



FORT MYERS MONTHLY MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

Newsletter, Eleventh Month, 2021

Mailing Address: 138 Pinebrook Dr. Fort Myers FL 33907
Telephone: (239) 318-0538 ❖ Website: fortmyersquakers.org
E-mail: ftmyers.quakers@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor: Deb White: debwhitenfl@gmail.com

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.

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.

Midweek worship, in person only, is held at the chickee hut each Wednesday morning, at 10:30 a.m.

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*

Fourth Section:

How do Friends meet our responsibilities to the community and the world?

11. Care of the Natural World

Queries:

- *Do we live in harmony with nature? Do we live in keeping with the spirit of the unity, sacredness, and integrity of all creation?*
- *Do we seek to minimize our consumption of the earth's resources? Do we encourage equitable and sustainable use of those resources?*
- *Do we walk gently over the earth, seeing that of God in all of nature?*
- *Do we seek to educate ourselves, our children, our meeting, and our community about how our lives can be more in harmony with the earth?*
- *Does the meeting strive to bring all its practices in harmony with the natural world?*

Advices:

- *Maintain in ourselves and encourage in others a sense of responsibility for the environment, both for the present and for future generations.*
- *Avoid amusements that stimulate destructive emotions, are detrimental to*

the health or tranquility of others, or are damaging to the natural environment.

- *Show a loving consideration for all creatures, cherishing the beauty and wonder of all God's creation.*
 - *Share our sense of reverence and stewardship for the earth.*
-

Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Minutes – 11th Month 14th Day, 2021

The Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met online on the 11th month 14th day via Zoom conference and in person with 17 Friends present. The Meeting opened with a period of silent centering. Richard Frechette, Clerk, read from SEYM Queries on Care of the Natural World:

- Do we live in harmony with nature? Do we live in keeping with the spirit of the unity, sacredness, and integrity of all creation?
- Do we seek to educate ourselves, our children, our Meeting, and our community about how our lives can be more in harmony with the earth?

Ministry & Counsel Committee

Deborah Van Swol expressed interest in becoming a formal member of the Meeting and a clearness committee was appointed by M&C to meet with her. Both the clearness committee and M&C recommend acceptance of Debbie as a member of our Quaker community. Debbie was welcomed enthusiastically by all.

❖ **Minute 2021-MM-20:** *We approve the acceptance of Deborah Van Swol into membership in our Quaker community.*

A member of our Meeting, Nancy Fennell, has been invited to give the next Michener Lecture at SEYM in January, 2022. When asked the title of her presentation, Nancy replied, “Do ye not know that ye are God’s temple?” (I Cor 3:16)

Richard Frechette, our Meeting Clerk, expressed concern at the M&C Meeting that we needed more efforts to keep us together socially. Others mentioned how comfortable they are with Zoom contacts

Finance Report: Treasurer Paul Davis presented the financial report for the period ended 10/31/21, noting that we are still doing well financially.

General Funds

Checking	6,086
Gen Fund Savings	40,400
Gen Fund Fr Fiduciary	32,779
Total General Fund	79,265

Oct 2021 Income vs Expenses

Oct Income	\$2,268
Oct Expenses	\$ 527

Meeting House Funds

Savings	93,904
MH Funds Fr Fiduciary	15,253
Total Meeting House Funds	109,157

FMMM Total Funds 188,422

First review of draft 2022 Budget (Finance Committee)

Our assessment to SEYM takes place in July. Last year Paul paid \$5,613 for July 2021 to June 2022, knowing that we might need a little cushion this coming year with all the unknown Meeting house expenses. This is why the SEYM line item is as low as it is.

The budget assumes that we will not renew our lease at the Calusa Nature Center, although we will need to keep paying rent until April. Paul has budgeted \$3,000 this year for Meetinghouse expenses before we would need to withdraw funds from our reserves. He asked that everyone review the proposed budget at home and send him any suggestions prior to next month's Meeting for Business.

Friend Carolyn, Clerk of the Peace and Social Concerns Committee, requested that the Meeting consider the proposed budget items for the Harry Chapin Food Bank and a new program by Misión Peniel called Pan de Vida. Previous to the COVID-19 pandemic, our Meeting's donation to the Harry Chapin Food Bank was \$500. Last year, due to the increased need in the community, we increased our contribution to \$3000. For the coming year, we learned that the number of people served by Harry Chapin is almost the same as it was at the height of the pandemic. Although the staff is not sure why this is happening, they think that people may be spending their money on other essentials and relying on the food bank for nutrition. Seeing this need, and choosing the middle way, PSC has budgeted \$1000 for the Harry Chapin Food Bank for next year. Please send Carolyn your thoughts.

The other area where the PSC committee welcomes input is our donation to Misión Peniel. We're currently giving them \$300, but we are considering increasing that amount to \$750 in order to contribute to the Pan de Vida (Bread of Life) program, which began last year. This program provides three nutritious, hot meals per week to homebound residents in the Immokalee farm worker community according to their dietary needs and delivered with love. The cost per

person is \$750 per year. Please let Carolyn know your thoughts before the next Meeting for Business.

First review of Nominating Committee

Friend Carolyn, Clerk of the Nominating Committee, reported that all the necessary spots on the various committees are now filled, with the exception of the Technology Committee. Our greatest need is for someone to step in for Richard, should he be unable to set up for hybrid worship. If no one comes forward to learn how to do this, Richard suggests a fallback plan whereby the people who come to the Chickee would have their own worship, and one of the Clerks of committees, who all have Zoom accounts, can send out a link for online worship. However, our Facebook page and our website still need help. Friend Helen suggested we pay someone to set up a website that is easy to manage, and that Clerks could learn how to update their own material on the site. Friend Paul said he thought that someone had been paid to set up the current website, and that the biggest challenge is getting it updated. Carolyn welcomes suggestions.

Report of the Meetinghouse Covenant Committee

Friend Paul opened with a brief history of our Meeting place: In 1992, Friends established a “sweat equity” relationship with the Calusa Nature Center that gave us access to Iona House for First Day worship. By 2015 we had established a more formal lease and were contributing to much needed repairs on Iona House, paying the utility bill and a small monthly rental fee, and providing volunteers to Calusa Nature Center governance. That lease expires in April 2022.

In December, 2019, Friends began to discern whether we wanted to continue the relationship with the Calusa Nature Center or move to some other space. When asked what qualities were most important, Friends indicated that we wanted a spiritual space that would be close to nature, with facilities for a First Day School that would attract more young families. We wanted the new arrangement to be economical, and that we should take time to decide if, where, and when to move.

In 2020, Friends began looking for a new space. We looked at buildings on the market, queried other Quaker Meetings about their process in buying or building a new Meetinghouse, and visited local organizations to see if we could rent their space. Finally, we settled on the property on Shire Land owned by the Unitarian Universalists of Fort Myers. The UU’s welcomed us to the possibility of becoming part of an expanding community that included the Gulf Coast Symphony, the Boy Scouts, and their own congregation.

Friends organized two committees: the Building Committee (later called the Spiritual Space Committee), which looked at various options for a structure in consultation with a local architect; and the Covenant Committee, which worked with the UU’s to explore the possibility of providing something new and unique on their campus, and creating a relationship between the two parties that would be both spiritual and legally sound. Hundreds of hours of work were involved in these activities.

After exploring several possibilities, the Spiritual Space Committee decided to reserve the building materials for a yurt from a company on the West Coast. Plans and pictures of the 40-foot circular structure were sent around to the Quaker community along with the assurance that the down payment for the structure was fully refundable until early January, 2022. Delivery of the materials was scheduled for May, 2022, the end of Florida's dry season.

Having reserved a yurt, the two committees worked with the UU's to see where on their campus we might build. Initially, this space was near the parking lot and other UU structures that we might use for various activities such as child care, potluck lunches, informal conversation with the UUs and the like. We explored possibilities of renting and buying the space. Both presented challenges. It seemed necessary for both sides to get lawyers involved.

That turned out to be a mistake. The work of lawyers is to cover every possible contingency and get the best deal for their own client. This made the UU document unacceptable to the Quaker side. But when we presented our lawyers' version to the UU's, they said they would end discussions with us. We were shocked. However, we understood that the UU's had legitimate reasons to dismiss our plan. The spot where we proposed to build was central to their campus, and our structure would disturb the design and flow of their buildings and activities. And since the UU's are currently "land rich but membership poor" they feared that a document more favorable to Quakers would tie the hands of their future Board.

Paul volunteered help bring the UU's back to the table. He is professionally trained in negotiations and understands that relationships based on covenants, rather than legalities, are deeper and more lasting, since they are based on unity and grace, tolerate risk and forgive errors.

Accordingly, the Covenant Committee drafted a Memorandum of Understanding and a Covenant. This document, they knew, could have been more skillfully written, but it was approved by the UU Board. It seemed promising that they were willing to enter into a different kind of relationship with us, one that would allow both the UU's and the Quakers to grow in the future.

So at this point, we have the funding, the space, and an opportunity to be in a spiritual relationship with UU's. The next step, if Friends approve of the Memorandum of Understanding and the Covenant today, is writing and negotiating a formal lease and contracting an engineering company to do preliminary site work.

As we consider these two documents, we need to ask what happens if either organization fails. If the UU's were to sell and downsize, they would pay back our seed money, which we estimate to be \$300,000. And if the Fort Myers Meeting should fail as an organization, our building would become the property of the UU's and the rest of our assets would transfer to SEYM.

In the discussion that followed, the following opinions were expressed:

- I am very much in favor of going forward with this plan. But the document says that if disputes arise, a council will be formed consisting of equal numbers of Quakers and UU's plus one outside party. This implies that voting or arbitration will take place. As a Quaker, this makes me very uncomfortable. Voting has never been part of the Quaker tradition. If we could change a sentence or two in these documents, we'd need to say that Quakers do not accept voting as the way to resolve disputes. We don't force people to go against their deepest beliefs. We need an acknowledgement that coming to unity is a crucial part of Quaker identity.
- The document doesn't say that voting would actually take place. It may imply that, but it doesn't state it explicitly. As Paul says, the document is not worded perfectly. But if we try to edit it, or even change a single word, it would need to go back to the UU Board, which has already accepted the document as it stands. That would put us back another month, which brings us closer to the deadline for payment for the yurt.
- I really like the emphasis on faith in these documents, and in having faith, this coming together will work. I love that it's very open, and that it stresses solving problems through discussion, faith and prayer. I like the sensitivity that's been put into the writing of these documents.
- I agree that the wording of the documents is fine. But what troubles me is that the Covenant says that Friends will own the structure and cover all the costs to build, insure, and maintain it. Are we sure we have the finances to do this?
- I too am worried about the numbers. It's wonderful that a donor gave the amount that they did. But I'm not sure that we've talked about whether we can sustain a structure financially into the future. On the other hand, I can see there is an urgency on the part of the people who have worked so hard on this. I don't want to stand in the way.
- I think that the Chickee Hut is the most beautiful place to worship. But we had 10 people here today and 20 on Zoom. Does this imply that Quakers are more comfortable with Zoom than they are with meeting in person? What if we built a beautiful structure and only a few people came?
- I believe that Zoom is here to stay, since it meets the needs of so many people with mobility limitations. We need to be careful not to imply that Zoom is an easy way out.
- Almost all Quaker Meetings throughout North America and England have their own Meetinghouses – except Fort Myers Friends. We should take on that responsibility as others do. It doesn't have to be that much of a financial burden. Any lease that we accept will be comparable to what we've already been investing in Iona House.

- As Treasurer, I can't imagine a more fiscally responsible thing than what we're doing. The donors' pledge will cover most of it. Other people have also indicated they are willing to support it financially. We will have no mortgage. The UU's are comfortable with handling the logistics of renting the space to other groups, which will help pay our rent. The yurt will be new, so maintenance won't be much of a problem. If insurance is too expensive we could self-insure. But I don't imagine we couldn't handle it. If we want a Meeting house, I believe this is the most cost-effective way to do it.
- I keep bringing this up, but we keep calling the Meetinghouse a yurt. Yet we haven't come to unity on what kind of structure we actually want. My concern isn't whether it's round or oblong. If it's not a building we can break bread together in, we'd have to rely on other people's facilities. Most simple Meetinghouses have their own kitchen, storage, and bathrooms. I would like to see a meetinghouse that's self-contained.
- The circular space that we are describing as a yurt would be attached to a covered walkway with small rooms attached for bathrooms, storage and a small kitchen. I believe this design was circulated to Friends quite a while ago.
- We call it a yurt but it's just a circular contained space that will be very good for integrating hybrid meetings. We will be able to use a much more effective technology than we have currently at the Chickee Hut, which is already quite good.
- The point has been brought up that we didn't officially approve of the yurt design. Yet in the covenant documents, the yurt is referred to. Why is that, if we didn't have that discussion? Do we need to agree today to the yurt? I would like to see these covenant documents moved along. But as Quakers, coming to consensus is important.
- We could ask the UU's if we could take the word "yurt" out of the document and just mention some sort of appropriate worship structure. But the UU's really liked the idea of a yurt. They thought it would add a unique structure to their campus, one that could be an ideal space for a quartet performance, for example. So yes, we did go forward with the yurt idea in our discussions with the UU's.
- Perhaps I can help a little. From my research of these kinds of structures, circular designs are the most storm resistant. The yurt type of construction is most efficient and very green. The cost is very affordable, in the \$80,000 range. The president of the UU council was particularly enthusiastic about this style and size, which would fill a void on their campus. The yurt would hold a maximum of 75 people and be efficient for smaller groups as well. The architect we consulted found it to be a very strong, sustainable, and green structure. Living lightly on the earth, this structure does that. I don't know if people have negative associations with the idea of a yurt. But it's one of the most universal structures that one finds as worship spaces throughout cultures. I believe we did send around illustrations that Friends had an opportunity to see. We received no negative responses.
- I'd like to speak for the yurt. It's beautiful. And it's one that the UU's liked. They have already given preliminary approval to the yurt design. The issues of handicapped access have

been addressed. Food preparation, bathrooms, the storage space, all have been addressed. Because of its unique design, I could see a yurt generating publicity for both Friends and UU's. It's a space that represents a lot of our values. If there's really opposition to a yurt, we need to know it. But we have no plan B for a different type of structure.

- We all have seen the plans for the yurt. But some of the issues have not been discussed with the full Meeting. For example, I didn't know about plans for the handicapped. My concern is that we didn't make a collective decision on this. Quaker process means we all hear everything, we all are included. Clearly that hasn't happened.
- As a member of the Sacred Space Committee, I'd have to agree with those who say that Quaker process has not been followed. There have been so many details and other moving parts to these discussions and negotiations, we did not bring the full Meeting along every step of the way. But I hope we can move forward today with the covenants, knowing that we are imperfect and that the process was imperfect, but that with grace and trust we can sign these documents today.
- I was reminded today of a mystical experience I had when lighting a fire in an old Meeting-house many years ago. When you add wood to a fire, there's more light, more heat. more faith, more spirit. If you continually feed the fire, it will tend you, enlighten you, and draw in others. In building this new Meeting house, we're not looking for a little community of our own. We're looking to join with other like-minded people to draw in even more people, and to share their heat and light.

Upon completion of discussion, Clerk Richard Frechette asked if Friends approve constructing a yurt on the UU grounds and whether Friends approve signing the Memorandum of Understanding and the Covenant with the UUs.

- ❖ **Minute 2021-MM-21:** *Friends approve construction of a yurt structure on the grounds of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fort Myers.*
- ❖ **Minute 2021-MM-22:** *Friends approve having the Clerk sign the following Memorandum of Understanding and Covenant with the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fort Myers.*

***Memorandum of Understanding between
Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Friends) and
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fort Myers (UU)***

Our Shared Beliefs

UU and Friends share many of the same basic beliefs and values. Our purpose for existing as organizations is to nurture the spiritual needs of our members. We also believe in serving our community especially those who have been forgotten and disadvantaged. We seek peace in the world and a world where we are in harmony with nature. We worship in a different manner and we each have our own cherished traditions and practices but what unites us is much greater than what separates us. We are both stronger when we each succeed.

Our Current Challenges

Friends have never owned a meeting house and have worshiped in a variety of settings. They long to have a structure where they can meet in silent worship, in the round, and where they have some control over the maintenance and use of the building. Friends have been gifted with the money to build a yurt, but they lack the resources to also buy and develop the land to put in on.

The UU owns a beautiful campus and complex of buildings that was built when membership was much larger. To realize revenues that help maintain the buildings, the UU shares its campus with the Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra. A campus-sharing relationship with Friends would be a different kind of arrangement based on shared spiritual spaces. The UU has unused land that through an arrangement with the Friends could provide another spiritual space on campus and another source of revenue.

Both congregations are small and are aging. We both struggle to attract and retain younger members. We both are concerned about what the future holds and how we might best gift the future members of our congregations the best opportunity to thrive.

Our Current Opportunities

Friends believe by investing several hundred thousand dollars in a yurt (and attached bathrooms) on the UU campus, we can accomplish the following:

- *Provide a spiritual home for the Friends*
- *Provide a significant new source of revenue to the UU through rental of the yurt*
- *Provide a unique structure (the only yurt in Fort Myers area) that would generate greater publicity for both the Friends and the UU*
- *Increase the value of the UU campus*

Our Concerns

UU needs to be sure that any agreement with the Friends does not tie the hands of a future Board of Trustees. They need flexibility in case they need to downsize, mortgage, or sell. They need assurance that any structure meets their architectural standards. They need to limit upfront costs.

Friends need reasonable assurances that they will have access to the new structures, hopefully for a long time. They need to keep our monthly costs low. They need to keep upfront costs low.

Our Intentions

For all the factors stated above, we intend to work diligently together to fashion a relationship and arrangement that can allow us to benefit from our opportunities, meet our concerns, and leverage our strengths for the betterment of the missions of our congregations, both current and future. We set out to accomplish our intentions in two parts: firstly, with a covenant between our congregations, and secondly, with a simplified land lease agreement.

Covenant between

***Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Friends) and
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fort Myers (UU)***

We exist to provide for the spiritual needs of our members. To best meet those needs we recognize the need to work together as the spirit guides us to create a community where UU and Friends grow spiritually and where our organizations thrive because of our combined strengths and beliefs. We recognize the spiritual gifts and traditions we bring to this Covenant are our greatest gifts. We believe should either of our organizations ever cease to exist, a spiritual light would be diminished.

We each have physical gifts we bring to this Covenant. UU owns a beautiful campus they wish to continue to own and develop according to their needs and beliefs. Friends have been gifted the money to build a unique yurt meeting house with attached bathrooms and storage. Friends will own the structure and will cover all the costs to build, insure and maintain it. They will pay for any of the costs to add and use the utilities. UU will rent the facility except when needed by the Friends so that UU may obtain additional funds to maintain the campus. This structure will become a valued addition to both faith communities.

The UU will provide access for the Friends to the yurt. UU will grant use of the campus trails and gardens and other amenities based on availability. Friends and UU will work together in sharing the facilities each brings to this Covenant. Each will assign two representatives from their congregations, respectively, to serve on a Covenant Council, whose purpose is to coordinate and resolve all issues that may result from the formation of this Covenant, within the principles set forth herein.

If the Friends would ever need to disband, they will gift the building and improvements to the UU.

If the UU would ever need to sell its campus, the Friends will transfer ownership of the building to the UU and the UU will reimburse the friends \$300,000 (the estimated value of the building and improvements). The UU will give the Friends notice of the need to sell as soon as possible and will work with the new buyer to allow the Friends time to move. Both congregations, through their representatives on the Covenant Council, may choose an alternative mutually agreeable solution in either future event.

Our Covenant is based on our shared spiritual beliefs and trust. As such, we will respect each other and resolve to handle any disputes through our Covenant Council. In the event we cannot agree on a solution, each of us will select 3 representatives who will pick a mutually agreed additional member of the Fort Myers community to hear and resolve the dispute. The decision of this group will be honored by both the Friends and the UU.

This Covenant shall exist as long as both organizations exist and will survive beyond the original signatories. It will end if either organization decides it should end.

We closed in silent worship.

Respectfully Submitted
Helen Fox, Recording Clerk

2021 & DRAFT 2022 FTMMM Budget

Friends are asked to review this draft prior to the December meeting for business

Name	2021	2022
BUDGETED EXPENSES		
Calusa Nature Center-Membership	\$250	\$0
Calusa Nature Center-Utility Payments	\$1,200	\$400
Environmental Working Group	\$100	\$100
Finance Committee-Banking & Corporate Fees	\$100	\$100
Finance Committee-Gifts/Contingency	\$100	\$100
Hospitality Committee	\$450	\$450
Meetinghouse Reserve	\$3,000	\$3,000
Ministry & Counsel-Care	\$1,000	\$1,000
Ministry & Counsel-Friends General Conference	\$1,200	\$1,200
Ministry & Counsel-General/Misc	\$300	\$300
Ministry & Counsel-Spiritual/Scholarships	\$1,500	\$1,500
Newsletter	\$300	\$300
Nominating Committee	\$100	\$100
Outreach Committee:Outreach Committee Web Hosting	\$150	\$200
Outreach Committee:Outreach Committee-Friends Journal Listing	\$80	\$80
Outreach Committee:Outreach-Phone	\$130	\$130
Outreach Committee:Zoom	\$650	\$650
Peace & Social Concerns-AFSC	\$600	\$600
Peace & Social Concerns-CIW	\$300	\$300
Peace & Social Concerns-Cultivate Abundance	\$100	\$100
Peace & Social Concerns-Educ. Concerns for Hunger	\$200	\$200
Peace & Social Concerns-Fair Housing	\$300	\$300
Peace & Social Concerns-FCNL	\$600	\$600
Peace & Social Concerns-Friends Peace Teams	\$300	\$300
Peace & Social Concerns-H. Chapin Foodbank	\$3,500	\$1,000
Peace & Social Concerns-Initiatives that may arise	\$1,000	\$1,000
Peace & Social Concerns-Lee Interfaith	\$500	\$500
Peace & Social Concerns-Mission Peniel	\$300	\$750
Peace & Social Concerns-Peace Day	\$100	\$100

Peace & Social Concerns-Quaker House	\$300	\$300
Peace & Social Concerns-Quaker Vol. Services	\$200	\$200
Peace & Social Concerns-Quality Life Center	\$500	\$500
Property Committee	\$150	\$0
Religious Education-1st Day School	\$50	\$50
Religious Education-Books/Misc	\$500	\$500
Religious Education-Retreats/Speakers	\$800	\$800
SEYM	\$2,700	\$2,800
Technology Committee	\$500	\$500
	\$24,110	\$21,010



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

What Fort Myers Friends are Reading

Suzanne Frechette

I'm reading a beautifully written book that was given to me by Friend Patrick Kessing, shortly before he passed. It's *Tracking Desire: A Journey after Swallow Tailed Kites* by Susan Cerulean. "My journeys after kites have led me to understand that the power of our longings is placing the integrity of life on our tender emerald planet so greatly at risk," she writes. "What are the fractured places in our hearts and minds and spirits that have allowed us to stand by and watch, and even to participate in, the destruction of so much of life?" As kites soar above the clutter and confusion of the world below, so may we.

Membership in the Meeting

Do you remember the first time you came to a Quaker meeting? Unless you are a “birthright Friend” (born into a Quaker family), you were probably considered to be a “visitor” to the Meeting on that occasion. And although Meetings differ widely on a lot of issues, all the Meetings I’ve ever seen agree that all visitors are welcome. Visitors are greeted, smiled at, and offered coffee, or pamphlets, or books from the library by any of the regular Friends present, and are invited to return any time in the future. They are usually asked to sign the Visitors Book and start to receive the Meeting communications. Whether it is as a guest of a regular, a lone individual or a large family, and whether the motive for coming was exploration, mild curiosity, or a deep commitment to Quaker beliefs, visitors are always welcome at Quaker Meeting.

If visitors continue to come, and become familiar with Quaker ways, they automatically become “regular attenders” or just “attenders”. Integration into the Meeting is gradual, as the individual or the family learns the names and ways of Quakers, joins in the activities of the Meeting, such as potluck meals, singing before worship, and special events such as marriages and memorials. Attenders can join into committees that carry out the work of the Meeting and be present for and participate in the regular “Meeting for Worship with attention to Business” that discusses the decisions of the Monthly Meeting and responds to the input from the Yearly Meeting. In recent years 54% of the Friends we included in the Directory of the Meeting held the status of Attenders, and another 27% were classified as Members of the Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

Some Meetings strongly encourage Attenders to become Members after a year or so, while other Meetings are comfortable with Attenders who do not feel led to join into Membership on any particular schedule.

Only the Monthly Meeting can admit and record a member, and that membership in the Monthly Meeting links the new member to the Religious Society of Friends, including our Yearly Meeting (SEYM) and its interim business meetings, and all the other worldwide Quaker bodies with which our Yearly Meeting is affiliated.

When a new attender has become familiar with the “unique Quaker method of shared responsibility for service to the Meeting” he (or she, or they) should seriously consider the issue of membership and should feel free to speak with any of the members of the Meeting about the process. New members are not asked to agree to any creed, or statement of what they believe: Friends believe in a process of “continuing revelation”, whereby God gave the truth to believers not just once, (in the Bible) but continues to do so through the Inner Light which is available to all. Thus, the expectation is that members of Quaker meetings will seek God’s will in all matters, at all times, and act according to it. If an attender at a Quaker meeting finds their mind continually turning toward the issue of membership in the Meeting, they should pursue the process.

The first step toward membership in a Meeting is in the hands of the Attender who is drawn to it. The attender writes a letter to the Clerk of the Meeting in which membership is being considered, and outlines the spiritual path that has lead the attender to consider membership. The clerk acknowledges the receipt of the letter and passes it on to the Ministry and Counsel Committee, which is charged to form a committee to help the applicant discern whether he or she is clear about the process of membership and whether this is the right time to take the next steps toward membership. It may be necessary for the applicant to relinquish membership in other religious bodies, and even in secular organizations that promote behavior and beliefs contrary to Friend's principles. The so-called "Clearness Committee" may meet a few to many times before recommending to the Meeting as a whole that the request for membership be acted on.

Clearness Committees may be staffed by members of the Meeting who are suggested by the applicant, and by others who are known to be insightful and caring Friends. If the application for membership includes more than one person, all those named should be included in the process. The committee members are expected to ask questions and listen carefully to responses but will not attempt to make the decision for the applicant(s). The Clearness Committee may ask questions about the theological beliefs of the prospective members, but it is not looking for a "correct" answer: more likely it is searching for one's ability to co-mingle one's beliefs with others.

When the participants are satisfied that the process has produced maximum clarity, the Committee will write a report to the Meeting, and the Meeting will decide about membership, at a regularly scheduled Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. A negative decision is rare. The SEYM publication, Faith and Practice, (4th edition, 2013, pgs 129-143) spells out the process in detail.

I remember that when I applied for membership I felt gratified that members of the Meeting encouraged me to apply, I enjoyed the conversations with the Clearness Committee, and very much enjoyed the celebratory lunch meeting at my house for the whole Meeting. We have rather neglected those celebrations in recent years, and I for one think we should reinstate them, as an affirming occasion for the values of the Meeting. But in the meantime, I hope that those who have become Attenders in recent years will consider the benefits of membership for yourself and for the Meeting.

Nancy Howell

November, 2021

Nancy Fennell to be SEYM 2022 Michener Lecturer

Every year since 1970, Southeastern Yearly Meeting (SEYM) has held what is known as the Michener Lectures. Unbeknownst to me until recently, I thought the lectures were named after the famous author James Michener who happened to be raised Quaker! How humbled I was when I discovered that these lectures were actually the result of two very committed Friends Dwight and Ardis Michener. During WWII, the Micheners were deeply involved in the work of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in France (1941). Dwight's background as an economist allowed the two of them to serve as financial managers for fiscal gifts to help French citizens who were suffering. They did this job until the US entered the war. At that time volunteers with children returned home, including the Micheners who wanted to be with their daughter Jean. Dwight and Ardis were involved in other public service work visiting conscientious objectors who were engaged in Civilian Public Service Camps doing various kinds of service work.

When they retired, they bought a home in central Florida and started a Friends worship group there. To help this fledgling group get started, they invited guests to present lectures for which they provided the hospitality arrangements. All meetings in the newly organized Southeastern Friends Conference were invited. As this event grew it eventually was moved to the Orlando Meeting House the First Day of Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend. The tradition has carried throughout the years under the care of SEYM.

This year it is Fort Myers Monthly Meeting's privilege to have one of our very own members take on this honored task. Nancy Fennell has been asked and has accepted to be the 2022 Michener Lecturer. We could not be prouder. Nancy served as clerk for several years for our Meeting, attended the School of the Spirit and served on its Board, was very active in SEYM activities, and facilitated workshops throughout Florida. Nancy also designed the framework for developing Spiritual Formation groups in SEYM. Within that framework she started the first spiritual formation group in FtMMM. In addition to all of her other accomplishments and talents, she has written for the *Friends Journal* and published a book *The Path of Silence: a Call to Deepen and to Live Our Spirituality* (2018; Amazon Kindle Direct Publishers).

Traditionally these lectures have been held in Orlando, but because the pandemic continues to impact our lives in a variety of ways, this year's lecture will be held on Zoom. Please support our gifted Friend Nancy not only by holding her in the Light and words of encouragement, of course, but also by attending her lecture.

Deb White
November 2021

Religious Education—a custom-version of *Quakerism 101*

The Religious Education committee will be offering its own version of “Quakerism 101” for the next few months. The sessions will take place at 1:00 on the third Sunday of each month.

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.

December 19, 2021. The Inner Light, division of Friends, modern beliefs and actions, leadership in peace, racial concerns, and other matters.
Led by Tom Miller. Background materials from Melbourne Meeting, pages 7 – 15, and Durham Meeting, pages 7 – 15.

4. **January 16, 2022.** Friends’ Special, Curious, Clear, Peculiar Terminology
Facilitated by Donna Anderton. Background materials from Friends Central Meeting and Friends General Conference.

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 Berkeley 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.



Blanket Drive

Ubuntu Spirit Inc is a local 501c not-for-profit doing our best to give support to unseen communities throughout Lee County. Winter is officially upon us. The nights here now have a bit of a chill. We have been brainstorming how to alleviate the cold and ease some of the burdens of our un-homed community. If you can help with any of the below then you will be easing the needs of someone who truly could use a little love.

- *Blankets
- *Sweaters
- *Sleeping Bags
- *Coats & Jackets
- *Sweatshirts

If you have donations, please reach out to:

Heather Strangeflower: (508) 864-1982 or Jeff Lizotte (978) 467-5774

Cash donations can be made via: Venmo: @ubuntuspirit | CashApp: \$ubuntuspirit
Follow us on Facebook: @UbuntuSpiritInc

Ubuntu Spirit Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, Federal Tax ID# 86-3234061

Note: This is the couple/organization that Suzanne Frechette identified at 1st day worship. You can also provide donated materials through Suzanne.

Meeting for Healing: Palm Beach Meeting is offering a monthly Meeting for Healing for individuals, the Meeting, ourselves, our country and our planet on the last Wednesday of the month at 7:15 on Zoom. This will be a time of holding each other and our concerns in the Light, sharing Reiki healing, prayer, and silence. All are welcome! Call Ellie Caldwell at 561-790-5499 for more information.

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
https://pendlehill.org	Pendle Hill: A Quaker retreat and resource center
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

<i>1st Days (Sundays)</i>	<i>Meeting for worship in a hybrid format: in person at Buckingham chickee hut or via Zoom. Conversational fellowship before worship at 10:00.</i>	10:30 am
<i>Each Wednesday</i>	<i>Mid-week worship at Buckingham chickee hut. This is in-person only.</i>	10:30 am
<i>Sunday 11/21/21</i>	<i>Quakerism 101: Discussion of History of Quakers: Context, Leaders and Early Events of Friends - Susan Oehl</i>	
<i>Sunday 12/5/21</i>	<i>Potluck at Buckingham chickee hut</i>	Upon rise of worship

Contributions to the Meeting can be made payable to Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, and can be sent to:

Paul Davis, Treasurer
 5530 Harborage Drive
 Fort Myers, FL. 33908