



FORT MYERS MONTHLY MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

Newsletter, Fourth Month, 2018

Worship: In the Iona House at the Calusa Nature Center
Mailing Address: 117 East Mariana Ave. North Fort Myers FL 33927
E-mail: ftmyers.quakers@gmail.com **Website:** www.fortmyersquakers.org

Clerk: Joan Culver (joanculver@gmail.com) • 1st Sunday of the Month: Pot Luck Lunch
Recording Clerks: Kathy Hale / Richard Frechette • 2nd Sunday of Month: Meeting for Worship
Treasurer: John Battin with Attention to Business

QUERIES & ADVICES *from Faith & Practice of Southeastern Yearly Meeting*

Mutual Care

Queries:

- How do we foster a spirit of community among the meeting's members and attenders?
- How does the meeting keep in contact with all of the meeting's members and attenders?
- How does the meeting assist couples and families to communicate, grow together, and rear children in a loving environment?
- Does the meeting community nurture the meeting's children?
- How does the meeting care for those who live alone, the sick, the aging, the widowed, the separated or divorced, and others with families affected by disruption?
- Do we assist Friends in need as their circumstances require?
- How do we labor with and care for those whose conduct or manner of living gives grounds for concern?

- How are visitors to our meeting made to feel welcome?

Advices:

- Be truthful and sincere, and thus encourage these qualities in others.
- Through example and education, help each other to recognize and follow the voice of God both in our spiritual lives and in joyful and willing service.
- Watch with tenderness over the opening minds of children. Seek to awaken in them the love and understanding of the life and teachings of Jesus and a sense of security in the love of God.
- Remember that there is a unique potential in each human being as a beloved child of God and that the Holy Spirit may lead children to give wise counsel to listening adults.
- Young people, too, have responsibility to care for the meeting and to participate in meetings both for worship and for business. Faith is needed as a vital part of our living.

MINUTES OF THE FORT MYERS MONTHLY MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

4th Month 8, 2018

The Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met in Iona House on 4th Month eight with seventeen Friends present. The meeting opened with a period of silent centering. Out of the silence, Clerk Joan Culver read queries and advices on mutual care. In response, a Friend noted that while coming to meeting this morning, she read the scripture where Jesus advised Simon Peter to feed the sheep. Another talked about keeping in touch with people who have been unable to attend worship on any given first day.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer John Battin reported that, to date, we have received contributions of \$6,969, and had outlays of \$2,473. Outlays included our approved aid to Puerto Rico for hurricane relief. We have a fund balance of \$33,909 in the General Fund Savings Account, and \$72,492 in the Meetinghouse savings account.

Finance: Friend Larry Butler sent the Meeting a note regarding Phil Stanley's bequest of to the Meeting. He urged that a decision on the use of the bequest be held until the Fall to give snowbirds an opportunity to weigh in on the decision. He also urged that at least some of those moneys be placed into the Meetinghouse Fund.

Peace and Social Concerns: Helen Fox read Clerk Carolyn Stanley's report that the Committee continues to support the efforts to establish a Children's Council in our County. Six members of the P&SC Committee is planning to meet with officials of the Cultivate Abundance program in Im-mokalee. The Committee is passing on a

request of SEYM's Peace & Social Concerns Committee for us to participate in a monthly letter writing campaign, the topic to be identified by different monthly meetings on a rotating basis. A second SEYM-P&SC initiative is a monthly Witness to Lawmakers, again with rotating responsibility for selection of the issue. We discussed the need for our meeting to facilitate increased interaction of our own Peace & Social Concerns Committee with other Meetings' Committees and with the SEYM P&SC efforts.

Hospitality: Suzanne Frechette reminded folks that the summertime departure of the Frechettes will leave a hole in the weekly set-up work of the committee and urged others to step up to the task. She also noted that we seem to have established an unofficial tradition of offering a vegetarian/vegan soup prior to the Monthly meeting for worship with attention to business and asked whether we need to continue this. The sense of Friends was that we do need to continue providing a simple pre-meeting meal, and we discussed ways to insure that this continues in the future, asking the Hospitality Committee to work out the logistics.

Properties: Suzanne Frechette reported that the renovation of the sign space in front of Iona House should be completed by mid-May. The floors will need to be worked on in the Fall, as well as additional bookcases in the front hall. She noted that the supply of physically able people to do more physical labor has diminished and that we may have to depend on hiring

workers for some projects. A Friend reported that there appears to be wasps entering the building. The Clerk asked Properties Committee to put together a comprehensive list of projects that need work. We also discussed the need to be judicious in taking on larger projects.

Outreach: Pat Iyre reported that the Committee is exploring the possibility of procuring Quaker T-shirts that we can wear at various events as an outreach endeavor. She passed out some paper samples of already-designed shirts. We shared our favorites. We asked the Committee to share the idea with Friends during the month and to re-present this proposal at the next meeting.

Tom Jacobs will create signs that can cover over the “No Trespassing” signs when we are gathered at the CNCP.

The Committee suggests that we invite Beverly Ward, the SEYM Earthcare Witness Secretary, to speak to us about combined environmental and racial injustice matters, focused on local issues.

Report on the SEYM Gathering: Nancy Howell reported on a minute coming out of SEYM Gathering relating to gun violence,

asking for us to witness to our legislators. She also reported on an SEYM Gathering Retreat Session focusing on the European immigrants’ treatment of native peoples that continues to this day. Coming out of this retreat session, SEYM approved a minute repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery. Both of these minutes will be posted in our next newsletter.

SEYM also approved the inclusion of the Earthcare Secretary position in the annual operating budget, as well as a Youth Program Coordinator position.

Calusa Nature Center & Planetarium: A fund raiser activity was held last week. The CNCP was appreciative of our contributions of time and money. The Agency will continue without an executive director for the short term, with rotating responsibilities among the Board.

Minutes of the meeting were read and approved. The Meeting ended with a period of silence.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Frechette
Co-Recording Clerk

**Fifth First Day – April 29 is *VISITATION SUNDAY*
A Day to Visit Another Meeting or Worship Group**

Take a Friend

We are all made richer by Intervisitation

Sponsored by SEYM Worship & Ministry Committee

2018 TREASURER'S YEAR-TO-DATE SUMMARY			
		<u>March</u>	<u>March</u>
		<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
	Contributions	\$3,975	6,969.00
	Outlays	(\$1,150)	(2,473.00)
	Difference	\$2,825	4,496.00
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	General Fund Cash on Hand Mar 1 ,2018		8,737.00
	General Fund Contributions Mar, 2018		1,883.00
	Transferred to General Fund Savings		(5,384.00)
	Budgeted Outlays Mar 2018		(740.00)
	Cash on Hand March 31, 2018		4,496.00
		#####	
	General Funds Savings Feb 28, 2018		11,711.00
	Phyl Stanley Bequest		15,810.00
	Transferred from General Funds		5,384.00
	Interest Earned 3/2018		4.00
	General Funds Savings March 31, 2018		32,909.00
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	Meeting House Savings Feb 28,2018		72,492.00
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A Report on the 2018 SEYM Gathering

Nancy Howell

The five-day yearly Gathering of Friends from the 15 monthly meetings and worship groups that make up SEYM was held from March 28 to April 1, 2018, with three Fort Myers people (out of some 125 SEYM people there) attending.

As usual, featured events included early morning worship by the lake, daily worship-sharing in small groups; six plenary sessions for Meeting for Worship with Attention to business (where Friends approved the Nominating Committees recommendations for officers and committee members for the next year, approved the proposed budget, accepted reports from active committees, and approved an Epistle to send out to all to the other yearly meetings). Other events include music (playing the piano after dinner and singing hymns, the surprisingly large “Faith and No Practice” band which played for the intergenerational dance on Friday evening, (but the usual “Jammin’ on the bench” was curtailed this year due to respiratory infections to Davida Johns and Peter Crockett). The Walton lecture was given this year by Sa’ed Atshan, a young professor of Peace Studies at Swarthmore, who shared his experiences at the Ramallah Friends School in Palestine, and his life in the U.S. with us. Other usual features include Laughter Yoga (led by Joel Cook), and Chanting in the Chapel (led by Kody Hirsh). I’d like to tell you in a bit more detail about a couple of workshops that impressed me deeply.

The first is “Water and Climate Justice: The SEYM Case Example”, offered by Beverly Ward, SEYM’s new Field Secretary for Earthcare, who is also a member of the Quaker Earthcare Witness United Nations Working Group. She taught us about the environmental justice movement and pointed out the frequency with which the

adverse impacts of climate change (such as sea level rise, displacement, access to clean water, and dumping of pollution and toxic chemicals) fall on communities of color. I’ve been aware over the past year that Beverly has been working her way around the SEYM territory to get to know the meetings, and that it would be appropriate to invite her to visit us and present some kind of a workshop, and so one of my motives in attending her workshop was to see a public presentation. I was pleased to see that Beverly is articulate and passionate in her work, and I have no hesitation in recommending to the Adult Education Committee that we should invite her for a visit in the fall. Indeed, given the presence in Fort Myers of at least two issues of gross injustice toward the communities of color – the dumping of arsenic-laden sludge from the local water treatment plants on a vacant, unfenced area in Dunbar where children have played for decades, and the failure to provide public clean water to the Charlestown Park area; along with the failure to notify the local communities of the risks of exposure in both cases - we might want to consider sponsoring a more public presentation, and asking for her recommendations for further action.

The second workshop I would like to report to you was presented by Cece Yocum, entitled “Peacebuilding en las Americas”. FMFM members and attenders had the benefit of Cece’s work earlier this year when she presented our annual retreat, on Spiritual Resources. Cece is a professional therapist, and one of the bravest people I have ever known. She has worked with Quaker Peace Teams in many communities in West Africa and has more recently shifted her work to Latin America, where she continues to lead groups in healing and

reconciliation after war, conflict and violence. Quaker Peace Teams not only respond to immediate threats to peace in their communities, but when they leave they leave behind dozens of people who have been trained in the work, ready to continue the work as needed. Based on the principles of Alternatives to Violence Project (AV), the limiting condition of QPT seems to be financial. Now that ProNica has been laid down, I think our meeting should consider transferring our support from ProNica to Quaker Peace Teams.

Finally, I wish you were all with me when I experienced “Roots of Injustice, Seeds of Change: Toward Right Relationship with Native People” presented by Kody Hersh and Jane Westburg, of the Miami Meeting (and a long-time attender of the Boulder Colorado meeting where this exercise was translated from a Canadian First Nations focus to a U.S. focus).

Imagine an open space, like a school gym, with overlapping blankets spread on the floor and a circle of chairs around them. As the audience arrives, each is given a small colored card, and asked to take a seat. As the exercise starts, the audience is asked to get up and crowd onto the area of the blankets, which we are told represents the U.S. We all represent the Native Peoples, and the territory all belongs to us before European contact. Then the presenter begins to read a simplified history of the native peoples experience over the past 500 years. Those holding blue cards are asked to go

sit down when the story focuses on the native peoples who died from European diseases to which they had no immunity; those with yellow cards leave the blanket area and sit down when the part of the story telling of how whole tribes lost their territory to expanding European settlement, and others died as a result of Indian wars, as one group invaded another’s territory. At each great loss of population, the audience is asked to remember and grieve for those who died. I had a pink card, and my group died during the great migration to Oklahoma territory, called “the trail of tears”. And at each step of history, helpers in the exercise roll up the edges of the blankets, reducing the territory available to the native peoples. It was a simple and moving experience, which felt respectful and educational.

That is only 3 of the 28 workshops offered during those five days, not a random selection, but those which I happened to experience and which moved me. Don’t you wish now that you had come? If you are thinking about coming next year, write down the web site address of SEYM (www.seym.org) and check it regularly during the year as the plans for next year are made. If you are concerned that you cannot drive that far during the week before Easter, talk with others in our meeting about ride-sharing. If you are concerned about the cost, there are fellowships available from our meeting, and from SEYM, to make it possible.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting of The Religious Society of Friends Minute on Relationships with Indigenous Peoples

Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends publicly repudiates the Doctrine of Discovery and supports the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting in Annual Sessions April 1, 2018

Southeastern Yearly Meeting of The Religious Society of Friends Minute on Stopping Gun Violence

Friends have a vision of humankind drawing together in mutual care, including reconciliation addressing both the safety of the victims of violent acts and the unmet needs of perpetrators of those violent acts. To this end, we demand that our government, school systems, and all adults in our children's lives take steps to face the root causes of violence in our society. As Quakers, we support the youth in their vision of a world without a ubiquitous background of violence, a world where people learn how to express feelings of anger and pain constructively. We have been numb to this need for too long. This is an issue to unite us in protection of the children and all the people we love. We urge the passage of several pieces of legislation that will make a beneficial difference for all Americans:

- Require universal background checks on every gun purchase.
- Implement a ban on all high-capacity ammunition magazines and military grade semi-automatic weapons.
- Reinstate the assault weapons ban or institute strict licensing similar to the National Firearms Act of 1934 (PL 73-474).
- Repeal the "Dickey Amendment", to allow federal health agencies to conduct research into the causes, effects, and evidence-based prevention of gun violence in our communities and provide funds for this work through Congressional action.
- Repeal Chapter 790.33 of Title 46 of the 2017 Florida Statutes "Field of Regulation of Firearms and Ammunition Preempted", which now prohibits local governments in Florida (Municipalities, Counties, Cities, etc.) from making any regulations more restrictive than the State laws to control guns or ammunition. Local governments should be able to pass their own regulations to ensure the safety of their citizens.

In a larger context, we share distress at the degree to which American culture accepts, uses, and relies on violence by individuals and groups to solve interpersonal and societal conflicts. We ally ourselves with the victims of such violence and with their sense of urgency in seeking reforms through non-violent means.

We affirm our belief, faith, and experience in the power of love, respect, tolerance and friendship as bases for living together with those around us, in family, community, societal and global relationships.

We intend to share this Minute with all people in Southeastern Yearly Meeting and all other Yearly Meetings in the USA, as well as our legislators and the students of Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. We encourage Friends to share this concern widely within their communities, to take action and start collaborating. Let us be open to whatever meaningful work our hearts are led to do.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting in Annual Sessions April 1, 2018

Nehemiah Action 2018

On Tuesday, March 20, eleven Ft. Myers Friends joined 789 other concerned residents from eleven congregations at St. Columbkille Catholic Church for the Seventh Annual Nehemiah Action organized by Lee Interfaith For Empowerment (LIFE).

Nehemiah, a biblical figure who called upon the people to rebuild Jerusalem in the fifth century B.C.E., is a fitting symbol for spiritual action that aims to improve life chances for Lee County's impoverished residents, especially children.

From Isaiah 58:6 This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke. Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke.

Lee County has a significantly worse record than the state average on children's welfare, including infant mortality, number of licensed childcare facilities, and rate of hospitalization of infants and young children. Only 31% of Lee County students enter school ready for kindergarten. Lee County has the lowest access to dental care by low income people in the entire state. Access to mental health care and high school graduation rate are below average. And sadly, Lee County teens experience three times the number of violent deaths of their peers compared to the State of Florida.

The goal of this year's Nehemiah Action is to establish a Children's Service Council, a body allowed by Florida statute that would provide and maintain preventative, developmental, treatment, and rehabilitative services for the children of Lee County. This, organizers believe, would be a long-term, sustainable solution to the issue of childhood suffering.

But four of the five Lee County Commissioners seem to have no interest in putting the issue on the ballot. In fact, none of the Commissioners even showed up at the Nehemiah Action event, where they had been invited to answer publically

two questions put to them in advance by the organizers: *Will you put a Children's Service Council on the November 2018 ballot? Will you introduce the Children's Service Council at a Commission meeting by April 30th, 2018?* Encouragingly, Commissioner Frank Mann (District Five) did send a letter answering "yes" to both of these questions. His response was greeted with cheers from the audience.

Also on the agenda was last year's Nehemiah Action initiative: reducing the number of youth arrested for non-serious offenses and instead, giving them civil citations, which would divert them to community programs without giving them criminal records. Unfortunately, only 11% of the 79 Ft. Myers children eligible for civil citations were issued them.



Police Chief Diggs of Ft. Myers was seated on the stage at the event. He was asked if he would work to create a written policy on civil citations, and if he would train all Ft. Myers police officers in their use. Chief Diggs answered "yes" to both these questions and was heartily applauded. However, when asked whether he would work to ensure that the number of Ft. Myers children is above the state average or 80%, whichever is higher, he said "no", explaining that he would not make a promise he couldn't keep. As previously instructed by the organizers, the audience greeted his negative response with silence.

The two-hour evening of song, prayer, speeches by various ministers, and questions for the officials ended with encouraging words from the organizers. Even though the chairs for the five

County Commissioners on state were conspicuously empty, the press was in attendance, and more actions will follow.

UPDATE: Since the Nehemiah Action, Commissioner Hamman agreed to meet with the organizers to discuss a Children’s Service Council. Commissioner Mann has sent a request to have the issue placed on the agenda of the Board of

Commissioners meeting on April 17th. Community support is requested, both for an action outside the courthouse and to make the case for a CSC before the officials. Please join the group if you can on **Tuesday, April 17th at 8:45 AM** outside the courthouse at 2120 Main St., Ft. Myers.

-Helen Fox

Friends General Conference Gathering 2018

Taste the vibrancy and the variety that is available by immersing yourself in this community of Friends for a week. We eagerly look forward to welcoming you — in person — to the Gathering!

Location: University of Toledo, OH

Dates: July 1-7, 2018

Theme: The Power of Truth

For More Information, go to www.fgcquaker.org/connect/gathering

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR FRIENDS

<http://seymquakers.org> Southeastern Yearly Meeting
www.fcnl.org Friends Committee for National Legislation
www.fgcquaker.org Friends General Conference
www.afsc.org American Friends Service Committee
<http://fwcc.world> Friends World Committee on Consultation
www.quakerspeak.com QuakerSpeak: A Quaker YouTube Channel.
www.quakerhouse.org Quaker House, Fayetteville
www.quakervoluntaryservice.org Quaker Voluntary Service
www.quno.org Quaker United Nations Office



Friends Meeting of Fort Myers
Religious Society of Friends
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Address Correction Requested

MEETING CALENDAR

All First Days	Pre-Worship Singing	9:55 am
	Meeting for Worship:	10:30 am
Tue 4/17	L.I.F.E. gathering outside Ft. Myers Courthouse	8:45 am
Sun 4/29	Visitation Sunday – Go visit another Quaker Meeting	
Sun 5/6	Pot luck lunch	At rise of worship
Sun 5/13	Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business	At rise of worship
	Last Chance Book Club	