



# 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

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?*

## 8. Personal Integrity & Right Action

### Queries:

- *Do we keep to simplicity and moderation in speech, manner of living, and vocation?*
- *Do we make time in our day for silence, solitude, spiritual reflection, and the growth of our inner life?*
- *Do we remind ourselves each day of our connections with people, other creatures, and all that sustains life?*
- *Are we ready to live in the Spirit that heals estrangements that may arise from resentment, nagging fears, and alienation from others?*

## 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 listen to others, even beyond words, being sensitive to their personal needs and difficulties?*
- *Are we free from the use of judicial oaths, thus affirming that our statement is only part of our usual integrity of speech?*
- *Do we regard our possessions as given to us in trust, and do we part with them freely for the needs of others?*
- *Are we careful to keep our jobs and social activities from absorbing time and energy that need to be given to spiritual growth and service to others?*
- *Do we stay tender and open to the leadings of the Spirit?*

### Advices:

- *Use our capabilities and possessions as God's gifts entrusted to us to share with others in humility, courtesy, and affection.*
- *Accept and encourage the creativity in others.*
- *When we have a choice of employment, choose that which gives the fullest opportunity for the use of our talents in the service of others.*
- *Be willing to seek and be faithful to God's will.*
- *Remember that we are all one in God.*

**Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends  
Minutes of 8th Month 11, 2024**

The Fort Myers Monthly Meeting with Attention to Business met in hybrid format on the eighth month, eleventh day, 2024, with 18 F/friends present.

We began in worshipful silence. Clerk Richard Frechette read the following from SEYM's Queries and Advices from SEYM on Personal Integrity & Right Action:

- Queries:
  - Do we make time in our day for silence, solitude, spiritual reflection, and the growth of our inner life?
  - Are we ready to live in the Spirit that heals estrangements that may arise from resentment, nagging fears, and alienation from others?
  - Do we listen to others, even beyond words, being sensitive to their personal needs and difficulties?
- Advices:
  - Use our capabilities and possessions as God's gifts entrusted to us to share with others in humility, courtesy, and affection.
  - Accept and encourage the creativity in others.

**Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Paul Davis reported that there was not a lot of financial activity this month; that will change when we begin the actual building of the Meeting House.

We have now gone seven-twelfths of our Budget year. Our 2024 Budget contains Fixed line items, Discretionary line items and Estimates for Meeting house operating expenses. The Fixed line items and Discretionary lines items are chosen each year by our various committees and are approved at Meeting for Business in December.

Paul generated estimates for the Meeting House operating expenses not knowing when we could break ground. Fixed line items include things like our various donations, and our yearly billed expenses like Zoom. We have minor monthly or quarterly expenses like our web hosting that we pay as we are billed. Discretionary line items are for things that come up during the year, like special needs of our members/attenders, support for attending religious gatherings, etc. They are recommended by the various committees. Utility expenses were estimated based on expenses occurring for one half of our 2024 fiscal year.

We have paid all of our fixed line items for 2024. Since most of these are donations, Paul have felt we can stretch the impact of our donations if we can make them earlier rather than later in the year. Our committees have spent little of their discretionary line items so far in 2024. We have incurred no Meeting house operating expenses yet. (Building expenses are not in our 2024 Operating Budget but will be in a separate building budget using Meeting House Funds.) The Unitarian Universalist Congregation has waived our land lease monthly expense until we break ground.

This means our 2024 Operating Budget is in good shape with many of our expenses paid already and no items significantly over budget.

<b>FMMM Funds Report for 7/31/2024</b>	
<b>General Funds</b>	
Checking	5,763
Gen Fund Savings	38,397
Gen Fund Fr Fiduciary	34,355
<b>Total General Fund</b>	<b>78,515</b>
<b>Meeting House Funds</b>	
Savings	476,387
MH Funds Fr Fiduciary	15,986
<b>Total Meeting House Funds</b>	<b>492,373</b>
<b>FMMM Total Funds</b>	<b>570,888</b>

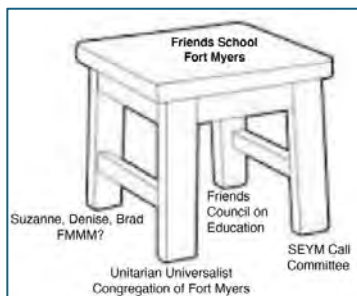
<b>July 2024 Income vs Expenses</b>	
<b>July Income</b>	<b>\$1,350</b>
<b>July Expenses</b>	<b><u>\$ 240</u></b>
* \$225 Morris DePew	
* \$ 15 Mom's Web Hosting	

**Report of Meetinghouse Committee:**

Friends Helen Fox and Suzanne Frechette reported that our potential builder, Tommy Lee Cook, is waiting for the Development Order to be authorized by the County to make sure that the design he and his engineer have come up with fits with what Lee County expects. We believe that Jack Morris has submitted everything required, but we haven't heard from him in more than a month. However, the good news is that our site work has been approved by the South Florida Management District.

**Update on Potential Friends School**

Friend Denise expressed gratitude for the presence of Reverend Sue Gabrielson of the UUCFM and Dan Vaughn, Clerk of SEYM Call Committee who have been part of the process for some time and have joined us for the discussion today.



Friend Denise Runyon explained that the stool, with its four legs (Unitarian Universalist Congregation; SEYM Call Committee; Friends Council on Education, and a small, ad hoc committee from FtMMM) can be seen as a symbol of how the idea of a Friends School on the UU campus began organically, almost like a furniture kit. For the past

two years the Call Committee had been discussing how to counter Florida's move against the values that Quakers hold most dear by establishing what might become a network of Friends schools around the state. In October 2023 the UUCFM began discussing how to use their campus buildings in a way that was consistent with their values. Just this last month, these two legs of the stool began to assemble as the organizations started to collaborate. The third leg, the Friends Council of Education, an organization that oversees all Friends Schools around the U.S., has recently been consulted. Our Meeting, the fourth leg, is just beginning our process. The stool is taking shape.

Friend Denise continued with the following report: As of August 8, 2024 FtMMM has been invited to participate in the development of a Friends School to be housed in existing school buildings on the UUCFM campus. This effort was begun by UUCFM to address their desire to better utilize their school buildings that was built for and used by a Montessori school until approximately 2012. UUCFM envisions an independent, not-for-profit organization owning and operating the school and hopes for the benefits of Quaker involvement and values. Neither UUCFM nor FtMMM is expected to have any financial obligations as a result of this school's existence, outside of the landlord/tenant relationship between UUCFM and the school. In other words, the school would rent the space from UUCFM.

Up to now individuals from the FtMMM have engaged in this process from a place of personal leading. Today we have the opportunity to talk with the leadership of the UUCFM and the SEYM Call Committee to help us consider the following question: *Do we have an interest as a Monthly Meeting to engage in an organized discernment process about our possible involvement in the proposed Friends School?*

#### DISCUSSION:

Friends asked for clarity on the details of how the school would be financed, how families without means would be able to pay for tuition, what the relationship would be between the day care, "Open Doors," that is already using some of the UU space and a newly established Friends School, and why the Montessori School previously housed on the UUCFM campus failed.

Reverend Sue answered the financial questions by saying that these details have yet to be attended to, but that they are looking at a new model of equity that asks all families to submit their financial ability to pay tuition and then, with the help of a disinterested third party, evaluate everyone's needs on a sliding scale. The funding would probably come from a variety of sources at the beginning, including grants, loans, and gifts from donors as well as from SEYM and other Friends Meetings in Florida, but the school would soon be expected to become self-supporting. In fact, the UUCFM is considering hosting the school in part to leverage its own assets and generate sustainable income. Reverend Sue explained that the Montessori school failed not because of funding difficulties but because of a lack of consistent leadership, but that in her experience, "[Quaker] values transcend the personalities and the leadership, creating the stability for Friends schools." The day care that is currently using two of the seven available classrooms would not be associated with the Friends school except as a possible conduit for student graduates of the pre-K program to a Friends education.

Friend Dan Vaughn was asked to describe a request for seed money that he plans to bring to a SEYM Interim Meeting for Business this October. Since it is in the interest of Friends across the State of Florida to counter the destruction of liberal values in education, he will ask SEYM for the approval of \$15,000 for legal fees, regulatory fees, professional surveys, other consulting fees, and start up salaries for compensation for a Head of School and other administration. This fund would be organized so that all monthly Meetings can contribute to the support of the new Friends School. It would be overseen and disbursed by the Executive Committee of the Yearly Meeting.

Friends commented on the query posed at the beginning of the discussion, that is, do we have an interest in participating in a discernment process? After some discussion and expressions of heart-felt support for the idea, it was decided that in fact, we are already participating in discernment, “so the answer is an apparent yes.”

❖ **Minute 2024-MM-05:** Friends agree to move forward with the proposed covenant with the UUCFM and SEYM to discern how we can best establish a Friends school.

Clerk Richard will sign the covenant. Friends determined that we should set up a more formalized committee, to be called the Friends School Working Group, that would work with UUCFM, SEYM, and others to continue the discernment. Volunteers for the committee are Friends Suzanne, Denise, Brad, Vicki, and Deb. If other F/friends want to be involved, they should contact Denise.

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**Covenant between and among  
Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Friends), the  
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fort Myers (UU), and the Southeastern  
Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (SEYM)**

**Our Shared Beliefs**

UU, Friends, and SEYM (the participating organizations) 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 stronger when we each succeed.

We recognize the need to work together as the spirit guides us to create a community where we can 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 any one 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 resources to build a unique meeting house, whose design and construction is currently in process, and will reside on the UU campus. This structure will become a valued addition to both faith communities.

### **Our Current Opportunity**

UU, currently in discernment about how to leverage its assets to bless the community and generate sustainable income, has been working with Friends on founding a Quaker school in service to the Southwest Florida (SWFL) community, the first of its kind in all of Florida. By working collaboratively under the advisement and wisdom of SEYM, we can accomplish the following:

- Develop the creativity and discover the inspiration needed to meet this new project.
- We can connect to the wider Quaker community to share resources, deepen our faiths, and, by doing so, we are stronger to advocate for peace, social justice, and sustainability.
- Boldly raise the visibility and brand of open-minded Quaker education, expanding a community of seekers in SWFL;
- Identify a successful Friends school implementation model which other Meetings in Florida (and elsewhere) may choose to follow;
- Leverage the existing classroom resources available on the UU campus to start with a smaller school (e.g. K-4) and a smaller front-end investment, while accumulating reserves over time to expand the number of students that will have access to the new school (K-8); (The UU campus has room for expansion when the time is appropriate.)
- Create a viable learning environment at the UU campus within which students and staff alike can continue to mature as companions in a wide range of experiences, rooted as much in the unseen as the seen, as much in the spiritual as in the physical;
- Offer a Beloved Community within a community that cares deeply about what kind of persons its members, young and old, are becoming, what goals and values are effective in their lives, and what their response is to the high calling of being human;
- Develop SWFL citizens, graduates of our school, who will have a strong sense of social understanding, skills to deal with adversity, tolerance and respect for others, and a strong sense of self-worth so that they have the power needed to succeed.

### **Our Concerns**

Friends and, to a lesser extent, UU have aging memberships such that the operational energy and administrative oversight needed to complete and operate the new Friends school is likely to come in large part from dedicated supporters from outside the UU and Friends membership communities.

Access to such outside, professional support may require additional developmental costs.

## 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 our overall mission: to found a long-term viable Quaker school at the UU campus in Fort Myers, FL. We set out to accomplish our intentions in three parts: firstly, with this covenant between and among us, and secondly, with a feasible Friends school development plan, and thirdly, through the robust implementation of the legal, financial, and organizational structures such a plan requires

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 the dutiful application of Quaker decision-making principles and the adherence to UU values.

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

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



## From Ministry & Counsel

Our community is aging and we continue to realize 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. Spiritual needs may be changing as well. (see flyer from Pendle Hill later in the newsletter.)

Just a reminder that the Ministry & Counsel committee is here for both physical or spiritual ministry and counsel. Last issue focused on the financial assistance we can offer members and attenders of our meeting. Knowing that all ministry/counsel offered is **always conducted confidentially**. If anyone has a concern of their own or about another person in our Meeting, we encourage you to reach out to M&C members.

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.)



Sunday, August 11, 2024

Helen Fox

## Reflection

I have often wondered why so many people-- including me -- believe in things unseen, or things that we might see, or feel, or experience very briefly, in a glimpse, as through a glass, darkly.

You might have this experience on a solitary walk, as an encounter with the ancestors, long dead, but alive among the cedars.

Or like a cousin of mine, raised Catholic, raped in prison, who decides to keep her baby, and at the moment of his birth sees a vision of the Virgin Mary.

Perhaps one might feel this visitation from another reality in an instant of communication between species, human and curious octopus, perhaps, or whale

Or as a certainty that a benign God, or Goddess, or Angel is watching over you in a time of trouble, making meaning of your life, your pain.

Or as a burning bush, a parting of a sea, manna from heaven. Lord Krishna in the guise of a ragged child appearing at your door, leading a cow.

Or when a Quaker might glimpse "that of God" – or goodness, or potential, in the most degraded human being.

Why is it that the moment of deep understanding that everything is connected, that we all are a part of a vast web of eternal existence, is so fleeting and comes in so many different forms?

I had a bit of insight into this while reading a book called "Friends for 350 Years" by Quaker author Howard Brinton, in a passage where he is trying to explain what happens in the silence of a Quaker Meeting. He says, *"Spiritual truth cannot be sharply defined like scientific truth. It exists on the dim edge of the unexplored region beyond the horizon of self-conscious thought. The language of the Spirit is symbolic, and its suggestions are not so much facts as signs which point beyond themselves to the unseen ground of all existence. So inarticulate sometimes is the voice of the Spirit that it can be expressed only by a sigh, or even by complete silence."*

Symbolism. The language of metaphor.

Metaphors like "God the father. Or the spirit of the Calusa, who seem to dwell in a particular tree, or in a breath of air rattling the dry palm fronds near their gravesite.

Or perhaps I might feel it as an eagle suddenly appears overhead, or in the call of a raven laughing at my predicament, my constant questioning.

(continued on next page)

The language of the Spirit is symbolic, rather than sharply defined and factual.

So maybe it's not important whether the ancestor you and your little dog met among the cedars really appeared from the beyond, or if a benign, paternal God actually exists, or if the raven really knows what is in my heart. These are all symbols that cause us to reflect, not prove; feel, not understand with one's mind.

That's what we're doing in the silence, I suppose – waiting in community for that moment of grace, that moment of seeing, or rather, knowing, things unseen through whatever metaphor our culture, our community, or our own felt experience makes sense to us.

I still don't know why these moments of grace are so fleeting, but I think I do understand why it doesn't matter if you believe in God, or if the cashier at Publix is truly an angel in disguise, or if you are convinced you came to earth from some distant star; these are all metaphors, translations, as Howard Brinton says, "which point beyond themselves to the unseen ground of all existence."

*The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science.*  
~ Albert Einstein



REGISTRATION

Standard Price: \$25

Subsidizing Price: \$40

Subsidized Price: \$10

Financial assistance  
available

# Hand in Hand: Aging Together in the Spirit

Online: Wednesdays, 7:00pm-8:30pm ET  
Sep 4-18, 2024

**A three-part online series with authors of *A Tender Time: Quaker Voices on the End of Life*, Patti Nesbitt, Eileen Stanizone, and Kristin Camitta Zimet**

This program offers live and interactive engagement with *A Tender Time: Quaker Voices on the End of Life*, the Baltimore Yearly Meetings' End of Life Working Group's new resource.

In these three sessions, Friends are invited into the themes of the book:

September 4: *Aging in the Spirit—Finding Your Own Way*

September 11: *Befriending Your Mortality*

September 18: *Beyond Death: Continuing Relationships*



*Patti Nesbitt*



*Eileen Stanizone*



*Kristen Camitta Zimet*

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## USEFUL WEBSITES FOR FRIENDS

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

<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.
<b>Thurs. 8/15</b>	Religious Education committee meets via Zoom.	2:00 p.m.