

# Worcester Friends Newsletter

December 2019



## 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.

### 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 resumes January 8, 2020**

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

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

### Upcoming Events

**Wednesday, 12/25/19 Merry Christmas! (No Midweek Meeting for Worship)**

**Wednesday, 1/1/20 Happy New Year!! (No Midweek Meeting for Worship)**

**Sunday 1/12/20 9:00 am Annual Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.** All members and attenders are encouraged to attend.

**Monday, 1/13/20** PSC/O will cater an LBGTQ Asylum Network's monthly meeting. Contact Tom Brenner to help.

**Sunday, 1/19/20, 9:30 am** Spirituality Reading Group, *Our Life is Love* by Marcelle Martin.

**Friday, 1/24/20, 5:30 pm** Facing Race Reading Group, *Killers of the Flower Moon: the Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI* by David Grann.

**June 28-July 4** Friends General Conference (FGC) Radford University in Radford VA

**Monthly Meeting for Business  
Worcester Friends Meeting  
December 8, 2019**

Present: Daron Barnard, Katharine Barnard, Sheila Brenner, Clarence Burley, Ellen Perry, Karen Sargent, Aaron Sakulich, Matthew Shorten  
Clerking: Matthew Shorten

The meeting opened with silent worship and a reading from *NEYM Faith and Practice* on our practice of business.

**Business Items:**

1. Building Usage: Matthew Shorten presented followup to last month's question of renting to different Buddhist groups. He has spoken with the different groups and there will be no conflict with providing space to different groups going forwards.
2. Cookie Swap: We set December 22<sup>nd</sup> as the date for this year's holiday cookie swap.
3. Book donations: Friends Meeting at Cambridge is coordinating a collection of nonviolence and spirituality-themed books for Friends Theological College (Kenya). Relevant books can be culled from our Meeting's collection of Market Day books or donated individually and sent to Eden Grace at Cambridge Meeting before January 3, 2020.
4. Donation to Uxbridge Meeting: The Uxbridge Meetinghouse Association is soliciting donations to support maintenance of the building. We agreed that the Meeting will contribute \$50 for this purpose. Friends wishing to further support the Uxbridge renovations can additionally contribute to the Association's designated fund for that purpose.
5. Revisiting Worship Time: Meeting members are interested in moving forwards with the consideration of changing the timing of worship and committee/business meetings. This consideration had initially been brought forwards by the Visioning Committee, with concern for balancing the needs of worshippers, committees, and fellowship. Today we agreed to use a survey to collect an initial sense of interest and opinions, though the survey would not be a final decision-making tool. Aaron Sakulich offered to draft a survey, which he will email to all those present at Business Meeting today for input prior to sending more broadly.
6. Visioning Committee: The business meeting feels that there is value in reconvening the Visioning Committee to continue their care of the Meeting. The Visioning Committee would be the group to consider the results of the survey on changing worship time, and consider how to bring the collected opinions back to the Meeting. Additionally, we noted that having a Friend in residence this summer brings the question of having others in need stay at the Meetinghouse, and whether our current house is equipped for this. Matthew Shorten will work to reconvene the Visioning Committee in the New Year to discuss these concerns.

**Treasurer's Report:** Aaron Sakulitch presented the budget, showing income and expenses to be running on schedule. The unspent money for siding and insulation has been removed from the worksheet for clarity.

To improve the ease of managing our finances, Aaron proposes the following:

- Updating the designated signers for the Webster Five accounts. This will allow Aaron to access and manage all of the Meeting's accounts.
- Obtaining a checkbook to manually write checks from our Webster Five checking account, and an ATM card so as to be able to make deposits outside of business hours.
- Instating online banking, which has multiple benefits, including synching our QuickBooks accounting with our actual bank balance, and allowing for online bill payment.

All of the above were approved by Business Meeting and Aaron will work with Webster Five and the other Meeting designees to actualize these changes.

Aaron is working on further simplifying and clarifying the accounting, and will bring his suggestions to Practical Committee. This may include consolidating the Meeting's multiple bank accounts, and/or modifying the QuickBooks worksheet.

### **Committee Reports:**

Practical: The committee did not meet in November or December, but committee members have worked on various issues as mentioned above. Additionally, it is noted with appreciation that Mary Chenaille arranged plowing for the winter, just in time for this week's snowstorm! The committee is still soliciting any suggestions of alternate plowers for next year, so as to compare prices. December 15 is available should the committee wish to meet to discuss issues including next year's budget.

Spiritual Life: Daron Barnard announced that the committee met last week. The committee had not met in November in lieu of the Meeting-wide workshop and worship-sharing on worship practices. This was well-attended and well-received.

NEYM *Faith & Practice* Revisions Committee has asked for our input on their section on marriage. A preliminary read of this section shows it to me much in line with Worcester Meeting's previously-written minute on marriage. Spiritual Life Committee proposes that Worcester Meeting members review the section online or on paper (available in the Meeting library) and come prepared with comments to our February business meeting. If, in reading over the proposed section, any Meeting member feels that an in-depth discussion of the *Faith & Practice* marriage section is needed (more than would be possible during meeting for business), please let Daron Barnard know so that this could be scheduled.

## Meeting for Business Continued

We took up the issue of NEYM's recent decision to stop withholding financial support for Friends United Meeting, and a need to reconcile this with our Meeting's recent history of withholding support for FUM due to their personnel policy re: sexuality. Daron Barnard reached out to NEYM, and Noah Baker-Merrill (NEYM Secretary) has offered to visit the Meeting to provide history and context for the discussion. After considering the dates that Noah is available, we settled on February 2, 2020. Noah will be accompanied by one or more representative of NEYM. We anticipate that, after this contextual discussion, our Meeting will have further sessions to discern our way forward. This is an issue in which we will need to tenderly hold each other, our Meeting and our Yearly 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: Friends will provide dinner for the LGBT Asylum Task Force on January 13, 2020, and volunteers for cooking and serving the meal are needed. The Meeting has continued to maintain a connection with Worcester Interfaith, though it is noted that Interfaith will not meet in December due to Christmas. The committee continues to work on planning future events including a presentation to the Meeting on Worcester Public Schools issues, and a community-wide presentation on race facilitated by Lisa Graustein. Dates are not yet set, but these would occur in the New Year.

The Facing Race reading group continues to meet. The next meeting will be this Friday, December 13. Current discussion issues include reparations and our relationship with Native communities. PSCO committee has discussed bringing these issues to the wider Meeting.

### **Announcements:**

1. Friends are reminded that Worcester Friends Meeting will hold Annual Business Meeting as per our custom, on the second First Day of January, which will be January 12, 2020.

The meeting closed with silence.

In the Light,

Katharine Barnard, Recording Clerk

#### **Request to members and attenders:**

The Gifts and Leadings Committee is working on committee membership for 2020. See Jane Cutting, Daron Barnard or Mary Chenaille if you feel a leading to share your gifts on a particular committee.

Meeting is 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](http://www.WorcesterFriendsMeeting.org). A calendar of events is also available there. Please check with Corresponding Clerk Mary Chenaille before reserving the Meetinghouse.

## Darkness

### Waiting and Unknowing

*Advent [meaning “coming”], to the Church Fathers, was the right naming of the season when light and life are fading. They urged the faithful to set aside four weeks to fast, give, and pray—all ways to strip down, to let the bared soul recall what it knows beneath its fear of the dark, to know what Jesus called “the one thing necessary”: that there is One who is the source of all life, One who comes to be with us and in us, even, especially, in darkness and death. One who brings a new beginning. —Gayle Boss [1]*

I hope it isn't difficult to understand why I'm beginning the Advent season reflecting on darkness. [2] I'm not trying to be a spoilsport, but once Thanksgiving is over, we in the United States are rushed headlong into the Christmas season. Yet Advent was once (and still can be) a time of waiting, a time of hoping without knowing, a time of emptying so that we can be filled by the divine Presence. Though you may be wrapping gifts, planning special meals, and spending time with family and friends, I hope you will also take time to allow the Advent darkness to do its work as well.

Not knowing or uncertainty is a kind of darkness that many people find unbearable. Those who demand certitude out of life will insist on it even if it doesn't fit the facts. Logic and truth have nothing to do with it. If you require certitude, you will surround yourself with your own conclusions and dismiss or ignore any evidence to the contrary.

The very meaning of faith stands in stark contrast to this mindset. We have to live in exquisite, terrible humility before reality. In this space, God gives us a spirit of questing, a desire for understanding. In some ways it is like learning to “see in the dark.” We can't be certain of what's in front of us, but with some time and patience, our eyes adjust, and we can make the next right move.

The Gospel doesn't promise us complete clarity. If God wanted us to have irrefutable proof, the incarnation of Jesus would have been delayed until technology and science could confirm it.

Scriptures do not offer rational certitude. They offer us something much better, an entirely different way of knowing: an intimate relationship, a dark journey, a path where we must discover for ourselves that grace, love, mercy, and forgiveness are absolutely necessary for survival in an uncertain world. You only need enough clarity to know how to live *without* certitude! Yes, we really are saved by *faith*. People who live in this way never stop growing, are not easily defeated, are wise and compassionate, and frankly, are fun to live with. They have a quiet and confident joy. Infantile religion insists on certainty every step of the way and thus is not very happy.

**-Richard Rohr by way of Matt Shorten**

## Wonderful Weather

On a sunny but not too hot day in July

I sat on a bench on a porch, waiting a ride

Several people crossed the porch  
walked down steps and beyond

A woman in a summery yellow dress  
paused briefly. "This weather  
is wonderful-like that I knew  
in Spain in December"

Now I know what to expect  
should I ever find myself in  
Spain in December...

-July 26, 2019



From **Sandra Kocher**



## Reversal

When I was a child  
we had a fig bush in our  
back yard in Virginia-tall  
and true to its 18th century  
variety.

My Dad liked to take a  
few figs off the bush and  
eat them. "I don't like  
those," I pointed out.  
"Dried figs are much better."

Now that I am considerably  
older, I've discovered  
fresh figs! Sometimes  
I find them in supermarkets  
in summer or at a  
local farm stand that acquires  
them for its customers. I cut pieces  
off the sweet fresh figs  
and put them on my cereal  
instead of sliced banana.

Now I wish I lived  
near a productive fresh  
fig bush, maybe even move  
back to Virginia!

- February 23 & March 9, 2018

**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	-----	First 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](mailto:info@worcesterfriendsmeeting.org). Items of note for the next Newsletter may also be sent to [brennerfamily@gmail.com](mailto:brennerfamily@gmail.com) or dropped off at MeetingHouse.***