



# 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:

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)

## SEYM Queries & Advices

### Third Section:

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

## 7. Self-Discipline & Responsibility

### Queries:

- *Do we attend meeting for worship regularly and punctually?*
- *Do we participate in meeting for worship with a concern for business and support it financially and with personal service according to our resources and abilities?*
- *Are we conscientious in fulfilling all obligations of state and society that are not contrary to our religious convictions?*
- *Are we punctual in keeping promises, just in payment of debts, and honorable in all our dealings?*

## Meeting Directory Available

**A pdf file of the Ft. Myers Quaker Meeting Directory is available to our Meeting family.**

**Ask Richard Frechette ([Rich.Frechette@gmail.com](mailto:Rich.Frechette@gmail.com)) to e-mail you a copy. Or, if you are unable to open up or print down a pdf file, ask Richard to make a paper copy for you.**

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

- *Do we choose recreations that strengthen our physical, mental, and spiritual life, avoiding those that may hinder others, our Earth, and ourselves?*
- *Do we act responsibly concerning substances and behaviors that can become addictive.*

### Advices:

- *Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in our hearts, which are the leadings of God.*
- *Bring the whole of our life under the healing and ordering of the Holy Spirit, remembering that there is no time but this present.*
- *When tempted to do wrong or to despair, call upon God with an open heart, confessing our weaknesses and our needs.*
- *Be mindful at all times of our connection with the Divine and others—avoid substances, behaviors, and activities which diminish this connection.*
- *Be aware of the ill effects of mind-altering or habit-forming drugs, intoxicants, gambling, and other detrimental practices.*
- *Choose recreations that increase our vitality, self awareness, and peace of mind and strengthen our will to create what is good.*
- *Make thoughtful use of our time.*
- *Guard ourselves and our children in our choice of print, electronic media, and other entertainments. Avoid those that promote violence and disrespect for human beings.*
- *Friends, strive to be courteous and responsible while driving.*

**Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends  
Minutes of 7th Month 14, 2024**

The Fort Myers Monthly Meeting with Attention to Business met in hybrid format on the seventh month, fourteenth day, 2024, with 17 F/friends present. We opened in silent worship.

Clerk Richard Frechette read Queries from SEYM on Self-Discipline & Responsibility:

- Do we attend Meeting for Worship regularly and punctually?
- Are we punctual in keeping promises, just in payment of debts, and honorable in all our dealings?
- Do we act responsibly concerning substances and behaviors that can become addictive?

**Treasurer’s Report:**

Treasurer Paul Davis noted that he reports expenses when checks are cashed. Expenses in June included the UU’s lawyer’s work on the title and engineering for the new Meetinghouse. This month, SEYM cashed our second half of the year estimated assessment. Their fiscal year runs from July until June, while ours runs from January until December, which is why we must estimate our assessment. We recently received SEYM’s 2024-25 assessments and noticed that the Fort Myers Monthly Meeting’s contribution has risen. The Finance committee will meet to consider the increase and make recommendations to the Meeting.

<b>FMMM Funds Report for 6/30/2024</b>		<b>June 2024 Income vs Expenses</b>	
<b>General Funds</b>		<b>June Income</b>	<b>\$2,250</b>
Checking	4,638	<b>June Expenses</b>	<b>\$7,875</b>
Gen Fund Savings	38,389	* Expenses	
Gen Fund Fr Fiduciary	33,842	* \$665 Freident & Ingrid, PA	
<b>Total General Fund</b>	<b>76,869</b>	* \$3,910 Morris DePew	
<b>Meeting House Funds</b>		* \$ 3,300 SEYM	
Savings	475,391		
MH Funds Fr Fiduciary	15,748		
<b>Total Meeting House Funds</b>	<b>491,139</b>		
<b>FMMM Total Funds</b>	<b>568,008</b>		

Clerk Richard reported that the Meeting has received a notification that we are identified as a potential recipient of 2.5% of the estate of Melady Kehm, a former attender of our Meeting who moved out-of-state several years ago and who recently passed away. We do not yet know the actual amount. Friends were asked if they would be amenable to earmarking any such funds to the Meetinghouse Fund. Friends agreed that we would make this decision when we know the amount of the gift, and meanwhile, not to earmark it for General Operations.

### **Report of Ministry & Counsel Committee:**

Clerk Nancy Murvine reported that the Ministry and Counsel Committee has been discussing the challenges of our aging community and where the committee could offer active support and counsel in areas of psychological, physical, emotional, material, and emergent needs.

As in the past, M&C will submit articles to the newsletter that remind our community of the ways in which the Committee has been and will continue to be a help in both the spiritual and earthly health of our community.

This month's newsletter will outline the kinds of financial support M&C can offer. We urge members and attenders to read these articles and to be eyes and ears in our community, sending concerns about a member or attender in need to M&C. Everything we do is done in confidence.

### **Report of Peace & Social Concerns Committee:**

Clerk Carolyn Stanley reported that there was nothing from the committee for formal consideration by the Meeting.

### **Report of Meetinghouse Committee:**

Clerk Helen Fox reported that our prospective builder, Tommy Lee Cook, recently communicated that he is almost finished costing out the design for the building. The committee will set up a meeting with him and his engineer when that work is complete. We do not yet have a contract with Cook and hope to sign one after the committee approves the final design. The Development Order is still in process at the County.

### **Ad Hoc Committee regarding a Potential Friends School on the UU/Friends Meetinghouse site:**

On June 9 at Meeting for Worship, Friend Denise shared information to introduce this project for thoughtful consideration and asked Friends the following question for reflection: *Would Friends commit to a joint undertaking with the Unitarian Universalists to establish a Friends School under the guidance of the FMMM?* The report and discussion today are a continuation of that reflection.

The backstory: Earlier this year, the UU Minister, Rev. Sue Gabrielson, reached out to Friends to ask if we would be interested in joining an effort to set up a Friends School on the UU campus. Our involvement in the new school would be fairly minimal: we might supply several Board members, give advice on curriculum and Quaker practices, provide oversight, and contribute

financially. Several FMMM Friends were excited about this request and formed an on-the-spot Ad Hoc Committee to look into this possibility.

The Southeast Yearly Meeting (SEYM) Call Committee has also been discussing establishing a Friends School in Florida. On June 19, 2024 the FMMM Ad Hoc Committee met with the Call Committee, and Suzanne and Denise also met with the UU committee, to discuss moving forward with establishing a Friends School on the UU campus in Fort Myers. Their sense was that the way has opened by Divine Providence for FMMM to join with the UU to support and contribute to this effort.

Their thinking, in part, is that many resources are already in place on the UU site such as a physical facility with classrooms up to code for a school; the UU minister, Rev. Sue Gabrielson, has experience as a former Head of School at the Monteverde Friends School in Costa Rica; and the property borders on the Six Mile Cypress Slough which would offer many opportunities for outdoor education.

Additionally, a Friends School could provide outreach to families who might become interested in our Meeting and visit our new Meeting House. Rev. Sue Gabrielson has mentioned that the Meeting House could be the site for the morning Meeting to start each day at the school.

The SEYM Call Committee, which our Ad Hoc committee has been attending, has brought in wider Friends resources to their discussions. They have met with Drew Smith, Executive Director of the Friends Council on Education, a national resource for Friends Schools, and Karen Carney, Head of School for the Chicago Friends School, who shared her experiences and wisdom about developing a Friends School. Both resources have provided a wealth of information and support to help us learn how to start a Friends School.

Meanwhile, the UU Committee is moving forward with organizing the structure needed to establish a private school in Florida. Bill Petrarca, VP of Operations for the Unitarians, has recently drafted a mission statement and strategic plan for the Watershed Friends School (possible name.) The concept is a “micro school,” starting with 12 to 15 Kindergarteners and growing one grade per year, perhaps through grades 2 or 3. The UU’s currently have a contract with a local daycare, which will use 2 of their 7 empty classrooms for pre K this year. Next year, when the Quaker school might open, these children would be ready for kindergarten.

## **Discussion**

- Friends education is extraordinary. Quakers offer real science, real history, and how to live in society. They offer nonviolent solutions to conflict, participatory decision-making, and whole child development. Children learn to converse with adults as equals. The vibe at these schools is clearly different from the competitive, rules-based atmosphere that permeates most education.
- Florida passed a law a year ago expanding the school voucher system; it is no longer being means tested, but rather “first come first served.” Vouchers are supposed to be for children trapped in failing schools, but in reality, wealthy families are taking advantage of them. There’s a finite budget for schools in the state of Florida, and the

public schools have always been underfunded. So in effect the vouchers used for a Friends School would be further undermining the public school system. Furthermore, if we want economic diversity among the students, the poorer students would likely be crowded out by the families with means who get ahead of them in line for financial support.

- Private schools do not need to provide for students with disabilities; they can pick and choose who they educate. These schools do not deal with disadvantaged people as their primary motive. This puts a heavier burden on the underfunded public school system, and also behooves us to ask who our audience is.
- Friends Schools can be expensive; you need an extraordinary Head of School as well as a financial administrator who can keep the school solvent. Both of these positions rightfully command high salaries. Even though we would have no (or fewer) expenses for buildings, classrooms, and such, there are teachers' and staff salaries, supplies, insurance, and other administrative costs. The vouchers would presumably cover part of these. But we need to understand the financial plan before committing our resources, which right now are mainly going toward a new Meetinghouse.
- Other groups such as the Bahai's are considering opening micro schools with the "free money" now available from the state of Florida. Would we have a market? Who is our primary audience?
- Achieving racial diversity in the state of Florida is very difficult. Because of the history of race relations in this state, and especially in Fort Myers, there is a strong sense of distrust of white people among African Americans. If we want this school to be diverse it could be a real challenge. (Others disagreed, saying that in their experience, whites and blacks, especially in lower middleclass communities here, get along just fine).
- If we teach students to be seen and heard and then the school fails, would we be thrusting them back into a public school system that does not appreciate these qualities?

We recognize that at present there is not unity within the Meeting about going forward and that before we make a decision, we need more information and at least one threshing session, which can be done over zoom. The session would happen after the other committees (SEYM Call Committee and UUs) have met again and have more information for us. We also agreed with the idea of expanding the current Ad Hoc Committee. Friends willing to join that effort are: Brad Smith, Vicki Scott, and Chris Ruhnke. Brad volunteered to call the former head of the George School to find out what questions we should be asking. An update will be provided at the next Meeting for Business.

There being no other business, the Meeting closed in worship.

Respectfully submitted,  
Helen Fox, Recording Clerk

## *Need Financial support?*

### *FMMM Offers Help to Members and Attenders*

Periodically, the newsletter has published articles provided by Ministry and Counsel about the roles of M&C in the spiritual/religious life of the community (Ministry) and in earthly lives of our members and attenders (Counsel). The most recent article was about the use of clearness committees to be a support during times of difficult transitions or concerns. What many may not know is that the committee also offers monetary support to those in need. In addition to funding travel to yearly meetings, M&C has offered financial assistance for specific needs. Through the Quaker discernment process and with creative solutions when needed, M&C has offered help with requests such as:

- Emergency rent/mortgage payments
- Replacement of a lost cell phone and a plan that was within budget
- Food, clothing, and essentials
- House repairs (AC maintenance and/or replacement)
- Medical expenses and equipment (such as a walker)

As our community ages, we are seeing new needs. Transportation is one. Driving oneself is often not possible. Health issues may require help getting to and from appointments or the need for food service deliveries.

What we are asking is that we all take responsibility for making our own or others' needs known to M&C. Remember, this is ***always confidential***. To make a request, simply call Nancy Murvine, clerk, or others on Ministry & Counsel. Other members of the committee are Mara Fallon, Helen Fox, Karin Gelotte, and Deb White. (Contact information is available in the Meeting directory—available from Presiding Clerk, Richard Frechette.)

## ***A Victory from L.I.F.E. (Lee Interfaith For Empowerment)***

On June 17, Fort Myers City Council was “seeing red” as 30+ LIFE members from at least 9 congregations showed up to support affordable housing! We were there to speak to support Marcia Davis, from the Fort Myers Housing Authority, who was asking the city council to approve \$1.15 million from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to begin funding for the Horizons development. The plan is to relocate residents temporarily, take down 170 aging and storm-damaged units, and replace them with 230 new units, as well as neighborhood amenities. Volunteer speakers Dotty Morrison and Carolyn Stanley reminded City Council that their recently formed local Affordable Housing Trust Fund currently has over \$4 million—just sitting there doing nothing. Helping developers willing to build affordable housing is exactly what the trust fund is meant to do. Now in about two years 170 residents will be able to move back into new upgraded, more storm resistant apartments and 60 new residents in Fort Myers will be able to live in an affordable apartment and not be homeless or have to pay more than 50% of their income on housing.



THANK YOU to all who attended and to all who prayed that this issue would go forward.

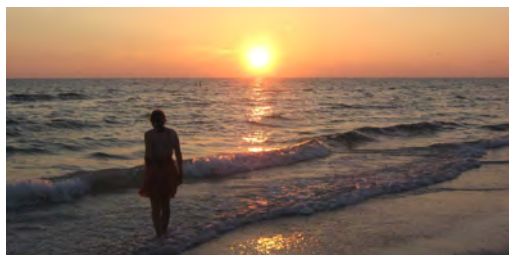
LIFE for Justice!

Carolyn Stanley, Quaker representative and  
Dotty Morrison, Leader of the LIFE Affordable Housing Committee



# From SEYM Worship & Ministry

## Wading in the Water: Listening, Opening, & Walking Faithfully



The waves of our spiritual journeys come in all sizes, from the gentle lapping of a lake to breaking ocean surf. Each wave invites us into new revelation, deeper listening, seeing with new eyes, walking with faith despite the pulls of the surrounding culture. In these three online sessions, we will invite Friends into spacious times of exploration, sharing, and deepening our Quaker faith.

Each session stands on its own; The final session is coming up

Session 3: July 20th 2024 – 1-3 pm

### **Walking Forward in Faith**

#### **Venue**

[Online on Zoom](#)

#### **Organizer**

Worship & Ministry

[Register Here](#)

When it feels like the sands are shifting under our feet, how do we move forward? What sustains us through spiritually challenging times? What gives us hope? We will explore how care of community supports individual and collective faithfulness, knowing that “the power of love will carry us through all.” How is Spirit calling us?”

*Anne Pomeroy is a Quaker spiritual director and a member of New Paltz Monthly Meeting in New York Yearly Meeting. They have traveled widely among Friends, serving both as elder and as a workshop leader. They are a member of both FGC's Executive Committee and Development Committee. In this role, Anne has frequently been invited to run workshops that strengthen spiritual friendships and elder relationships. Their ministry is grounded in a listening heart that seeks to discover what is most needed in those with whom they journey. SEYM is most blessed to have this opportunity for Anne to wade with us in the waters of our spiritual life.*

<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>Second First Day of each month</b>	Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business	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>Third First Day</b>	Singing before worship.	10:00 a.m.

## **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