



# **FORT MYERS MONTHLY MEETING**

## **OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS**

**Newsletter, Eighth Month, 2021**

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### **Meeting for Worship During the Pandemic**

*Friends are now meeting for hybrid worship every 1<sup>st</sup> day at 10:30AM. Friends may meet physically outdoors (weather permitting) under the roof of the chickee hut on the Orange River in Buckingham.*

*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*

Third Section:

To what extent is our personal life in accord with Quaker principles?

## **8. Personal Integrity & Right Action**

Queries:

- Do we keep to simplicity and moderation in speech, manner of living, and vocation?
- Do we make time in our day for silence, solitude, spiritual reflection, and the growth of our inner life?
- Do we remind ourselves each day of our connections with people, other creatures, and all that sustains life?
- Are we ready to live in the Spirit that heals estrangements that may arise from resentment, nagging fears, and alienation from others?
- Do we listen to others, even beyond words, being sensitive to their personal needs and difficulties?
- Are we free from the use of judicial oaths, thus affirming that our statement is only part of our usual integrity of speech?
- Do we regard our possessions as given to us in trust, and do we part with them freely for the needs of others?

- Are we careful to keep our jobs and social activities from absorbing time and energy that need to be given to spiritual growth and service to others?
- Do we stay tender and open to the leadings of the Spirit?

### Advices:

- Use our capabilities and possessions as God's gifts entrusted to us to share

with others in humility, courtesy, and affection.

- Accept and encourage the creativity in others.
- When we have a choice of employment, choose that which gives the fullest opportunity for the use of our talents in the service of others.
- Be willing to seek and be faithful to God's will.
- Remember that we are all one in God.

## Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Minutes of 8th Month 08, 2021

The Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met in hybrid fashion at the Chickee Hut and over Zoom on the 8th month 8th day with 21 Friends present. The Meeting opened with a period of silent centering. Richard Frechette, Clerk read the following Queries from SEYM Faith & Practice on Personal Integrity and Right Action:

- Do we remind ourselves each day of our connections with people, other creatures, and all that sustains life?
- Are we ready to live in the Spirit that heals estrangements that may arise from resentment, nagging fears, and alienation from others?

In response, a Friend said that he remembers daily a teaching of the Sioux Indians: "Mitakuye Oyasin, all my relations, we are all connected." These family relationships include the whole of creation: trees, rocks, rivers, plants, animals, and all human beings.

**Discussion on returning to Iona House:** A discussion was held about whether we should reconsider resuming worship at Iona House beginning in September, given the rise of COVID cases in Florida due to the new Delta variant. Clerk Richard Frechette suggested that we consider the following questions:

1. While Friends agreed in June that we should move back into Iona House until we have built a new home, does the current situation with the Delta Variant of Covid suggest we reconsider?
2. Should in-person worship be limited to those who have been vaccinated?
3. Should Friends be asked to wear masks?
4. Should we hold monthly potluck in Iona House? If not, are there any other alternatives?
5. Other considerations?

Friends contributed the following thoughts:

- Friend Jim Koopman was asked to give his advice as an epidemiologist: He responded, *“The answers to these questions are highly dependent on how much virus is circulating in the population. Unfortunately, in Lee County, we have the highest level of cases we’ve ever had in the pandemic. I wish I could say what the future will hold regarding the virus, but most likely it will take a month before the number of cases peaks and much longer for that number to fall. Whether we’re vaccinated or not, with the Delta variant we have a significant risk of both transmitting and contracting the infection; therefore everyone should be wearing masks. This virus may be ten times as contagious as the previous variant – CDC’s estimates up to 20 times. So, in my opinion, this information precludes starting back in Iona House until the epidemic comes down a lot. And in addition to getting sick and/or transmitting the virus to others, there is a risk that vaccinated people who get infected could transmit a new variant of the virus that has adapted to their immunity provided by the vaccine.”*

Friend Jim considered the rest of the Clerks questions, saying:

- *“Should in-person worship be limited to those vaccinated? That is a more personal decision for people who have not been vaccinated as to whether they want to potentially expose themselves to the virus or not.”*
- *“Should we wear masks? Most definitely.”*
- *“Should we continue potlucks at Iona House? I don’t think we want to meet in any closed indoor areas at this time. One thing we know about this virus is that transmission is decreased by air exchange. Under the Chick-ee Hut there’s considerable air exchange even when the wind isn’t blowing, so our risk is much less there than in an indoor space.”*

In answer to a Friend’s question about booster shots, Friend Jim replied, *“For those who have had two doses of an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna), there’s probably no need for a booster at this time. The situation is being monitored very carefully and we will be informed when and if it changes. For those who got the J&J (single dose) vaccine, it’s probably worthwhile to get the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine as a booster at this time.”*

In answer to a question about how to determine one’s own personal risk, Friend Jim responded, *“Those who are at highest risk are those who have or have had cancer, and those who are undergoing chemotherapy. If you have serious health problems you should consider reducing your risk as much as possible, even avoiding outdoor venues like the Chickee Hut.”*

- ❖ **Minute 2021-MM-18:** Friends agreed we should not resume worship at Iona House, but should continue hybrid worship at the Chickee Hut and over zoom into the foreseeable future, and that Friends who meet there in person should wear masks when possible.

Several Friends added:

- I have really appreciated Suzanne and Richard's incredible generosity of opening up the Chickee Hut for worship – and potluck!
- I would like to encourage everyone who is on zoom today to come to the Chickee Hut. If we all become comfortable here, maybe we wouldn't have to go back to Iona house at all.
- Almost everyone on zoom today has a personal reason not to be present at the Chickee Hut. It's heartbreaking not being able to be in community in person, but many of us have health considerations, both for ourselves and for our families.
- I really feel I am grieving a loss of the Meeting. I wonder, if we build a new Meeting House, will I even feel safe there? I feel safe coming to the Chickee Hut when there are just a few people here. But because I am a cancer patient, I'm at risk. As much as I'd like everyone to come to the Chickee Hut, if you all did, I don't know if I would come.

The Clerk then moved on to questions about the lease we have with the Calusa Nature Center for the use of Iona House on Sunday mornings and for storage of our library and other items, for which we pay \$100 a month. We are required to give a six-month notice if we want to end the lease. Should we keep the CNC apprised each month about when we might return; if so, should we notify them that it's okay for them to schedule their own events on Sundays in September and October, or should we make the decision not to return to Iona House at all?

Friends agreed that the Clerk should advise the CNC that on the advice of a professional we have decided not to use the space in September or October because of the virulence of the Delta variant, and that we will keep them informed month to month about when or if we will resume our worship there. We will continue to pay \$100/mo. whether or not we use the space.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Paul Davis provided the following report:

While we experienced a bit of a negative cash flow in July, this is simply because we paid our entire yearly assessment to SEYM and it is our largest budgeted expense. We also bought the Owl video conferencing device. Our donations in July were extremely generous, making the month's negative cash flow not too great.

We continue to be in excellent shape, as we have paid all of our major budgeted expenses for 2021 and we are only one half way through our fiscal year. This means the causes we support have had our donations to work with, and our obligations have been met except for our \$100 per month utility payments to the Calusa Nature Center.

Friend John Battin's foresight in investing some of our funds with Friends Fiduciary has produced a 10% return.

With the potential of building at the Shire Lane site or negotiating a new lease for meeting space I believe it is still best to “keep our powder dry” and keep most of our funds in savings and money markets where they are easily available. Once we have a bit more clarity, we could move more of our funds into Friends Fiduciary.

**FMMM Funds Report 7/31/2021**

**General Funds**

Checking	7,610
Gen Fund Savings	40,395
Gen Fund Fr Fiduciary	32,215
<b>Total General Fund</b>	<b>80,220</b>

<b>July 2021 Income vs Expenses</b>		
July	Income	\$4,430
July	Expenses	\$6,698*
* Major expense SEYM \$5,613 OWL Video Device \$999		

**Meeting House Funds**

Savings	93,343
MH Funds Fr Fiduciary	14,990
<b>Total Meeting House Funds</b>	<b>108,333</b>

**FMMM Total Funds 188,553**

**Religious Education Committee Report**

The Committee provided the following report on their recommendations on process for Quakerism 101:

1. That the Meeting support seven sessions for Quakerism 101, drawing from the committee’s work over some months and around the world to seek suitable approaches and materials for our needs to recommend to the Meeting
2. That the first session be worshipful consideration of J. Brent Brill’s book, “Holy Silence,” as recommended by Jeanette Botha. Friends can order it to read and consider over the summer for personal practice and in preparation for our first session together
3. That our Quakerism 101 sessions be held on the third Sunday of each month from October 2021 through April 2022 at 12:30 for approximately one hour, having given up the committee’s earlier idea of 9 A.M. as crowded
4. That each session be preceded by providing the full membership with written materials drawn from the committee’s diligent search of many available resources

5. That the sessions themselves be conducted in the manner of Meeting for Worship, with an introductory set of remarks by one of rotating members of the Religious Education Committee followed by contributions, questions, discussion (with cross-talk to be allowed, even encouraged)
6. That all members and attenders be invited to participate, and invited to tell us whether they plan to attend, and by what modality, so we know how to arrange setup for how many
7. That we order a copy of the current SEYM Faith and Practice for each participant, timed for our beginning session both as a possible reference aid during our sessions and as a gift to those who join us

As Friends in Melbourne Meeting have written: *“We have no dogma, no creed, no preachers, no sacraments. We believe in the Light Within, ‘That of God in everyone,’ upon which our Testimonies of Simplicity, 2021 strive to witness to the world in our daily lives. Join us in the immediacy of a shared spiritual experience.”*

Quakerism 101 content proposed by and from Religious Education Committee

1. October 17, 2021 The Importance of Silence to Quakers. Led by Jeanette Botha. Background material J. Brent Brill’s Holy Silence.
2. November 21, 2021 Context, History, Leaders, and Events of Early Friends. Led by Susan Oehl. Background materials from Friends General Conference, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and Durham Friends Meeting pp. 1 – 7.
3. December 19, 2021. Friends’ Special, Curious, Clear, Peculiar Terminology. Facilitated by Tom Miller. Background materials from Friends Central Meeting and Friends General Conference.
4. January 16, 2022. The Inner Light, division of Friends, modern beliefs and actions, leadership in peace, racial concerns, and other matters. Led by Donna Anderton. Background materials from Melbourne Meeting, pages 7 – 15, and Durham Meeting, pages 7 – 15.
5. February 20, 2022. Interests, Challenges , and Contemporary Issues for Friends Ranging from Spirituality to Racial Concerns to the Environment and others. Led by Nancy Howell, Susan Oehl and Religious Education Committee members. Background materials from Berkely Friends and others.
6. March 20, 2022. Southeastern Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice. Led by Donna Anderton and Religious Education Committee members.
7. Brief Evaluation of this Quakerism 101 and Looking to the Future: Quakerism 101 participants. Do we have any ideas to follow up?

**Peace & Social Concerns Committee Report:** Friend Carolyn Stanley provided the following report of their activities over the past year:

The Peace and Social Concerns Committee of Fort Myers Friends Meeting is grateful for the leadings of the Spirit that have helped us deepen our understanding of social justice issues and take principled action over the past year.

- We have educated ourselves about racial and economic justice, recommended books, videos, and actions to the Meeting, and held thoughtful discussions with others in the Meeting on these topics.
- In response to the continued police shootings of unarmed African Americans we wrote a “Statement on Police Violence,” which we sent to other Monthly Meetings, the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), and 35 local religious institutions.
- We learned how to approach legislators and their aides who may not agree with our positions, and how to write letters to the editor that persuade with personal stories rather than arguments
- After the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, we wrote a “Statement in the Light of Recent Public Violence” that affirms Quaker conscience in the face of injustice.
- We have supported charitable and activist organizations that support people who live in poverty, including farm workers in Immokalee.
- And we have worked to ensure a strong Quaker presence at meetings of Lee Interfaith For Empowerment (LIFE) that have resulted in improvements in affordable housing, the issuance of civil citations, rather than felony charges, to youthful offenders and the promise of more peaceful interaction between police and people in crisis. The July 2021 update from LIFE says that the sheriff has now trained a significant number of officers in mental health response.

Friend Carolyn also reminded Friends that our Meeting would again be sponsoring a booth at the annual Peace Day Festival, which will be held this year on September 19 at the Wa-ke Hatchee Community Park.

### **Covenant Committee Report**

Friend Pat Iyer provided a status report for the Covenant Committee regarding the potential leasing of land from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Myers. They have had several conversations with our attorney about the proposal for a land lease the Unitarians had drafted some months ago. Our attorney then prepared a counter-proposal, which is summarized below. The Clerk has forwarded this new draft to the Unitarians. After they consider it, they will begin zoom sessions with the Committee and hopefully, come to agreement on the changes. In the counter-proposal:

- The \$5000 we would pay the Unitarians up front has been reduced to \$1000;
- We would sign a lease in increments of 10 years;
- We would have the right to examine the Title of the Unitarians’ property;
- During the construction phase, we would pay the Unitarians \$500 a month. Once the construction is complete, we would pay \$750 a month (rather than \$1000). If we

make the building available to them for their regular use, which we would like to do, our rent would be reduced to \$350/month.

- If we decide to walk away before the end of the lease, the Unitarians would be able to buy our building at fair market value, based on appraisal. This replaces a provision in the UU draft that would have the equity in the meetinghouse shifting from Ft-MMM to UUCFM at a rate of 5% per year, resulting in the UUs fully owning the building in 20 years.
- A section was added on environmental contamination; we would be allowed to inspect the property for any contaminants. We would also be allowed to add sidewalks and 10 handicapped parking spaces.

Friend Paul added that the Committee explored whether we could buy the land on which the building would be located; the answer is no, legally, we would need more acreage than the Unitarians have available.

A Friend suggested asking the Unitarians about moving our library to one of their buildings since we have limited access to it at Iona House. We agreed to explore this idea with them.

We closed in silent worship.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Helen Fox  
Recording Clerk

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## Southwest Florida 14th Annual Peace Day



Sunday, September 19, 2021  
10 AM - 5 PM FREE  
At the Wa-Ke Hatchee Park  
16760 Bass Road, Fort Myers, FL  
Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the  
Religious Society of Friends will have a booth.

Stop by and visit.

We also need volunteers at the booth.  
Contact Carolyn at 740-827-1800  
[carolyn2020stanley@gmail.com](mailto:carolyn2020stanley@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](mailto:debwhitenfl@gmail.com)*

### ***The Kendal Sparrow***

By Barbara Schell Luetke of Salmon Bay (Seattle) Meeting.

This lovely novel, set in the 1650s in the English and Irish countryside, tells of the life of Elizabeth Fletcher, a teenage farm girl who becomes “convinced” by George Fox to become one of Quakerism’s first female ministers. Her story, based on historical records and meticulous research, transported me into the world of the first Friends: their spiritual leadings, their family life, their personal struggles and hardships, and above all, the warm, loving friendships that developed between them on the road. Small groups of young Friends would tramp for miles, sleeping in the rough, finding their voice in marketplaces and “steeple houses,” enduring medieval prisons, and standing up for female equality. We hear of the first “tellings” of George Fox at Pendle Hill, the medical treatments of fevers and tender ministrations to road-weary travelers, even the beginnings of sign language for the deaf. You can find the book at the FGC Press ([www.quakerbooks.org](http://www.quakerbooks.org)). Or you can borrow my copy. Just say the word.

~ *Book review by Helen Fox*

### ***FROM THE SEYM COMMITTEE FOR MINISTRY ON RACISM (CMOR):***

SEYM will be hosting a Zoom presentation from Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (FADP) titled “**Race and the Death Penalty**” on **Friday evening, September 10, at 7:00 PM**. There is no cost but Friends need to register in order to receive the link.

"Description: Throughout our nation’s history of racial injustice - from slavery to lynchings to systemic racism - white lives have been valued over black and brown lives. The death penalty, with its brutal record of racial injustice, is inextricably linked to this history. The same criminal justice system that perpetuates mass incarceration determines who lives and who dies by execution. Join us for a discussion about the role of race in the capital punishment system, from our earliest days as a nation through today." (from attached FADP bio document)

If you are interested in receiving a link to attend this Zoom presentation, please contact:

Susan Taylor  
 Co-clerk, CMOR  
[susantaylor410@gmail.com](mailto:susantaylor410@gmail.com)  
 850-445-6052 (cell and text)

## USEFUL WEBSITES FOR FRIENDS

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

## MEETING CALENDAR

<i>1<sup>st</sup> 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 a.m.</i>	10:30 am
<i>Each Friday</i>	<i>Informal worship at Buckingham chickee hut.</i>	10:30 am
<i>9/4/21</i>	<i>Potluck following worship at Chickee Hut</i>	upon rise of worship
<i>9/11/21</i>	<i>Meeting for worship with attention to business in a hybrid format: Chickee hut and via Zoom</i>	12:00 noon
<i>9/19/21</i>	<i>14th Annual Peace Day with Friends booth Wa-Ke Hatchee Park</i>	10:00 - 5: 00 p.m.