

Worcester Friends

April 2021



Calendar In compliance with to MA Covid-19 guidelines, the Meetinghouse is closed for Sunday Meeting for Worship. Check weekly Friendly Reminders for updates.

Virtual Zoom Worship continues:
Sunday 11:00am-12:00pm with worship sharing (joys and concerns) from 11:45-12:00.

We gather in silence so ask that attenders enter worship muted; please unmute your microphone only when speaking.

Announcements follow at 12:00pm

Join Meeting Zoom for Worship
Meeting ID: 935 8166 3579
Passcode: 661048

Invitation from Peace, Social Concerns and Outreach Committee:

Tom Doughton, History Professor from Holy Cross will attend the next PASCO Meeting on **Sunday, April 25 at 9:30 am** to help us think about our relations to the original Nipmuc owners of the land at 902 Pleasant St (current WFM Meetinghouse). We will also talk about a more formal presentation by Prof. Doughton about some aspect of the history of African-Americans in Worcester.
For more information, contact lmcardib@gmail.com

Stephen Aldrich Fund

The impact of contemporary economic change and the need of individuals and families is all around us. We sense the need, but often ask, "What can I do?"

Much as we ask this question today, Stephen Aldrich asked and responded in the 1800's by bequeathing a large portion of his estate to the [RI-Smithfield} Quarterly Meeting to provide emergency funding for Friends in need. This bequeath continues today as the Stephen Aldrich Fund and is available to all members of the Meeting community seeking one-time emergency financial assistance.

Individuals needing assistance or those who would like further information regarding the Fund should contact our Meeting's representative, **Paul Gallagher**. All contact is held strictly in confidence.

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business is held on the second Sunday of the month at 9:00 am. Any business items should be sent to Clerk Daron Barnard at daronbarnard@yahoo.com.

[https://zoom.us/j/92774446613?](https://zoom.us/j/92774446613?pwd=M2IyeWJjZVpqTHB4bTJNdWRyRnlhZz09)
[pwd=M2IyeWJjZVpqTHB4bTJNdWRyRnlhZz09](https://zoom.us/j/92774446613?pwd=M2IyeWJjZVpqTHB4bTJNdWRyRnlhZz09)
Meeting ID: 927 7444 6613
Passcode: 253544

All are invited to the newly formed **Christ Centered Worship** which meets via Zoom on **Saturday Mornings** at **11:00 am**.

[https://holycross.zoom.us/j/97240144131?](https://holycross.zoom.us/j/97240144131?pwd=V096eTVVN2loN2dUOWFLRVIBYnpaQT09)
[pwd=V096eTVVN2loN2dUOWFLRVIBYnpaQT09](https://holycross.zoom.us/j/97240144131?pwd=V096eTVVN2loN2dUOWFLRVIBYnpaQT09)

Join Zoom Meeting:
Meeting ID: 972 4014 4131

Passcode: Friendly

Find your local number: <https://holycross.zoom.us/u/adUXS394nt>

**Worcester Friends Meeting
Meeting for Business
April 11, 2021**

Present: Katharine Barnard, Daron Barnard, Sheila Brenner, Clarence Burley, Lucy Candib, Mary Chenaille, Ellen Perry, Aaron Sakulitch, Karen Sargent, Matthew Shorten, Richard Schmitt
Clerking: Daron Barnard

The meeting gathered on Zoom and opened with a moment of silence, and a reading from NEYM Faith and Practice, Advices and Queries: “Remember that love is a gift of the Divine, not simply a human emotion. As imperfect human beings we are not always able to feel loving toward one another, but by opening ourselves to the Light Within, we can receive and give love beyond our human capacity.”

Business items:

1. **State of Society Report:** The report was formed out of the discussion held March 28, 2021. The draft has been commented on by discussion participants, and edited. The final version was shared this morning and approved by the Business Meeting. Daron will forward the report to the Quarter and the Yearly Meeting Ministry and Council. We wonder if our challenges are unique or shared, and we would be interested in reading the reports from other Meetings to learn how they have responded to the same challenges that we have faced. Daron will inquire of Noah Baker-Merrill as to any plans to share SOS reports among Meetings.
2. **Yard Maintenance:** Practical Committee recommends rehiring Carlos Ruona to continue yard maintenance at the Meetinghouse and the Cemetery. Mary Chenaille will clarify whether the agreement includes Carlos doing a Spring cleanup, or if this would be additional. We agreed to rehire Carlos at a stable rate this year, paid on the same schedule as last year. Mary will clarify how Carlos feels that the work breaks down between the house and the cemetery. We would reimburse our Meeting account out of the Cemetery account for the cemetery maintenance. Mary will also clarify the exact amount agreed upon with Carlos (\$2800 vs \$2700). Note that last year we paid Carlos approximately \$2700, so if \$2800 was expected, we owe him \$100. As soon as Mary provides Aaron with the exact payment agreement, he will send Carlos the first payment. There is a pile of junk near the back entrance of the Meetinghouse that needs to be removed as it would be in the way of yard work; Daron suggests also using this as an opportunity to remove anything from the basement that needs to be discarded, and asks Practical Committee to take this up. Aaron will tidy up the junk pile in the meantime, until more permanent removal can occur.
3. **Use of the Meetinghouse by outside groups:** The Worcester Ward 9 Democratic Committee has asked about using space for meetings on an occasional basis. They would pay for use of the building. We have agreed this is not a conflict of interest, and will offer that they can use the space as per our suggested guidelines for use and in accordance with Massachusetts DPH advisory on gatherings during the pandemic. We observed that our requested donation for use of space is quite low (the amount having been set 8 years ago) and it would be reasonable to increase the suggested amount. We will plan to revisit the guidelines. Practical Committee is asked to clarify the logistics of how outside groups would use the building, including maintaining a schedule of building use, and allowing others entrance to the building.

Reminder that **there will be a threshing session on our Meeting's finances next First Day (April 18) at 9am.** Lucy will create a Zoom link for this meeting. Aaron has put together a summary of our finances, and there is additional useful information in the February Business Meeting minutes. Katharine will forward the minutes to Sheila, who can put all of this together an email to be sent out this week, as advance documents for the threshing session.

Committee Reports:

Practical Committee: In addition to items above, the committee reports that the blown-in wall insulation at the Meetinghouse has been completed, and has been paid for. The holes created by the insulators will need to be finished. The committee will also continue to discuss paint vs siding for the building, and also the issue of vermiculite in the attic. It is also noted that someone has taken the Little Lending Library, built by Young Friends a few years ago and placed in front of the Meetinghouse a few months ago. We hope it is in use in its new location.

Spiritual Life Committee: The committee has discussed setting up Friendly Calls, and Daron will solicit interest. Look for information in the Weekly Reminders. Jane Cutting has been attending Worcester Interfaith to join in shared community and political actions. Worcester Interfaith also has a clergy meeting and Spiritual Life Committee is asked to consider who might attend on behalf of the Meeting.

Peace, Social Concerns and Outreach Committee:

David Coyne of the Temple Emanuel Sinai Greening Committee has contacted the Meeting to ask if representatives of the Meeting would be interested in joining the Worcester Congregations for Climate Action. The group's interest ranges from political and community action, to as fostering behavior change at sites of worship and among congregants. Karen Sargent expresses interest in being involved. There are others among our Meeting membership who have been active on climate change as well who might like to join the group. Lucy will forward the information about WCfCA to Karen.

Richard has been communicating with Tom Doughton, who is a Worcester historian. Tom has also created a video on Nipmuc history, which features a walk and conversation with Colin Novick, CEO of Greater Worcester Land Trust. He has also created a walking tour of Black history of Worcester. His input on reparations and land acknowledgment will be very valuable. Lucy and Richard will invite him to an upcoming PSCO meeting, to which anyone interested is welcome. The date of that meeting will be publicized in the Weekly Reminders. In the future, we could consider inviting Tom for a talk as well, potentially as a shared activity with other congregations.

Lucy and Richard report that they attended Lisa Graustein's recent course, "The Sins of Separation". Out of that course, Lucy requested and received a \$1000 grant to support the Black Excellence Academy.

It is suggested that a bystander intervention training could be useful at this time of hate crimes, particularly those against Asian Americans. We considered possible facilitators. Mary Chenaille will contact Phil Stone to see about his interest and availability to facilitate. When we held this training previously, it was facilitated by Martha Yeager, who at that time worked at AFSC, and we could contact her to see if she might be available.

We closed to transition to worship.

Katharine Barnard
Recording Clerk

State of Society Report
Worcester Friends Meeting
11 April 2021

Worcester Friends met March 28, 2021, to consider the State of our Society. The discussion, guided by the queries supplied by the Yearly Meeting, focused on our experience worshipping, building spiritual community, and service and outreach during the pandemic.

Along with Quakers across New England, our meetings shifted to Zoom starting in March 2020. We were skeptical, but knew it was necessary, and meeting virtually was certainly better than not meeting at all. We have found that virtual gathering has worked better than anticipated, as it allows Friends to join worship despite physical distance, conflicting work schedules, or mobility challenges. These are options that didn't exist before. Though it's different from usual, we have welcomed visitors, gotten to know new attenders, conducted business, planned outreach and actions all over Zoom...in other words, we have carried on. We are reminded, "the Meeting is not the building."

Virtual gathering has provided opportunity for thinking outside our usual meeting schedule. We have expanded worship by adding a Saturday worship group for Christ-centered worship. Not only is this a blessed worship for those who attend, but also has been welcomed as an option for additional connection outside of First Day. Our "Facing Race" book group has continued to meet virtually and continues to be very important for those who attend. We had low youth attendance before the pandemic and no youth attending currently, but many of our young people have stayed connected with Friends through NEYM's youth programs.

Despite these blessings, it's not the same as meeting in person. The quality of worship is less satisfying, the Spirit is less palpable, it is harder to center worshipfully. For some, the "screen time" is a detractor or distractor, and for others it is a total deterrent to attendance. There are members of our community whom we have not seen in a year. Fellowship does not naturally flow as it would in person. It's harder to share interests and ideas, though we're figuring out how to do this. We really miss a handshake, a hug, and the tangible act of caring for each other with our weekly potluck.

We have worked to connect and care for our community. The core of this is worship, and keeping our worship alight, especially in the early days of the pandemic, took careful attention. To provide for more tangible needs, we have established an "Open Hearts, Open Hands" Fund to financially assist any of our community members in need. Our Spiritual Life Committee has tried to reach out to people who are not in regular attendance, but it is an imperfect system. We are seeking other ways to connect.

The pandemic has touched us all differently. There are people in our Meeting who have felt isolated or stuck at home and are searching for ways to feel connected and engaged. We appreciate their leadership in outreach and action on social and racial justice, LGBTQ rights; it is good to be challenged to live our faith, to be asked "why not?" Meanwhile, there are others among us who have been totally consumed by work or self or family needs and have been unable to take on more right now. This, and the loss of attendance of some members, has resulted in less unified participation in outreach work. Committees meeting virtually has led to the committees experiencing their work as siloed from the meeting as a whole.

During the warmer months in 2020, some people met for small-group worship. Worship in the back yard was experienced as deeply connected and deeply spiritual. We really look forward to getting back together in person, though are faced with the potential loss of options that we previously didn't know existed. We don't want to lose those people for whom Zoom offers inclusion. We worried then, and now, about fragmenting our community if we don't find a way to have shared worship or fellowship. As we move forwards, we will be guided by these questions:

- How do we maintain options while preserving unity?
- What did we learn about flexibility that we want to continue? What can technology continue to offer us?
- How does our (physical) building meet our needs?
- How can we regain a sense of communal responsibility for action and outreach?

There is much to learn, and there are many blessings.



Registration-<https://lu.ma/neym-tending-the-soil>

Encouraging Generosity in Your Meeting Webinar

This free webinar is led by Everence in collaboration with Friends General Conference. Help your meeting develop financial resources needed to carry out the work of Spirit in your community and beyond in this 90 minute webinar including time for questions and answers.

The webinar will be on Zoom and a link will be sent to you with your registration.

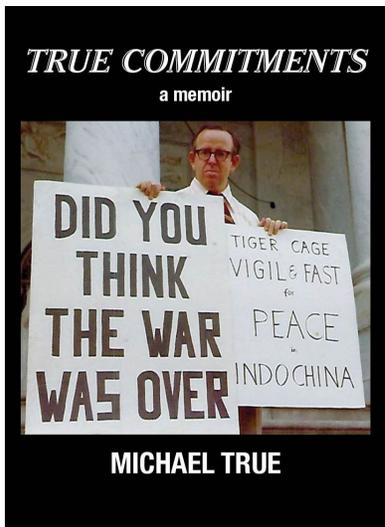
Thursday, May 6, at 7pm ET / 6pm CT/ 5pm MT / 4pm PT

[https://www.tfaforms.com/4894733?utm_source=FGC+E-](https://www.tfaforms.com/4894733?utm_source=FGC+E-Newsletters&utm_campaign=cbc6481946-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_11_08_03_52_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_834ba22447-cbc6481946-288760173&mc_cid=cbc6481946&mc_eid=e96e0)

[Newsletters&utm_campaign=cbc6481946-](https://www.tfaforms.com/4894733?utm_source=FGC+E-Newsletters&utm_campaign=cbc6481946-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_11_08_03_52_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_834ba22447-cbc6481946-288760173&mc_cid=cbc6481946&mc_eid=e96e0)

[EMAIL CAMPAIGN 2019 11 08 03 52 COPY 01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_834ba22447-](https://www.tfaforms.com/4894733?utm_source=FGC+E-Newsletters&utm_campaign=cbc6481946-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_11_08_03_52_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_834ba22447-cbc6481946-288760173&mc_cid=cbc6481946&mc_eid=e96e0)

[cbc6481946-288760173&mc_cid=cbc6481946&mc_eid=e96e0](https://www.tfaforms.com/4894733?utm_source=FGC+E-Newsletters&utm_campaign=cbc6481946-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_11_08_03_52_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_834ba22447-cbc6481946-288760173&mc_cid=cbc6481946&mc_eid=e96e0)



Register [Here](#)

Book Launch of *True Commitments*

Center co-founder Michael True was a man of many titles – professor of American Literature, father, writer, and one of Worcester’s most indefatigable peacemakers. During his life, Michael devoted a lot of ink to highlighting the work of nonviolent activists, known and unknown. In *True Commitments*, his last book, he finally tells of his own grand and adventuresome life. Who said peace-making was boring? Join us virtually at Worcester’s [Tidepool Bookshop](#) on Chandler Street for:

**Book Launch of *True Commitments*
A Memoir by Michael True
Thursday, April 29: 7:00 p.m.**

“Anyone has a nerve writing an autobiography, rightly regarded as the supreme egotistical act. Not writing it, letting all that life and all those people disappear without some remembrance and appreciation, however, seems wasteful.”

- Michael True, *True Commitments*

Worcester Interfaith 4/14/2021: Worcester Says It Won't Fight Lawsuit, Which Alleges Current Electoral System Illegally Dilutes The Vote Of Communities of Color

Today, the diverse coalition of Plaintiffs in a federal voting rights case challenging the City of Worcester's method of electing its School Committee applauded the City's announcement that it will not fight the lawsuit but will instead change to a more fair and equitable electoral system. The announcement was made by Worcester's Mayor on Tuesday evening, following a discussion of the lawsuit by the City Council in executive session.

The lawsuit was filed earlier this year by Worcester Interfaith, the NAACP, Worcester Branch, and eight individual voters of color, who alleged that the City's current "at large" method of electing the School Committee illegally dilutes the vote of Latino/a and Black voters in Worcester. Although communities of color make up nearly half of Worcester's population, and the student body of Worcester Public Schools is even more diverse, the School Committee is all-white and has been so for virtually all of Worcester's history.

"We are very pleased that the City Council has committed to changing the electoral system for School Committee to a system that will provide individuals of color in Worcester an equal voice," said Rebecca MacDowell Lecaroz, partner at Brown Rudnick LLP, the law firm that is representing the Plaintiffs on a *pro bono* basis along with Lawyers for Civil Rights (LCR). "We look forward to working with the City to formalize the agreement in a consent decree that will lead to a new system which will ensure fair representation."

Isabel Gonzalez-Webster, Executive Director of Worcester Interfaith, echoed that statement, saying "It is gratifying that the City has recognized that we need to change Worcester's electoral system. A more fair system is necessary in order to have true representative democracy and to deliver equal educational opportunity to every Worcester Public School student."

Fred Taylor, President of the NAACP, Worcester Branch added, "This is a long time coming and can't happen soon enough. We at the NAACP are always looking for ways to eliminate systemic barriers to equal opportunity. This is another step towards equity, and all of our children will be the biggest beneficiaries of this change, which will help bring fair representation to the Worcester School Committee."

The lawyers for both sides will now work together in the coming weeks to formalize the City's commitment into a binding Consent Decree, said Oren Sellstrom, Litigation Director of LCR. Attorney Sellstrom noted that the Consent Decree that the City of Lowell entered into in 2019 following another LCR lawsuit will provide the parties with a good model, adding that by agreeing to settle the case early, Worcester will avoid the two years of litigation that Lowell endured before ultimately agreeing to change. This will help ensure prompt compliance with the federal Voting Rights Act while preserving scarce taxpayer dollars. "We look forward to working with the City of Worcester to implement change that will benefit all residents of Worcester, particularly communities of color and the diverse students who attend the Worcester Public Schools."

The case is *Worcester Interfaith v. City of Worcester*, No. 21-CV-40015 (D. Mass. filed Feb. 8, 2021). As detailed in the Complaint, Worcester is the second largest city in Massachusetts and second largest city in New England. Communities of color in Worcester make up nearly half of the City's overall population (approximately 44%), with the largest minority populations being Hispanic/Latino/a (21.3%) and Black (12.1%). The student population of Worcester Public Schools, over which the School Committee presides, is even more diverse. In the 2019-2020 school year, 43.1% of students identified as Hispanic/Latino/a and 16.9% identified as Black or African American. Despite this composition and the rapid growth of the Hispanic/Latino/a and Black communities, Worcester's six-member School Committee is all-white and with very few exceptions, has been all-white during the course of the City's history.

Worcester is the last large city in the Commonwealth to elect its School Committee through an all at-large plurality electoral system. Other cities and towns in the Commonwealth have moved to a system that includes at least some district-based seats. In a district-based system, a city is divided into a number of districts, and residents of each of those districts vote for their own representative on the School Committee.

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

WFM acknowledges that we are on the traditional territory of the Nipmuc Nation.



Scheduled Meetings

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business	-----	Second Sunday, 9 AM
Spiritual Life Committee, Daron Barnard & Mary Bennett	-----	First Sunday, 9:30 AM
Practical Committee, Karen Sargent	-----	First Sunday, 9:30 AM
Peace/Social Concerns/Lucy Candib & Richard Schmitt	-----	Fourth Sunday, 9:30 AM
Clerk of Worcester Friends Meeting	-----	Daron Barnard
Recording Clerk	-----	Katharine Barnard
Corresponding Clerk	-----	Mary Chenaille
First Day School	-----	Katharine Barnard, Michelle Flint, Matt Shorten
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 or dropped off at MeetingHouse.