

Worcester Friends Newsletter Feb/March 2017



Calendar

Sunday Meeting for Worship: 11 A.M.

Childrens' Program: 11 A.M. (childcare year-round, First Day School program during school year)

Potluck Lunch: 12.15 P.M. every Sunday. Stay for fellowship.

Business Meeting: 2nd Sunday each month at 9 A.M.

The Meetinghouse is Handicapped Accessible

Rhode Island-Smithfield Quarterly Meeting will be held on **3/19/17**, beginning at 10:30 am. at Providence Meetinghouse, 99 Morris Ave. in Providence. RI.

Sanctuary City Discussion will be held on Thursday, **3/23/17** at 12:00 noon at the First Baptist Church, 111 Park Ave. Sponsored by Worcester Interfaith.

NEYM Query 2: Meeting for Worship

Are meetings for worship held in expectant waiting for divine guidance?

Are you faithful and punctual in attendance?

Do you come in a spirit of openness with heart and mind prepared for communion with God?

Do both silent and vocal ministry arise in response to the leading of the Holy Spirit?

Do all other activities of your meeting find their inspiration in worship, and do they, in turn, help to uphold the worshipping group?

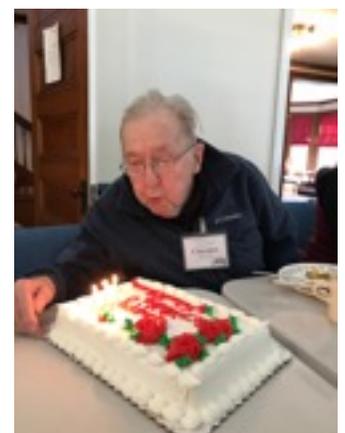
Living Faith Gathering in Providence on April 8, 2017

All are invited to attend the April 8th Living Faith Gathering of NEYM at Moses Brown School in Providence, RI. on April 8, 2017. This day-long gathering is designed for families and includes 20 workshops on faith, spirituality, activism, and witness. The Youth Program is designed to help younger Friends explore and express their Quaker faith through songs, stories, games, activities, art projects and more. Childcare is available throughout the day. Lunch will be provided and includes kid-friendly options. Families interested in Quakerism or new to Friends are particularly encouraged to attend. For more information or questions, contact the planning committee at livingfaith@neym.org

Happy 90th Birthday!

Worcester Friends Meeting wishes happy 90th birthday to our special Friend Clarence Burley.

(See inside for a few wise words from Clarence)



State of Society Report 2017, Worcester Friends Meeting

Worcester Friends gathered on February 26, 2017 to consider the state of our Monthly Meeting. Guided by the queries provided by NEYM Ministry and Counsel, we considered the grace we have experienced in the life of our meeting community, how we are learning and growing and living our faith, and where our shortfalls are.

Friends are deeply grateful for our worship, which is foundational to our community and the source of our energy to do the work of the Spirit. We find it deeply powerful to sit in silence and to be encouraged to encounter the presence of God. Friends spoke of inviting God to emanate from our personhood – a powerful testament to the appreciation that we are all holy.

Our Meeting community nurtures us. Strengthening and building our meeting community through shared activities gives us clarity of vision and the strength to weather difficult times. We longitudinally share potluck weekly and for deep sharing held a day-long Meeting retreat. We also hope that sharing our spiritual journeys will help others find their path. We rejoice in the opportunity to share community with Friends of varying ages. Our strong group of Young Friends is very much a presence and an inspiration at the heart of the meeting. They bring us hope with their interest and energy. They strengthen the bond between our meeting and NEYM by participating in youth retreats and thus providing the adults with opportunities for intervisitation. New members and attenders have brought richness to our community this year, while we miss several long-time members who have moved away.

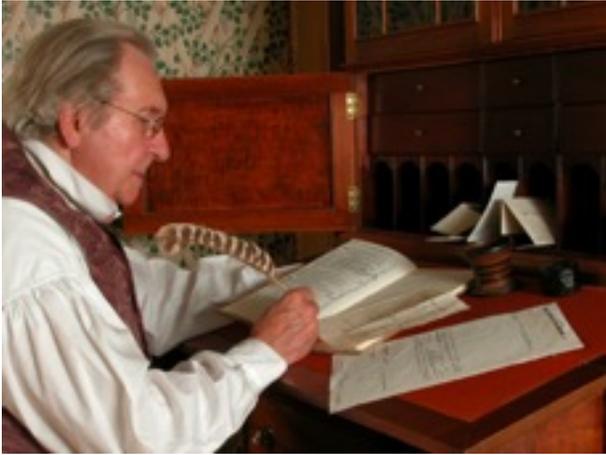
Being part of a meeting community gives us the chance to provide service where our hearts are. It is good to feel needed, and good to have gifts to offer. It is also important to be supported, but it's difficult to ask for help. We would like to better support each other in doing the work of the Meeting and ensure that we all have balance between service and spiritual refreshment.

We are learning about bringing our leadings to the Meeting, and also how to make ourselves available to support others. We find that this is not always an easy process, either for those led or for those who receive those leadings with tender care. Those who bring a leading must appreciate that their deep passion may not be shared by the community, and find balance with this. When leadings pull the Meeting's attention in different directions, it can feel like a stress on our centeredness. Those receiving the leading must put aside their judgements and personal sentiments to be open and truly listen. At the root is our love and care for our community and its members. We find that when we handle leadings with care, it becomes one of the threads which holds us together. Worcester Friends have a strong leading around climate change and our work to be responsible in this area touches all aspects of the Meeting.

The current state of our world provides many real challenges and worries. Some feel that we (as a society) are now paying the price of our previous complacency. The hidden gift in our current state, though, is that we have been awakened to our responsibility to "be the hands of God". As we do this work, we ask ourselves, "How much is enough?" We seek to find where to place our priorities; ultimately, it feels that our work should center in making the world a place that is congruent with our faith. We recognize that the strength to do this work comes from being grounded in our Quaker selves.

As we do our work in the community, we consider what it means to be a Friend and the importance of identifying ourselves as Quakers. Being transparent about our faith, especially with those outside our Meeting community, motivates us to live our faith all the more authentically. Being Quakers in this conflicted world means that we seek to find ways to bridge divides between people of differing ideologies. We welcome visitors to the Meeting. We support those who are deeply involved in political movements and resistance. We return to the idea that it is being centered in our faith that allows us to do our work; the Meeting does not do the work, but it forms us so that we may do the work, being the hands of God.

A Closer Look at Worcester Friends: Clarence Burley



1. **Can you briefly describe your religious journey?** No, I can't; it's much too long and still has a long way to go. Suffice it to say that it had detours from Episcopal to Congregational, Unity (not Unitarian,) agnostic, Jewish, Christian Science, agnostic again, then Roman Catholic for a long time. I might not have made it to Quakerdom had I met Richard Rohr O.F.M. or Thomas Keating O.C.S.O. and centering prayer first.

2. **How long have you been a Friend? How long have you been Corresponding Clerk?** I applied for membership in 2007, believing that I had discharged my duty as godfather of my granddaughter upon her confirmation in the Roman Catholic Church. Somehow the meeting for business saw fit to accept me. They immediately shanghaied

me into the ministry and counsel committee and in 2010 as clerk. In 2013 I promoted myself to corresponding clerk without consultation for clearness.

3. **As a Quaker, what issues are of particular concern to you?** I am concerned with issues revolving around the tension between individuality and membership in a group be it religious, ethnic, economic, complexion, prior territorial occupation, prior incarceration, LGBT, and sometimes W and Y—you name it. We identify ourselves and one another for bad reasons— promotion and exaltation of our group. We also identify for a good reason, to stop—or at least ameliorate—the bad results. How many white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant bank officers does it take to change a light bulb? Two. Why two? One to call the electrician and one to mix the martinis.
4. **How do you choose the literature you include in your Friendly Reminders?** Those little poems come from all over—Writers Almanac, <https://www.poemhunter.com/>, popular songs, and my old brain. It's an ego trip. I'm thinking of a series of some 20+ sonnets—Kenneth Boulding's "The Nayler Sonnets", based on James Nayler's 17th century deathbed statement, "There is a Spirit...." What do you think? Too heavy?
5. **What advice would you give to WFM members who are discouraged by the current political climate in our country?** Read Matthew 14:22-33.
6. **Where would you like to see WFM concentrate their energy in the coming year?** We might best focus on this old house as a center for the number of leadings that we each feel, environment, hospitality, sanctuary, witness, and on and on.

Check out the newest video in the series Quaker Speak which features a few of our own Young Friends at <http://quakerspeak.com/how-do-quakers-support-childrens-spirituality/>



Monthly Meeting for Business, Worcester Friends Meeting

Date: February 12, 2017

Present: Daron Barnard, Katharine Barnard, Mary Bennett, Mary Chenaille, Fred Mikkelson, Richard Schmidt, Mark Sullivan

Clerking: Daron Barnard

The meeting opened with silent worship and reading of NEYM Query 2: Meeting For Worship.

1. Business Items

- a. **Improving contact among Meeting members.** It will be very useful for the Meeting to have contact information for members and frequent attenders. This list could be employed to contact each other, for example, in the event of canceling a meeting due to weather or spreading urgent news. After discussion, we decided to spend a month collecting contact information from those who want to be included in the directory; information will be collected on a clipboard at Meeting, and via soliciting information through weekly email reminders. Directories will be printed and available at Meeting for people to take home. Updates will be solicited on an annual basis. Other information to be included in the directory is a listing of the officers of the Meeting, clerks of committees, and a structured phone tree. It is felt that membership in the Meeting does not need to be included as we regularly acknowledge members of Spiritual Life Committee. Katharine Barnard and Laura Sturgill will work on the directory. As a parallel concern, it is also necessary to have emergency contact information for attenders and members. We have planned to compile a file box of index cards in which individuals can file their emergency contact information. This would be kept in a discrete location in the library for access as needed. Periodically we can remind attenders to update their information. It is also suggested that the website could be used as a way to post announcements such as weather-related cancellations.
- b. **State of Society report.** A threshing session will be held at 9am on the 4th Sunday of February (Feb 26th), using queries from NEYM Ministry and Counsel as a guide. This year's queries relate to the theme of 2016 Sessions, "Being the Hands of God: a Call to Radical Faithfulness", and are available for review as preparation for the threshing session, both printed and in the Meetinghouse lobby, and appended below.
- c. **Report from 5th Sunday Discussion on Climate Change.** A discussion was held on January 29, 2017, attended by 10 people including Young Friends. We discussed our role as Friends who are concerned with climate change, both our role in the larger community and as owners of our Meetinghouse. It is noted how this concern aligns with NEYM priorities. Other Quaker Meetings are working on similar creative projects that would be good models. We may need grant funding, such as a Legacy Grant, or an Annual Appeal to support this. Further consideration was turned over to Practical Committee.
- d. **Allocation of Recent Donation.** The Meeting was recently bequeathed \$2000 from Friend Rachel Carey-Harper to be used to further our work in social justice. The committees will be asked to consider priorities that align with Rachel's charge to us, and bring their recommendations back to Meeting for Business.
- e. **Sanctuary.** Meeting members have attended gatherings in Boston and Worcester regarding practical aspects of being a "sanctuary church". Mary provided information today. She explains that there is no set definition of a "sanctuary church" but notes that the general meaning is that places of worship have historically been protected from ICE entering the premises. Places providing sanctuary, unlike underground movements in history, are publicly advertised. We have learned that our Meeting is not set up to be a sanctuary residence (ie. Level 1 Sanctuary) but could be a Level 2 Sanctuary which would provide support (transportation, study facilities, etc) for people in sanctuary residences. We would need to consider legal and financial ramifications for the Meeting and its officers if we were to participate in this movement. We are hoping there will be legal counsel offering information to sanctuary-providers. Meeting members have also been active in the City of Worcester to support Worcester's tolerance for refugees and immigrants.

2. **Treasurers Report:** We are ahead with income largely due to rental of the building by an outside group. Expenses are anticipated to improve as of next month when our telephone service will be more cost-effective. We will consider taking steps to move funds away from banks that are not aligned with our social concerns.
3. **Committee Reports:**
 - a. **Practical.** Mary Chenaille will serve as clerk of the committee this year, with Kevin Walsh as an alternate. Discussion related to “greening” of the building, and tasks were delegated primarily involving insulation and air-sealing of the building and understanding and improving our energy expenditure. Some early priorities will be insulating the 3rd floor and continuing replacement of the windows. The committee also set maintenance priorities for the year.
 - b. **Spiritual Life.** The committee recognizes that involvement in the sanctuary movement is congruent with our faith but we need more concrete information. In our current social and political climate, it feels important to deepen our spiritual community as a way to nourish ourselves and our work for social justice. Plans for this year will include a Meeting retreat, possibly with a spiritual focus along the lines of Quaker Quest. We will also continue work on finalizing a Safety Minute. Clarence continues to cull the library and is looking for help removing excess inventory. The Young Friends’ classroom is coming along nicely with the Young Friends taking the lead.
 - c. **Peace Social Concerns and Outreach.** The committee has not met due to coinciding with protest marches. Next PSCO meeting will be held February 19. A committee clerk for this year can be appointed at that meeting.
4. **Announcements:**
 - a. Bystander Training will be held at the Meetinghouse on March 18, 2017, from 10am-12 noon, with train-the-trainers from 12:30-1:30 the same day. Martha Yeager of AFSC-SNE will facilitate the workshop. People who are interested should contact Karen Sargent as attendance is limited.
 - b. As a future agenda item, Mary Bennett asks the Meeting to consider eliminating meat consumption at potluck, in line with our testimonies of nonviolence and climate awareness.

The meeting closed with silence.

Respectfully submitted,
Katharine Barnard

Monthly Meeting for Business, Worcester Friends Meeting

Date: **March 12, 2017**

Present: Daron Barnard, Katharine Barnard, Clarence Burley, Tom Brenner, Mary Chenaille, Fred Mikkelson, Whitney Mikkelson, Karen Sargent, Richard Schmidt, Mark Sullivan, Kevin Walsh

Clerking: Daron Barnard

The meeting opened with silent worship and reading of NEYM Query 3: Meeting for Business.

1. Business Items

- a. **State of Society Report.** Friends met on February 26 in worshipful consideration of the queries provided by NEYM’s Ministry and Counsel committee. From this discussion, our State of Society report was written, the draft of which was brought by Spiritual Life Committee to Business Meeting today. We weighed the value of including specific examples as a way of capturing the spirit of the Meeting without becoming a catalog, and a few amendments were made to the draft. The report was then approved and will be submitted to NEYM and the Quarter.
- b. **Sanctuary.** Several Meeting members have attended informational sessions organized by Worcester Interfaith. The Sanctuary Movement is about creating a framework to provide care and shelter for people in this country without documentation in the case it is needed. In terms of organizational commitment, the Worcester churches providing Level 1 (residential) Sanctuary would need others to provide Level 2 Sanctuary. Level 2 entails assisting sanctuary recipients in ways aside from providing residence. There is also a movement to create a network for “Rapid Response” (witness and assistance in case of urgent need).

Questions are (1) what is the role of the Meeting (as an organization) in relation to these projects and/or (2) are people (as individuals) interested or ready to commit to participating. Participating in the Sanctuary Movement feels congruent with our faith and belief that all people are holy. However, further clarification about practical concerns such as legal ramifications are requested by Meeting members. Next steps will be inviting a local resource to inform us about these practicalities, contacting NEYM to determine their position, and to continue committee-based work and discernment on the topic.

- c. **Allocation of donation.** We have received a gift of \$2000 from Friend Rachel Carey Harper. We considered with care how to allocate that donation in the spirit with which it was given: to spend as we see fit to help make the world the place we want it to be. Our recent discussions have highlighted the importance of supporting Young Friends, climate responsibility, and social responsibility specifically around immigration. We also considered help for the needy and support of Quaker organizations, though it is noted that we do both on an ongoing basis. The discussion is turned back to committees for further consideration and will be brought to next Business Meeting.
- 2. **Treasurers Report.** As is customary for this time of the year, we currently have a negative balance. There have been no unanticipated income or expenses.
- 3. **Committee Reports:**
 - a. **Practical.** The committee will appreciate guidance as to how to implement ideas for modifying the Meetinghouse to make it more environmentally responsible. Those interested in discussing possible modifications are invited to the next Practical Committee meeting (April 2). There are two cemetery issues needing consideration. The wrought iron gates have over the years attracted sometimes unwanted attention, and the Meeting will contact other potentially interested parties on potentially removing these. The cemetery sign also needs replacement. Otherwise the cemetery is in good shape. Other plans and maintenance will continue under the care of the committee.
 - b. **Spiritual Life.** Geoff will continue as Clerk of committee this year. A Lenten-themed Bible study is planned for March 19. The committee will continue work on a Safety Minute for the Meeting.
 - c. **Peace Social Concerns and Outreach.** The Young Friends will plan a movie night with a social theme. Next Saturday, March 18, the Meeting will host a Bystander Training open to the community.
- 4. **Announcements:** Quarterly Meeting will meet next Sunday March 19 in Providence RI. Those wishing to carpool please contact Karen Sargent.

The meeting closed with silence.

Respectfully submitted,
Katharine Barnard



Friends Camp is a summer camp offering 1- and 2-week programs for children and teens ages 7-17. The camp, in South China, Maine, offers recreational, artistic, dramatic, and aquatic programming with Quaker worship and community work projects. Friends Camp gives youth a unique outdoor camping experience for spiritual, emotional, and creative growth that helps them discern a true and healthy path into adulthood. For more information, see <http://friendscamp.org/>

Registration for Summer 2017 is OPEN NOW!

Reflections on the Light from a Weekend of Silence

A Speck at the Sea

A breath in fog
at the edge of dawn am I
Standing on rock by crashing sea
Waiting and hoping on the Source
Again and again in each
moment Love melts fog.
“Come to me at the sea
drink your fill of Light”
Knowing God is Love for all
gratitude swells strong as wave
Each moment is made for thee
a mere speck in a moment at the sea.



A few minutes after writing that poem and taking these photos in the fog I came across this flower springing from the rocks. Pretty amazing considering it was on February 25th.



These came as gifts while reflecting on the example of the powerful; Love, prayer life and treatment of all life as sacred by native Americans at Standing Rock camp, where “water protectors” stand firm against the DAPL pipeline.

That much prayer and love at the frontlines of the struggle for justice and the environment offers much testimony to the importance of prayer and much hope. Let it be as they say there - “Standing Rock is everywhere.”

- Dave Legg 2/25/17

Worcester Friends Meeting
 Religious Society of Friends
 (Quakers)
 901 Pleasant Street
 Worcester, MA 01602



Scheduled Meetings

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business	-----	Second Sunday, 9 AM
Spiritual Life Committee, convener, Matthew Shorten	-----	Fourth Sunday, 9:30 AM
Practical Committee,	-----	First Sunday, 9:30 AM
Peace/Social Concerns/Outreach, convener Karen Sargent	-----	Fourth Saturday, 9:30 AM
Clerk of Worcester Friends Meeting	-----	Daron Barnard
Recording Clerk	-----	Katherine Barnard
Corresponding Clerk	-----	Clarence Burley
First Day School	-----	Katie Green, Katherine Barnard
Newsletter	-----	Sheila Brenner

Please send general correspondence to info@worcesterfriendsmeeting.org . Items of note for the next Newsletter may also be sent to brennerfamily@gmail.com.