

Worcester Friends Newsletter

November 2019



Calendar

Sunday Meeting for Worship: 11 A.M.

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

Midweek Meeting for Worship: Wednesday 11:30 am-noon.

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

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

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.

Upcoming Events

Sunday 12/1 9:30 am Practical and Spiritual Life Committees meet.

Friday-Sunday 12/6-8, JHYM Retreat at Woolman Hill, Deerfield, MA
Young Friends Retreat, Providence, RI,

Friday 12/13 5:30 pm Facing Race Reading Group, Reading: *There There* by Tommy Orange

Sunday 12/15 9:30 am Spirituality Reading Group Reading: *Our Life Is Love* by Marcelle Martin

Wednesday 12/25 Merry Christmas!

Sunday 12/29 9:30 am Peace, Social Concerns and Outreach Committee meets.

**Monthly Meeting for Business
Worcester Friends Meeting
November 10, 2019**

Present: Daron Barnard, Katharine Barnard, Sheila Brenner, Tom Brenner, Clarence Burley, Jane Cutting, Lucy Candib, Karen Sargent, Aaron Sakulich, Keith Williamson
Clerking: Matthew Shorten

The meeting opened with silent worship and a reading from Rufus Jones on the nature of God as published in the *Quaker Religious Thought Journal*, September 2019.

Business Items:

1. First Day School. There continues to be concern that our First Day School program is languishing with a paucity of children. This concern will continue to be held under the care of Spiritual Life Committee. For the time being, Adult Friends are appreciated who will volunteer to provide First Day lessons (sign up sheet in the front hallway). If we are gifted with greater attendance of Young Friends, we would need to consider a more structured First Day School program.
2. Babysitting. The Meeting would like to commit to provide babysitting weekly so as to be welcoming to families with young children. However, because our current need is slim, we will not at this time plan to hire a babysitter. Instead, we will compile a list of adults from the Meeting who are willing to provide ad hoc babysitting, so that if families with babies/toddlers attend worship, one (or more) of those adults may be called upon to step upstairs with the children while the parents worship. Tom Brenner and Daron Barnard have volunteered; Katharine Barnard will compile a more complete list, which can be posted in the front hall near the First Day teaching schedule.
3. NEYM relations with FUM. Worcester Meeting has in recent years withheld donations to FUM due to their LGBT policies. NEYM's decision at 2019 Sessions to resume contributions to FUM has made the financial withholding option less clear for Monthly Meetings. Daron Barnard will contact the Presiding Clerk of NEYM or the NEYM Treasurer to ask for a presentation to our Meeting on the history of this issue and the recent Minute from Sessions, so as to help us discern our way forward.
4. Corresponding Clerk, Newsletter Editor and Recorder functions. This year, these functions transitioned from Clarence Burley to being shared by Sheila Brenner and Mary Chenaille. Mary will take on the responsibility for Weekly Reminders, and manage the calendar of the building usage and rentals. Mary will also continue to be the Recorder for the Meeting. Sheila will continue to produce the monthly newsletter. There is still lack of clarity about how to handle correspondence. Mary, Sheila and Clarence will plan to sit together to detail the responsibilities of these jobs and ensure that they are all covered.

5. Requests for Building Rentals. We have had two groups request use of the Meetinghouse for meditation workshops. Mindfulness Worcester used the Meetinghouse for a half-day meditation retreat yesterday. The New Kadampa Tradition group, which has been using the building on Thursday evenings, would like to provide six Saturday retreats in 2020, and has raised questions about potential conflict in having two similar groups use the space. The Meeting feels that there is no conflict; both groups are welcome to rent, and neither are permanent residents in the building. Matthew Shorten will respond to the New Kadampa group and clarify our rental policy and expectations.

Treasurer's Report: Aaron Sakulitch has assumed the Treasurer duties. He reports that income and expenses are running according to budget. We have had rent income from Mary Bennett's karate class. It is also notable that NEYM has overpaid their rent, and Aaron will address this matter with them, including establishing a more systematized process for NEYM rent collection to prevent future discrepancies. In order to clarify the balance sheet, the Treasurer will remove the pending large building expense and the corresponding transfer from savings, with a plan to enter them back into the budget sheet once they have been enacted.

Aaron notes that in being new to the Treasurer position, he has the opportunity to look into process improvements and will plan to present these recommendations around the New Year.

Committee Reports:

Practical: The committee ran a successful Meetinghouse clean-up day on October 19. A time-sensitive matter is the need to identify a contractor for snow removal at the Meetinghouse this winter. Anyone with leads is asked send that information to Karen Sargent. We all agree that Practical Committee should be empowered to make arrangements for a contract. Mary Chenaille is asked to discuss plans for leaf removal with our lawn maintenance crew.

Spiritual Life: The committee hosted a well-attended workshop last week on Quaker Worship ("How to have the best Meeting ever"). The committee will continue to consider future workshops or worship-sharing opportunities. Daron Barnard announced that NEYM has asked for input to the revisions to the *NEYM Faith and Practice* section on marriage. Anyone interested in providing input can find the text on the NEYM website and send comments to NEYM directly. The recently approved *Faith and Practice* sections on Death, Dying & Bereavement and Membership are available in our library. The Clerk has forwarded a letter of support for transfer of membership for Jon Herrin to Clearwater Friends Meeting.

Gifts and Leadings will meet soon to consider next year's appointments. Please see Daron Barnard, Jane Cutting, or Mary Chenaille with leadings as to your future service to the Meeting.

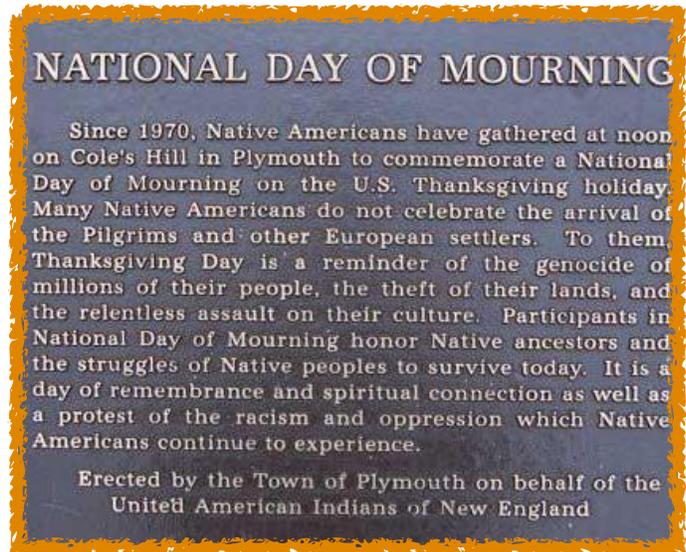
Peace, Social Concerns and Outreach: The Committee continues to look into ways to respond to NEYM's letter of concern on the conflict in the Middle East. We would like to find ways to promote healthy discussion on the matter, giving space for different voices in the spirit of promoting peace and conflict resolution. The Meeting continues to be involved with Worcester Interfaith, though there has been concern raised about the increasingly political (rather than spiritual) nature of the group. They meet on the 4th Wednesday of each month. PSCO will continue to plan for an invitational workshop on racial justice, with Lisa Graustein as facilitator, to be held in the winter. The committee is organizing to again provide dinner to the LGBT Asylum Network on the 2nd Monday in January. Lucy Candib will contact Hilda Ramirez of the Latino Education Institute to again visit the Meeting and provide updates on race issues in the Worcester Public Schools.

Announcements:

1. Meeting members are again reminded of Peg McMann, a new Friend to the area, now living at Brookdale in Auburn, who would will appreciate rides to worship.

The meeting closed with silence.

In the Light,
Katharine Barnard, Recording Clerk



Request to members and attenders:

The Gifts and Leadings Committee is still looking for someone to become our First Day School Co-ordinator. Until the position is filled, there is a sign-up sheet in the front hall where interested Friends can volunteer to lead individual Sunday sessions with Young Friends. If you have a book you love and would like to share, an art project, your own faith story, etc., our Young Friends would love to spend an hour with you.

There is also a sign-up sheet for First Day Greeters. Just come 15 minutes before M4W begins, put on your name tag and welcome newcomers to Worcester Friends Meeting. It makes a difference to first timers!

The Worcester Friends Newsletter is available on the website www.WorcesterFriendsMeeting.org. A calendar of events is also available there. Please check with Corresponding Clerk Mary Chenaille before reserving the Meetinghouse.

Gender Issues Workshop By Lisa Graustein

On Sunday, Sept. 29, Worcester Meeting was pleased to hold a workshop on gender issues, presented by consultant Lisa Graustein. Lisa has worked with NEYM Young Friends, Ministry and Counsel, and is a member of Beacon Hill Meeting. Her insights arise from both professional and personal lived experience.

We learned the many ways in which gender identity is not binary. Lisa clarified rapidly evolving vocabulary that was unclear to many of us, eg. trans, cis, queer and intersex. We also unpacked meanings of the alphabet soup abbreviations of LGBTIAQ+.

Attendees were dispatched around the Meetinghouse to search for tangible indicators of gender preference, and quite a few were identified.

We discussed the “sense of belonging”, and what it should entail. Some of the aspects included : support and acceptance, feeling safe and secure, being seen, lack of competitiveness, shared experiences, egalitarianism, and being loved.

Recommendations coming out of the workshop include:

- *offering the option of stating our pronouns on our name tags;
- *sharing our pronouns while introducing ourselves at rise of Meeting;
- *posting an “All Genders” sign on the bathrooms;
- *scrutinizing our postings and writings.

In short, we have a lot of work to do in this area, both as individuals and a Meeting community but this begins with being mindful about the issue.

For more information, these web sites are recommended:

GenderSpectrum.org. (Faith resources)

Interact.org

GLSEN.org

Them.us

Colorlines.org

Blackgirldangerous.com

—Matt Shorten

Friends Camp registration for the 2020 summer is open! Some sessions (especially Jones Session for ages 7-12 and Mott for ages 10-13) are filling much more quickly than in previous years. While it's exciting that so many families are interested in a Friends Camp experience for their children, **we also want to make sure that Friends Camp is accessible to Quaker families in New England! Please do not let finances be a barrier in your decision to register for camp. If finances are a concern, please reach out and we can work together to find a solution that will work.**

Right now, Jones Session is already 50% full since we opened registration last week, and Mott Session is close behind. This is just your special heads-up that registration is moving quickly this year, and we want your camper back at camp in 2020! [You can register here.](#) Please reach out with any questions you might have. I am happy to help, and my hope is to make the camp registration process as low-stress as possible. I know the summer is far away at this point!

Anna Hopkins, Director,

(207) 445-2361/ (207) 877-4302 (cell)

How to Have the Best Meeting Ever! (Thanks to **Dave Legg** for notes)

The Spiritual Life Committee hosted a workshop on how to deepen our worship experience on 11/13/19 before that day's Meeting for Worship. After reading queries, **Ellen Perry** and **Katharine Barnard** led us in contemplation of how individuals connect to their higher spiritual presence or spiritual selves.

As a community, we explored how individual Friends prepare and center themselves in preparation for worship. Some Friends strive to be aware of the possibility of revelation in Meeting by, "placing myself and Meeting in the hands of a loving God" or "picturing the Holy Spirit brooding over us" as we wait.

Before even getting to the Meetinghouse, some listen to gospel music while others prepare dishes for pot luck with the intention to let worship happen upon arrival to Meeting. One Friend talks with a prayer partner one hour a week which helps to deepen First Day worship.

Upon arrival, a common thread is the attempt to still the body and mind and to be grateful for the silence that we create where Friends can anchor in the Meeting and reach or receive from there. One Friend spoke of "silencing the talk in my mind and wait for the chance to deeply listen". Another Friend spoke of how breathing helps to bring calm and silence distractions.

In answer to a query on what we appreciate most in Meeting, Friends spoke of the moments when someone really speaks from the Light and the deep stillness that follows those messages and unites all worshippers. Gratitude for the shared, genuine values of our Meeting as well as when a message continues to affect a listener throughout the week. Another Friend marveled at those Meetings where an hour goes by like five minutes.

In trying to discern when a message should be shared, we talked about how we don't strive to share on the same theme as a previous message. We pray that whatever message comes will be "right" for someone present and should be shared "when impelled from the center strongly enough".

In closing an all too brief discussion, one Friend reminded us that the spirit is always available but coming to Meeting is powerful in that it "uncrimps" the hose so spirit can be primed and shared. Thanks to Spiritual Life for hosting and thanks to all Friends present for helping to discern how we can truly have "the Best Meeting Ever" every week.

To the extent that the blessing of peace is achieved by humankind, it will not be achieved because people have outraced each other in the building of armaments, nor because we have outdebated each other with words, nor because we have outmaneuvered each other in political action, but because more and more people in a silent place in their hearts are turned to those eternal truths upon which all right living is based. It is on the inner drama of this search that the unfoldment of the outer drama of history ultimately depends.

~ Dan Seeger

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, Daron Barnard & Mary Bennett-----	Fourth Sunday, 9:30 AM
Practical Committee, Kevin Walsh-----	First Sunday, 9:30 AM
Peace/Social Concerns/Outreach, Tom Brenner-----	Fourth Sunday, 9:30 AM
Clerk of Worcester Friends Meeting-----	Matthew Shorten
Recording Clerk-----	Katharine Barnard
Corresponding Clerk-----	Mary Chenaille
First Day School-----	Katharine Barnard, Sheila Brenner,
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.