as well as discussions on prayer based on Pendle Hill pamphlets. Co-clerk Donna Anderton added that meetings of the REC will not be in the evening, as was planned at one time, but will generally be held after worship on First Day, when other events are not scheduled.

New Meeting House Committee:

Clerk Richard noted that two of the three sub-committees established by Friends last month relating to future location for worship have chosen to rename themselves: The Legal Relationships Committee has become the Covenant Committee and the Meeting House Construction Committee has become the Sacred Space Committee.

Covenant Sub-Committee:

On behalf of the Sub-Committee, Pat Iyer reports that the Committee has met several times over Zoom since its inception and has met once with three representatives of UUCFM. The UUCFM reps show a clear desire for future co-utilization of their property.

The parties have agreed that each “side” will prepare a draft of a covenant and will provide it to the other party for review. The two groups will then meet to discuss conforming and conflicting elements with the goal of resolving the latter items.

The sub-committee has initiated contact with a Fort Myers attorney, Joseph Madden, and are awaiting a letter of engagement. They have prepared a bullet list of matters that we need addressed in the draft covenant and will send it to him once we have the letter of engagement. Mr. Madden will then assist in the development of the draft.

Some of the elements of that bullet list include our having a lease of ½ acre of the UUCFM land for a minimum of 50 years for building a meetinghouse and installing 10 handicap parking spaces, a procedure by which we would tap into utilities, a cooperative arrangement for utilization of each other’s facilities, protocols for dispute resolution.

Sacred Space Sub-Committee:

On behalf for the Sub-Committee, Helen Fox reported that the committee is looking for a space that is uniquely Quaker: simple, circular, light-filled, ecologically sound, and flexible enough for various uses by our Meeting and the wider community.

They believe we have found an ideal space in a 41-ft. diameter, 1300 sq. ft. yurt that would comfortably hold about 75 people in two concentric circles, and would be lit, in part, by a central skylight and large windows that would look out onto green spaces. Bookshelves around the edges of the circle would contain our library. The rest rooms, kitchen, and storage space would be housed in a separate, easily accessible building to keep the worship room quiet and maximize the use of space.

They are currently are looking at two different designs for the second building: either a

smaller, 25-ft. diameter yurt, or a structure that we are calling the Randell open-porch design, named after the Randell Research Center on Pine Island, which provided the model. The Randell design would consist of a covered, open, wooden walkway with small outbuildings for restrooms, storage, and a small kitchenette attached alongside. Either design would offer the larger community (people working in the gardens and food forest, for example), access to an ADA restroom. We are looking at LEEDS certification for ecologically sustainable structures.

An architect friend-of-Friends, Maynard Houston. has offered to consult and help design these structures. These designs and others will be made available to Friends so we can discuss, discern and come to agreement on the kind of space that suits us best. He is retired and will not expect to be paid for this work.

Rooms for childcare, fellowship, committee meetings, and potluck would be available to Friends in nearby UU buildings.

The Sacred Space Committee has made no decisions about which, if any, of these designs are best. However, in order to reserve the two yurts for possible construction next spring, the Meeting has paid an \$8000 refundable deposit to Smiling Wood Yurts, a company in the State of Washington, and have six months to come to our decision. The exact cost of these constructions are not yet known, as the details have yet to be worked out. But we believe both designs are within our budget.

Suzanne Frechette shared some images of the UUCFM complex and prospective construction.

Social and Spiritual Relationships Sub-Committee:

Susan Oehl reported that the Sub-committee is sponsoring a tour of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Myers (UUCFM) facilities and grounds. This will be held on Tuesday April 13th at 1:340 PM. The tour will be led by Gary Robbins, a member of the UUCFM spiritual community. The site of the prospective Quaker Meetinghouse will also be pointed out.

Chris Ruhnke reported on the memorial service for Patrick Kessing that was held at the UUCFM amphitheater on March 28. Over 40 persons attended, including folks from both our Meeting and the UUCFM, and quite a few people from a residential community in which Patrick provided gardening, landscaping and handyman services.

We ended with silent worship.

Nancy Howell
Recording Clerk
pro tem

Zoom Workshop with FCNL's Bobby Trice to be held April 18

*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' spirit-led 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.

More from Peace and Social Concerns

A CALL TO ACTION FROM L.I.F.E.! **(Lee Interfaith for Empowerment)**

- Are you concerned about the lack of affordable housing?
- Are you concerned that sheriff's deputies in Lee County are not trained to respond appropriately to mental health crises?
- Are you concerned that the Lee County sheriff's department is arresting 60% of youth who are eligible for civil citations?
- Are you willing to dedicate
- one hour, one time this year to show you care about these issues?

You can do this from the comfort of your home wherever you are if you have a computer or phone. Please mark your calendar to 'attend' the L.I.F.E. Nehemiah Action on

7 PM Monday, April 26, 2021.

You will be able to 'attend' on **Zoom**, Live Streaming on Facebook or on YouTube. (The link for the Zoom meeting will be sent out shortly before April 26.)

As most of you know Fort Myers Friends Meeting is a member of the local organization called L.I.F.E. We are a group of congregations that work to correct injustices in Lee County. All congregations are welcome Christian, Jewish, Muslim or any other - all are welcome at the justice table. We currently have about 14 congregations (additional congregations are still in the joining process). LIFE is one of many organizations throughout the country under DART: "The **Direct Action and Research Training Center** (DART), a national network of 23 local **faith-based** community organizing groups across nine states." DART gives "local communities the skills they need to uncover and take action on pressing local problems."^[1]

This year we have continued to ask for a local Affordable Housing Trust Fund in Fort Myers to support the building of decent affordable rental housing units for families earning less than the median income. New this year is the concern that more should be done to train the officials in the Lee Co. sheriff's department to de-escalate mental health problems in our community. We also ask for a commitment to reduce the percentage of youth who are arrested for misdemeanors that warrant civil citations. We expect over 1000 members of our congregations to attend. To reach that goal we need 30 Quakers to attend. You can join the Nehemiah Action for one hour on Zoom wherever you are to show your support. When all of the members of our congregations 'show up' at the Nehemiah Action, our voice is strong, our requests are heard and another step in our work for justice is made.

If you have questions, please contact Carolyn at carolyn2020stanley@gamil.com

“And the norms and notions of what just is
Isn’t always just-ice”
Amanda Gorman, poet

“the practice of justice is at the center of God’s purpose for human life.” C. Rene Padilla

If you want to learn more about affordable housing trust funds, this is a link to the one hour training program LIFE presented to our mayor and city council members:

https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/HrTIVIDDgR-CJ9tVsZ3Qsg7mRD6N-p52OYVEV2TvN2ftM4_9hxW9XrAacUUBcJ_Sb.HXXml2R7VhY8yOcv

Please attend the Nehemiah Action at 7 PM, Monday, April 26 on Zoom. Carolyn will send the link the week prior to the event.

~ Carolyn Stanley, your representative on the L.I.F.E. board of directors

*In Celebration of the Life of
Thomas Dudley Boggess Fennell
July 4, 1930 - March 26, 2021*

A memorial service in the Quaker tradition will be held for Tom Dudley Fennell, Saturday April 24, 1:00 p.m. The service will be conducted through Zoom. Prior to Saturday, a zoom invitation will be sent to our readership via email by clerk Richard Frechette, in addition to the memorial pamphlet for the service. If you are a reader but not on the FtMMM email list, and you wish to attend the service, please email Richard at ftmyers.quakers@gmail.com



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

Mind the Oneness: The Mystic Way of the Quakers is a Pendle Hill Pamphlet by Rex Ambler. The title, alone, is what motivated me to order and read this pamphlet. Sometimes it is easy to get caught up in the “business” of being a Quaker: in our social activism and advocacy, in our caring for each other and our earth, all of which are very good things. But if we go back to the original intent of early Quakers, as Rex Ambler does, we find that the mystery of faith and the inward search for the Light, undergirds everything else we do in living our testimonies.

I like how Ambler starts with the origins of the “Quaker Way” which grounds the entire pamphlet. He explores the difference between Quaker mysticism and other forms of mysticism, particularly that of the Desert Mothers and Fathers. He highlights that for much of Christian tradition, mysticism (i.e. monasticism), was separated from the active life. There were the mystics and then there were the activists. Ambler makes the case for the Quaker Way in the integration (hence, the oneness) of the contemplative life with the community life and political life. We are more effective as social activists and caring for the community and environment when we integrate all with our inner contemplative/mystical life. The life of prayer/silence undergirds all we do.

I highly recommend reading this pamphlet (#463) from Pendle Hill.

~ *Deb White*

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR FRIENDS

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

MEETING CALENDAR

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| <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> | 10:30 am |
| <i>Mon 4/12/21</i> | <i>LIFE Rally via Zoom</i> | 7:00 p.m. |
| <i>Sun 4/18/21</i> | <i>Zoom workshop by Bobby Trice (FCNL) "The Roots and Branches of Quaker Advocacy"</i> | 1:00 p.m. |
| <i>Sun 4/25/21</i> | <i>Religious Education committee meeting via Zoom</i> | 1:00 p.m. |
| <i>Mon 4/26/21</i> | <i>LIFE's Nehemiah Action via Zoom.</i> | 7:00 p.m. |



*Friends Meeting of Fort Myers
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Address Correction Requested