



FORT MYERS MONTHLY MEETING

Of the Religious Society of Friends

Meeting for Worship

Friends are meeting for hybrid worship every 1st day at 10:30 A.M. Friends may meet physically outdoors (weather permitting) under the roof of the Chickee on the Orange River in Buckingham. (aka Peace Acre). 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

Midweek worship, in person only, is held at the Chickee on Peace Acre each Wednesday morning at 10:30 a.m. For directions to Peace Acre, call 239-313-6201 or email:

ftmyers.quakers@gmail.com

Meeting 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

SEYM Queries & Advices

First Section:

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

1st Month: Meeting for Worship

Queries:

- Are our meetings for worship held in expectant waiting for divine guidance, with a living silence in which we feel drawn together in the Light by the presence of God?
- Do we respond to the Spirit's prompting to minister, whether in silence, through the spoken word, or through action after the meeting for worship?
- Are we sensitive to one another's needs in meeting for worship?
- Are the spiritual gifts within the meeting fostered and encouraged?
- Are our meetings accessible and welcoming to everyone?

- Are our meetings a source of strength and guidance for daily living?
- Is the vocal ministry in our meetings exercised under the leading of the Spirit?

Advices:

- Be prompt and diligent in attendance at meetings.
- Come to meeting with expectant hearts and minds prepared for communion with God.
- Be faithful, be patient, and persevere in our service as messengers of truth.
- To everyone is given a share of the responsibility for the meeting for worship, whether through silence or through the spoken word.
- Quiet our hearts and minds for worship prior to entering the meeting room, so the whole group can be knit together in spiritual fellowship.
- Do not assume that vocal ministry is never to be our part.
- Be ready to speak under the leading of the Light. Learn to recognize when a message felt within is from God and if it is a message intended for the group to hear.
- Pray that our ministry may arise from deep experience of the Divine.
- Let our spoken ministry be audible and free from unnecessary words.
- Avoid speaking in a manner that brings a sense of discussion or debate.
- Allow for a period of silence after a message has been spoken, so the group can reflect on what has been said and continue to be grounded in silent worship. Overly long or too-frequent messages can hinder the worship of others present.
- Receive the ministry of others in a tender spirit.
- Treat every newcomer as one sent by God.



Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Minutes of 1st Month 14th Day, 2024

The Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met in hybrid format on the 1st month 14th day with 17 Friends present. The Meeting opened with a period of silent centering.

Clerk Richard Frechette read the following from SEYM Queries and Advices on Meetings for Worship:

- Are our Meetings for Worship held in expectant waiting for divine guidance, with a living silence in which we feel drawn together in the Light by the presence of God?
- Are we sensitive to one another's needs in Meeting for Worship?
- Are our Meetings accessible and welcoming to everyone?

Friends shared:

- My heart responds to these queries, which I think we should consider whenever we gather. Making space for divine presence is a very rare experience -- and how to make it "living" is. I don't have an answer to it, I just love the question.
- Regarding making our Meetings accessible and welcoming, I think we've been making do -- with the ChickeeHut and with Zoom. It's important, at least to me, to come together physically, which we haven't been able to do for some time. If we had a Meetinghouse we could commit to building a larger community through charitable actions on a regular basis.

Report from Meetinghouse Committee

Clerk Helen Fox reported that members of the committee met with Tommy Cook and his architectural engineer, Bob Case, to discuss whether Bob would consider taking on our project. Although Tommy had previously told us that he was determined to retire, we were encouraged to see Tommy and Bob with their heads together over Jeff Mudgett's architectural drawings talking excitedly about how they would redo the building design to simplify the structure and save us some money. Tommy then affirmed that he "hadn't decided" whether to take our project but if he couldn't, that Bob would be able to see it through as our engineer/architect and would most likely be able to find us a contractor.

So, the plan is now to follow Jeff Mudgett's advice and get all the permits in place, whether or not we are able to raise enough money to construct the building at this time. As we have mentioned previously, and as Tommy and Bob ascertained, we will not be able to engineer the site and build the new Meetinghouse for less than \$750,000. That is the reality post-lan.

We are waiting for Jack Morris to complete the engineering work he started for us, and after our approval, submit his revised plans to the County.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Paul Davis began by reminding us what we're trying to achieve in a new Meetinghouse. We have said that we want to bring in the light, to be close to nature, to have available child care, to own our building rather than rent. We want good ventilation for both health and comfort, we want parking to be close by and safe for people and their vehicles. We want control over the days and time we can use the building and we want to be fiscally responsible and accumulate no debt. Despite the sharp increase in costs for the building and site work after Hurricane Ian, all of this has suddenly become possible.

Friend Paul then read a letter from Jim Koopman:

Dear Friends of the Fort Myers Monthly Meeting,

I am facing Alzheimer's dementia complicated by heart failure, which speeds up my loss of mental abilities. Over the past year, Helen and I have been active on the Meetinghouse Committee, working to establish a new place of worship that will build on the spirit that has been sustained by the Chickee Hut and by Zoom. We want to ensure that this project is pursued quickly and generates broad participation in the growth of our Meeting.

Some challenges have raised the cost of our building project. These include Hurricane Ian, the growth of Southwest Florida, and government commercial zoning regulations. Based on the advice of a trusted local contractor who has reviewed the plans, we now believe that \$750,000 is an accurate budget to prepare the site and raise the building. To attempt to cut costs, the Meetinghouse Committee obtained the help of an engineer to shave \$50,000 off the cost of the building without impacting its design. He has even agreed to donate part of his fee to help us do this. Our architect, feeling responsible for the actual budget coming in much higher than he anticipated, has given us his design and returned his fee. He wants us to succeed.

This leaves us with a gap of \$280,000 between what we as a Meeting have raised over many years and the true cost of building this Meetinghouse in Fort Myers. Helen and I will provide enough money to meet those costs. But the future of the Meeting will be better ensured by commitments from other Friends, as well. If you share the dream of a Meetinghouse, and if you are able to help, we would appreciate your donations.

As a scientist and an atheist, I have struggled with whether I had a place in a spiritual community. I found acceptance, love and growth in the Fort Myers Meeting. I hope our Meeting will be able to help other seekers long into the future. Although a building is no guarantee that our Meeting will flourish, Helen and I believe a physical presence on the campus of the Unitarian Universalists will help.

While our long, Quaker tradition has been to donate anonymously, our treasurer, Paul, has asked me to write this letter so that all members and attenders of our Meeting will understand the nature of our gift, my need to move forward in a timely manner, and my wish for you all.

*Yours in the light,
Jim Koopman
January 5, 2024*

In addition to this generous gift, we will also be receiving a donation from Donna Anderton's estate totaling about \$60,000. The lawyers handling Donna's have assured us that a partial distribution of \$30,000 to \$40,000 will be made to us as soon as possible.

❖ Minute 2024-MM-01: Friends agreed that Donna's gift be assigned to the Meetinghouse Fund rather than the General Fund.

These donations, plus a pledge to furnish the kitchen, another for audiovisual equipment, \$11,000 in pledges last month and the \$4000 handicap access grant from Friends General Conference leaves \$80,000 in our General Fund that we can continue to use to contribute to good causes.

The Meeting thanked Jim and Helen for helping to make the new Meetinghouse a reality.

Friend Paul then continued with the Treasurer's report for December.

FMMM Funds Report 12/31/2023

General Funds	
Checking	7,056
Gen Fund Savings	42,341
Gen Fund Fr Fiduciary	31,497
Total General Fund	80,894
Meeting House Funds	
Savings	465,905
MH Funds Fr Fiduciary	14,657
Total Meeting House Funds	480,562
FMMM Total Funds	561,456

December 2023 Income vs Expenses	
December Income	\$ 12,610
December Expenses	\$ 551*
* \$500 AFSC aid, Storage, Web	

This month, Paul will prepare annual giving reports for everyone who has donated to the Meeting for their taxes and submit our Florida Nonprofit report. If there are any questions, please call or email. Paul will begin writing checks to charitable organizations this month.

Report from Ministry & Counsel Committee:

Clerk Nancy Murvine reported that she will serve as the clerk of the M&C Committee for 2024. The Committee presented the State of the Society Report for Friends' consideration:

Each year brings challenges as we age as a community. This year saw many in our small Meeting face health problems and emotional concerns that required difficult decisions and lifestyle changes. We lost two members, John Battin and Tom Jacobs, and watched our two young families and one long-time member move out of the area. In the midst of all of these worldly matters, finding the divine within the Meeting becomes more precious. As one member noted, Meeting for worship "restores my soul." Another shared that "examples of generosity and kindness and the sharing, teaching,

and leading that exemplifies the spoken ministry contribute to my sense that spirit is moving through The Fort Myers Religious Society of Friends.”

Our place for in-person worship remains the Frechette’s outdoor chickee hut. We give thanks to them for opening this welcoming and glorious space where everyone who visits can easily connect with all of God’s creations—from the plants Suzanne has tended to the creatures they attract. Still, we continue to move toward a permanent home, and we are grateful for the grant from Friends’ General Conference to contribute to handicapped parking at the new site.

A sense of care and healing within our Meeting community is also necessary beyond First Day Meetings for Worship. In our Meeting, people genuinely care for each other, and there’s always someone ready and willing to help out when needed. We have shown support to each other through simple acts of staying in touch with calls, cards and emails. We have offered assistance through clearness committees as well as personal moments as caring listeners/Friends. After the crisis in the Middle East began, we held a discussion specifically about Gaza, where, in the safe space created by community, divergent views were heard with compassion and held with respect. We began an evening discussion group which is now on hiatus, but we feel we must do more to find ways for meaningful interactions, deeper connections, and lighthearted fun to assure a thriving community spirit.

We also continue to put our Quaker values into action in the greater community. We actively supported the Lee County LIFE organization’s work to address the lack of decent affordable housing. We shared our belief in our peace testimony at a booth at a Peace Day Festival in downtown Fort Myers. We made an additional contribution to Doctors Without Borders to help the victims of war in Gaza.

“The Life of the Meeting is like a strong river...always moving and changing, but constant.” In this river, the most challenging movement to navigate is the shift to hybrid worship made three years ago. At times the two groups (in-person and Zoom) seem to be separated into two streams. The benefits of staying connected to those who cannot physically be with us for worship makes Zoom a must. However, the informal gatherings before worship, the social potluck time, or the opportunities to sing together after Meeting have yet to be successfully blended between the two groups. We need to continue to look for ways to bring the two streams together.

The changing flow of the river has brought joy as well. We have welcomed new visitors and attenders, and we appreciate the gifts and talents that they bring. Their insights gained from life experience and study and awakenings can enlighten our community. This year, for the first time in a few years, we have started a new Spiritual

Formation group because the interest in exploring the journey is alive among us. Perhaps the greatest change is yet to come when our new Meetinghouse is a reality.

Although the Meetinghouse Committee has witnessed delays and unforeseen challenges, we can envision a space that will allow for lots more activities - social, spiritual, and justice-focused - as well as ways of partnering with other organizations to connect us more deeply to each other and to the larger community around us.

Finally, in this strong river that is the life of the Meeting, the “constant” was, is, and will be our faith and the actions of our beliefs.

Discussion:

- Obviously this report was written before today’s news about the funding of the new Meetinghouse. It deepens my awareness that this Meeting is an amazing group that see themselves as something larger than their own individual selves.
- The report is beautifully written. Thank you.

❖ Minute 2024-MM-01: Friends approved the State of the Meeting report.

Our acceptance of the report means we will forward it to SEYM where it will become part of the Annual Gathering document.

Report from Religious Education Committee

Clerk Denise Runyon shared the following:

The Religious Education Committee has been re-activated and held its first meeting on January 4, 2024. Deb White, Jeannette Botha, Susan Oehl, Sheilana Massey, and Denise Runyon were present.

The committee decided to move forward with plans for a monthly Worship Sharing on the fourth First Day of the month after Meeting for Worship in February, March and April. The Worship Sharing will be held in-person at the Chickee Hut and on Zoom.

The focus of the Worship Sharing is the Pendle Hill pamphlet 382, “Holding One Another in the Light” by Marcelle Martin. Pamphlets will be ordered by the RE Committee to share with those participating. It is also available for personal purchase on the Pendle Hill website:

<https://pendlehill.org/product/holding-one-another-light/>

Those participating are encouraged to read the pamphlet in advance. Queries will be offered at the Worship Sharing. This Worship Sharing will be led by Denise Runyon with the support of the RE committee members.

Friend Denise has agreed to serve as Clerk of the revived RE committee.

Peace & Social Concerns Committee

No report. Friend Carolyn Stanley continues as Clerk.

Technology Committee

Friend Pat Iyer has volunteered to serve as Clerk.

Nominating Committee

Friend Deb White will continue as Clerk.

The meeting closed in silence.

Respectfully Submitted,
Helen Fox
Recording Clerk

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

FMMM,
Denise Runyon
125 Pinebrook Dr,
Fort Myers, FL 33907

Winter Interim Business Meeting

Saturday, January 20, 2024

Quakers of Orlando Meetinghouse
316 E. Marks St., Orlando, Florida

In person and online

Join us in person or online at Orlando Friends Meetinghouse on Saturday, January 20th for Winter Interim Business Meeting (WIBM). We will have committee meetings and a Meeting Forum in the morning, and business meeting in the afternoon. All are welcome.

Schedule

8:30 • Fellowship, coffee & donuts

9:00 am • Opening Worship

9:30 am • Committee meetings

11:00 am • Meeting Forum

12noon • Lunch provided by Orlando Friends

Winter Executive Committee

You are also welcome to attend Winter Executive Committee on Friday, January 19th. We will have fellowship at 6:30 pm, followed by the Executive Committee Meeting at 7 pm. This meeting will also be hybrid.

Registration is required for both in-person and online attendance. See <http://seymquakers.org>.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting
54th Annual Michener Lecture
Save the date: 21 First Month 2024

Let It Burn: A Call for Attention to the Fires of Our Faith

Join SEYM Friends at the Orlando Meetinghouse for the 54th Annual Dwight & Ardis Michener Lecture given by **Ann Jerome** and sponsored by the SEYM Worship & Ministry Committee.

Some say these are the end times for the Religious Society of Friends; others see a wealth of germinal openings in the challenges among and around us. Meanwhile, the world's urgent needs require a steadfast spiritual foundation for our response. What kindling and cordwood are available for us today as we tend the fires of our faith?



Come to Orlando Meetinghouse, 316 Marks Street, Orlando, for Meeting for Worship at 9:30 a.m. and a light luncheon at 11:30 a.m. The lecture and seminars begin at 1:00 p.m. More information can be found on the SEYM website. <http://seymquakers.org>

*"Injustice anywhere is a
threat to justice everywhere."*

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

SEYM Needs YOU!

SEYM nominating committee encourage Friends at our monthly meeting/worship group to become spiritually enriched by serving in the Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

Friends who see gifts - that is talents, skills, and qualities - in others, please recommend them to the SEYM Nominating Committee. SEYM welcomes new contributors in service to your Yearly Meeting.

You, too, may feel "a moving of the Spirit," leading you to become more involved in the wider Quaker community. Committee membership is open to all members and regular attenders of SEYM monthly meetings and worship groups.

The Nominating Committee would like to thank all of you who have come forward to serve our Yearly Meeting. If you are newly led to serve, we await you.

Contact a Nominating Committee member to explore your interest or recommend a Friend you believe can serve the Yearly Meeting.

SEYM Nominating Committee members: [Brian Olson](#), [Beverly Ward](#), [Ed Lesnick](#), and [Shawna Doran](#).

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR FRIENDS

- <https://pendlehill.org>Pendle Hill, Quaker Retreat and Resource Center
- <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.comQuakerSpeak: A Quaker YouTube Channel
- www.quakerhouse.org.....Quaker House, Fayetteville
- www.quakervoluntaryservice.orgQuaker Voluntary Service

MEETING CALENDAR		
Each First Day	Meeting for Worship in a hybrid format: in person at Peace Acre or via Zoom. An informal conversation time begins at 10:00 am.	10:30 a.m.
First First Day of each month	Potluck lunch at Peace Acre (Chickee Hut).	Upon rise of worship
Each Wednesday	Mid-week Meeting for Worship at Peace Acre. This is in person only.	10:30 a.m.
1/20/24	SEYM Winter Interim Business Meeting, Orlando Meeting House and via Zoom	8:30 a.m.
1/21/24	SEYM 2024 Michener Lecture Hybrid format (Orlando and Zoom)	1:00 p.m.