



# 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](mailto:ftmyers.quakers@gmail.com)

Meeting Mailing Address: 138 Pinebrook Dr.

Fort Myers FL 33907

Telephone: (239) 318-0538 ❖ Website:

[fortmyersquakers.org](http://fortmyersquakers.org)

E-mail: [ftmyers.quakers@gmail.com](mailto:ftmyers.quakers@gmail.com)

Newsletter Editor: Deb White: [debwhitenfl@gmail.com](mailto:debwhitenfl@gmail.com)

## SEYM Queries & Advices

### First Section:

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

### 2nd Month: Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business

#### Queries:

- *Are meetings for business held in the spirit of meetings for worship?*
- *In decision-making, do we promote a spirit of love, understanding, and patience as we seek unity on an appropriate course of action?*
- *Do we keep our remarks simple and speak only as the Spirit leads?*
- *Are we able to unite in good grace with the sense of the meeting when our personal desires tend in another direction?*
- *Do we maintain respect for others, however strongly our opinions may differ? Are meetings for business seen as positive opportunities for testing and practicing our spiritual life?*

### Advices:

- *As members, attend the business meetings and extend our support to the meeting's affairs so that the burden will not rest upon a few.*
- *In meetings for business and in all duties connected with them, seek the leadings of the Light.*
- *Avoid undue persistence. As we release our attachment to our ideas, the Light may reveal solutions none of us has considered.*
- *Be willing to admit the possibility of being in error.*
- *Remember that the foundation of a lasting decision lies in the search for unity—that is, a corporate seeking of the Light in an atmosphere of love, trust, and mutual forbearance.*
- *Attendees are warmly invited to attend and participate in meeting for worship with a concern for business.*
- *Have a sense of when to continue to labor on or to lay aside an issue.*



## **Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business 2nd Month 11, 2023**

The Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met for Business at noon on the 2nd month 11th day in hybrid form, online and at Peace Acre in Buckingham, with 17 Friends present.

The Meeting opened with a period of silent centering. Richard Frechette, Clerk, read Queries & Advices from SEYM's Faith & Practice, 2<sup>nd</sup> Month on Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business:

- In decision-making, do we promote a spirit of love, understanding, and patience as we seek unity on an appropriate course of action?

- Do we keep our remarks simple and speak only as the Spirit leads?
- Do we maintain respect for others, however strongly our opinions may differ?

### Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Paul Davis reported that he has sent checks to all the charities and Quaker Organizations for which we have budgeted. While some still have not cashed their checks, those that did in January are listed in the report. Even though our cash flow for January was negative, this situation was planned for. By giving our pledges early in our fiscal year, we better support those who need and use our gifts. Since we receive donations throughout the year, our General Fund savings will increase once again.

The savings we have invested via Friends Fiduciary has been doing well because the stock market is currently high. Those investments align with Quaker values.

Our Corporate report for 2024 was filed with the State of Florida.

### FMMM Funds Report 1/31/2024

#### General Funds

Checking	6,509
Gen Fund Savings	38,349
Gen Fund Fr Fiduciary	32,161

**Total General Fund 77,019**

#### Meeting House Funds

Savings	468,001
MH Funds Fr Fiduciary	14,965

**Total Meeting House Funds 482,966**

**FMMM Total Funds 559,985**

#### January 2024 Income vs Expenses

**January Income \$ 2,385**

**January Expenses \$ 6,011\***

- \* \$161 Storage,
- \* \$1,080 Morris DePew-Engineers
- \* \$600 AFSC, \$100 Cultivate Abundance, \$500 Harry Chapin Food Bank, \$200 ECHO,
- \* \$1,000 LIFE, \$1,200 FGC, \$300 Quaker House, \$600 FCNL, \$70 Corporate Fee

## **Peace & Social Concerns Committee**

Clerk Carolyn Stanley shared the following report:

The Peace and Social Concerns Committee met on Monday, January 29.

After listening to the FMMM community, we have decided to focus the first part of 2024 on working on issues shared with other local organizations. After the new Meeting House is finished, we hope to share our belief in peace and nonviolence more widely through speakers and workshops.

We welcomed Lynn Charlton to the Peace and Social Concerns Committee and shared with her our past involvement with organizations in Immokalee. Lynn volunteered to connect with these organizations and try to arrange a visit. It's been a while since we've had a connection with these organizations.

The committee heard reports on the LIFE organization's work on Affordable Housing and Mental Health Issues from Carolyn, Stanley, Chris McBride, and Karin Gelotte. At the most recent Fort Myers City Council meeting, the recommendation was to use some of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund money to include payments for back rent, rental deposits, moving costs and utility bills so that residents can gain more relief from having to spend more than 30% of their income on rent. Representatives from LIFE were there to support this proposal and it was approved with a vote of 7 -1. Our representatives on the Mental Health Committee shared how immense the problem is and what a challenge it will be to narrow the topic down to one specific problem that is solvable locally. The Mental Health Research Committee met on Saturday at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fort Myers. They will begin the challenge of sorting through what they have learned at the interviews with staff at Salus Care, Lee County, and Lee Health and a Retired DCF Nurse.

Friend Karen, our representative to LIFE's Mental Health Research Committee, shared the latest news: The committee met, and, as Friend Carolyn said, there is an overwhelming list of needs. So far, we have pared the list down to five or six issues that are local enough that we might have an impact. For example, in Florida we have the Baker Law, where people threatening to kill themselves or harm others can be taken to a care facility. However, to do that, they are handcuffed and taken in a police car, which is humiliating and often unnecessary. Also, the

Baker Law requires that patients be discharged after 72 hours. The group thought the time should be extended to 30 days, so patients would have a chance to be put on the correct medication and be more likely to return for follow up visits – currently, only 25% do so.

Friend Carolyn continued with the PSC report, explaining that the committee had also discussed a letter Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fort Myers sent to Florida government officials about LGBTQ issues, namely, Florida State Bills HB 599 and Senate Bill 1382. The PSC committee asks if the Meeting would like to sign a similar letter, with or without changes, or if we want to leave it up to individuals to write their own letters. The UU's have done both: sent it as a Board and urged members to write their own letters.

Friend Carolyn read the introduction to the letter from UU Board member Marge Gonzales, who taught at a Quaker school for many years.

*Dear Friends,*

*We, the Board of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fort Myers, as individuals and leaders, have sent the attached message of concern to state legislators and state senators from Lee County. We are concerned that HB 599/SB1382 places restrictions on rights of LGBTQ+ members of our community and on the rights of tax-exempt entities who welcome them.*

*We hope you will join us in expressing concern.*

*Marge Gonzalez for the Board of UUCFM*

Friend Carolyn then read a sample letter to Florida Senators and Representatives that the UU's had prepared for members of their congregation on letter-writing day:

*To our representatives in the House in Tallahassee*

*As a leader (or member) of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fort Myers, we are writing concerning the bill HB 599/SB1382.*

*We notice that this bill “prohibits adverse personnel action on bases of deeply held religious or biology-based beliefs.” However further down in the bill it states “It is an unlawful employment practice for a nonprofit organization or an employer who receives funding from the state to require as a condition of employment, any training instruction, or other activity on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For purposes of this subsection the term ‘nonprofit organization’ means any organization that is exempt from taxation.*

*We are members of a religious organization, and one of our most deeply held beliefs is that every human being has worth and dignity. Being welcoming to LGBTQ+ members of the community is part of our mission. By affirming the worth and dignity of all, we aim to accept people according to the gender by which they identify themselves, which includes using their preferred pronouns. Certainly we would expect our employees to understand that this is part of our deeply held beliefs and would feel it would be an unlawful infringement of our rights to prohibit our educating them on this aspect of our belief system.*

*For the state to make contrary requirements of us is a violation of the religious freedom on which our country was founded. While we are distressed by the bill’s curtailment of the rights of LBGTO citizens, we feel that at the very least the bill should be amended to acknowledge that there are many religious organizations like ours who subscribe to Jesus’s admonition to “love thy neighbor,” and that we are all neighbors.*

*Sincerely,*

- ❖ **Minute 2024-MM-01:** Friends support sending a corporate letter to our Florida Senators and Representatives regarding LGBTQ similar to the one sent by the UUCFM. We authorize Friends Carolyn, Helen and Richard to meet to incorporate some of the changes discussed and to send the letter without it needing to return to Friends for a second approval.

### **Religious Education Committee**

Friend Denise Runyon will lead a worship sharing on 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of Feb/Mar/Apr focused on the Pendle Hill pamphlet,  *Holding Each Other in the Light*.

### **Meetinghouse Committee**

Tommy Cooke and his engineer, Bob Case, have given us verbal assurance that they will take on our project. After Jeff and Jack (architect and engineer) finish up their work their drawings will be handed over to Tommy and Bob. Other loose ends include hiring an environmental engineer (a new requirement) and getting final approval for the development order from the County. This week, the Meetinghouse Committee will meet on site with four Unitarian leaders: Bill Petrarca, Rev. Sue Gabrielson, Jennifer Grant (next year's President), Pati Maier (Treasurer), and Dorothy Van Howe (VP Operations) to update them on our progress.

### **Other Business**

Friends agreed to try singing before rather than after worship every third Sunday, with the understanding that the singing would end at least 5 minutes before the 10:30 worship time.

We closed in silent worship at 1PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Helen Fox, Recording Clerk

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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



## **SEYM Gathering & Annual Sessions** **March 27 – 31, 2024**

Dayspring Conference Center, Parrish, Florida

Renew your spirit! Enjoy fellowship and laughter, and deepen your connections to f/Friends and to Spirit at the SEYM Yearly Meeting Gathering. Don't miss this opportunity to be in community with about 100 Friends from around our region and the wider Quaker world.



Our theme this year is  
**The Friends We Are Becoming**  
*embracing our longings & leadings*

Our Program Schedule includes the Walton retreats and lecture, workshops, worship sharing, a great Youth Program, intergenerational community nights, plenary sessions, and opportunities to get out in nature.

**Virtual Registration is now open.** Online sessions include worship sharing, plenary sessions, and the Walton Lecture.

**Don't let lack of funds keep you away! Registration is pay-as-led.**

**For all info & registration,**

<https://seymquakers.org/event/yearly-meeting-gathering-2024/#details>



## The Walton Lecture & Retreats

will be presented by

**Hilary Burgin**



**Retreat #1: Truth and Telling Our Stories** *Thursday, March 28, 10 am.* Each of us has a Truth to tell about our relationship with the Divine and the path we are each (and collectively) on.

**Retreat #2: Living Loudly** *Friday, March 29, 10 am.* What do Friends have to offer one another and the wider community today? How are we testifying to our faith in our everyday lives?

**Walton Lecture: Longing at Every Age** *Saturday, March 30, 7 pm.* Hilary will speak out of the worship, encouraging Friends to engage with our Longings.

## More Gathering Highlights

Besides the Walton Lecture and Retreats and our Yearly Meeting sessions, we'll be having a Talent Show and Campfire on Thursday night, All Ages Community Night on Friday (with games, music, and dancing), early worship in the outdoor chapel, singing, nature hikes, worship sharing. The All Age Hangout and more affinity groups wrap up the evening programs.



## Workshops include:

Affinity Groups  
AFSC-Miami: Know Your Rights

Supporting Trans People  
You are called to feed the hungry but have YOU eaten lately? Extended Worship & Sharing  
Individual Spiritual Discernment

The Power of Enough (Right Sharing of World Resources)  
Personal Spiritual Narratives  
FCNL  
Where Cultural Differences & Racism Intersect  
The Friends We Are Becoming: Stories of Transformation  
Seeking Peace in Your Community  
A Friendly Guide to Perma[nent] Culture



## The Youth Program

Young people have a great time being together! We'll have workshops, games, nature walks, the high ropes course (ages 11+), an on-site service project, swimming, and art. PLUS intergenerational activities: a workshop, family canoeing, All Ages Community Night, and the Talent Show.

Don't let lack of funds keep you away! Registration fees & meals for Youth attending with their families are provided free of charge, and registration is on a pay-as-led basis.



## Welcome to Dayspring!

Dayspring Camp & Conference Center is located on the Manatee River, between Sarasota and St. Petersburg. Its many different native ecosystems — with forests, mangroves, and wetlands — provide a very peaceful

setting. The camp has nature trails and other opportunities to be outdoors. Visit their website to learn more.

## Lodging, Commuting, Hotels

Dayspring lodging offers both semi-private and private accommodations in cabins, houses, and dorms. Cabins and houses have common areas including

living areas and convenience kitchens. Dorms are closest to the dining hall and lounge.

Commuting: the camp is 30 minutes from St. Pete and Sarasota --- an easy drive!

Hotel: SEYM has reserved a block of 10 rooms at the Hampton Inn, Ellenton (just 7 minutes from the camp), at a discount rate of \$299/night plus tax.

The rate is the same whether for 1 or 2 adults, with or without children. This may be a good option if you prefer more privacy, or if you have a roommate and would prefer a larger room with a desk. To get the SEYM discount, reservations must be made by March 6 using our unique link.

See 'All the Details' on the SEYM's Gathering page.

<https://seymquakers.org/event/yearly-meeting-gathering-2024/#details>

*Recently Clerk Richard Frechette received this email from a representative of the Arthur Morgan School, a Quaker school in western North Carolina. If you are able to help or know of some place these young people might stay a group, please contact Richard.*

Thanks for being willing to think about where a group of [Arthur Morgan School](#) students might stay in Fort Myers during our extended field trip, studying coastal ecology in Florida. We're a group of nine children between the ages of 12 and 15 and four adult chaperones and are hoping to be in the Fort Myers area between March 8 and 10 or March 9 and 11. Any help you can offer would be so very much appreciated.

Thank you again.

Rebecca

Rebecca Zeldin

Co-Clerk, Academic Coordinator, and Teacher

Arthur Morgan School

*a living learning community for grades 7-9*

## USEFUL WEBSITES FOR FRIENDS

<a href="https://pendlehill.org">https://pendlehill.org</a> .....	Pendle Hill, Quaker Retreat and Resource Center
<a href="http://seymquakers.org">http://seymquakers.org</a> .....	Southeastern Yearly Meeting
<a href="http://www.fcni.org">www.fcni.org</a> .....	Friends Committee for National Legislation
<a href="http://www.fgcquaker.org">www.fgcquaker.org</a> .....	Friends General Conference
<a href="http://www.afsc.org">www.afsc.org</a> .....	American Friends Service Committee
<a href="http://fwcc.world">http://fwcc.world</a> .....	Friends World Committee on Consultation
<a href="http://www.quakerspeak.com">www.quakerspeak.com</a> .....	QuakerSpeak: A Quaker YouTube Channel
<a href="http://www.quakerhouse.org">www.quakerhouse.org</a> .....	Quaker House, Fayetteville
<a href="http://www.quakervoluntaryservice.org">www.quakervoluntaryservice.org</a> .....	Quaker Voluntary Service

<b>MEETING CALENDAR</b>		
<b>Each First Day</b>	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.
<b>First First Day of each month</b>	Potluck lunch at Peace Acre (Chickee Hut).	Upon rise of worship
<b>Each Wednesday</b>	Mid-week Meeting for Worship at Peace Acre. This is in-person only.	10:30 a.m.
<b>2/18/24</b>	Singing before worship.	10:00 a.m.
<b>2/25/24</b>	Religious Education Worship Sharing: <i>Holding One Another in the Light – Marcelle Martin PHP #382</i>	following worship

*Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."*

*– Martin Luther King, 1968*

**Friends Meeting of Fort Myers  
Religious Society of Friends  
c/o Richard Frechette  
138 Pinebrook Dr.  
Fort Myers, FL 33907-5988  
Address Correction Requested**