

Portland Friends Meeting Newsletter

Third Month

Meeting for Worship: 10:30am Sundays

Connections

Co-Clerks

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Special Needs Funds

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Christine Fletcher

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Religious Education

Adult: On Hiatus

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Youth Religious Education Coordinator:

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“Attend to the Spirit at work in the ordinary activities and experiences of your daily life. There is inspiration to be found all around us, in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our work and friendships, in our sorrows as well as in our joys. Be open to and alert for how the Spirit may be speaking to you in fresh ways, leading you in new directions.”

—New England Yearly Meeting Advice No. 9

Calendar

April 4 10:30a Easter celebration with Youth Religious Education (details on p3)

10:30a Meeting for Worship via Zoom*

April 11 9a Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business*

April 30 Deadline for Leadings Grant Applications (details to follow on the e-group, or contact katherinegbeach@gmail.com)

Every Sunday: 10:30a Meeting for Worship*

Second Saturdays: 5-8p Youngish adults potluck
Bart Czyz, btczyz@gmail.com, 207 899 5937

*contact Co-Clerks for online Meeting for links

Portland Friends Meeting Email Lists

Our Meeting has two email lists, or, “google groups:”

- 1) *PFM Life of the Meeting*, for items directly related to Portland Friends Meeting business and/or directly Quaker items. Think, “official.” (Occasional messages about Members or Attenders will be shared, as needed.)

To send an announcement to this list, email:

pfm-life-of-the-meeting@googlegroups.com.

- 2) *PFM Wider Community*, for **any** items of interest from the PFM community to share, not necessarily *directly* related to Quakers, including (but not limited to) personal invitations or wider community events.

To send an announcement to this list, email:

pfm-wider-community@googlegroups.com.

For any questions related to the lists, including requests to add yourself to one or both: pfm.email.list.owner@gmail.com.

Portland Friends Meeting
Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business
March 7, 2021

We began in silent worship at 9:00 a.m., gathered remotely and connected via Zoom. There were 32 members and attenders present for this meeting.

Our presiding clerk, Lyn Ballou, read the New England Yearly Meeting Advice No. 9, "Attend to the Spirit at work in the ordinary activities and experiences of your daily life. There is inspiration to be found all around us, in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our work and friendships, in our sorrows as well as in our joys. Be open to and alert for how the Spirit may be speaking to you in fresh ways, leading you in new directions."

1. **Clerk's comments.** It is hard to think of this past year as 'ordinary life,' but in many ways, it is the essence of ordinary. We have been at home with those closest to us (if we are lucky). Now things are beginning to change, with more vaccinations given and activities previously unavailable or limited being allowed to open back up. As a meeting, we are beginning to wrestle with whether and how to return to worship together in the meetinghouse, and what we want to keep from our virtual experience.

2. **February Minutes.** The minutes from our February Meeting for Business were accepted as printed in the newsletter.

3. **Treasurer's Report.** Kathy Beach presented the report showing our expenditures and income through February. Friends continued to be very generous. There was a positive balance for the month of February. Income was \$10,185, expenses were \$6,871, leaving a positive balance of \$3,314.

Year-to-Date:

Income: \$16,315 (21%)

Expenses: \$11,506 (15%)

Balance: \$4,809

Next month, Daryl Renschler will report for the committee on our endowment funds through Friends Fiduciary at April's Meeting for Business.

4. **Ministry and Counsel.** Christine Fletcher reported. The committee has had some requests to explore a different use of Zoom for online worship in which there is use of a breakout room as the worship space. This is a practice that several other monthly meetings use in which greeting and socializing can happen in the main session (foyer) and then Friends can decide when they are ready to settle into worship by entering the worship breakout room. There has been one worship experience with this model and the committee is grateful for the patience and flexibility of the community during this experiment. The experiment will continue through the middle of March, with those helping work to smooth out the bumpy parts and explore possible benefits to this model. Friends expressed thanks to the 'tech' helpers for their patience and joy as they help all of us!

Ministry and Counsel is also starting to explore how there might be a move back to some form of in-person worship and how to maintain the ability for Friends to participate via Zoom in a hybrid model. One Friend noted that despite any state permission for larger gatherings, our worship room is one that lacks good ventilation, so we must be cautious in returning.

Beth Bussiere-Nichols discussed and read the State of Society Report for the second time. She noted suggestions and revisions had been made. There is also a plan for the content of the report to be reflected upon in worship sharing by any who would like to on March 21, 2021 at noon.

Friends approved the Report with many "thumbs up." The Report will be printed in the newsletter.

5. **Youth Religious Education.** Andy Grannell, Youth Religious Education coordinator, reported. The committee met this morning to discuss plans for Easter morning (April 4) at 10:30 for 30 minutes of multigenerational worship at an equestrian center in Cumberland, with fellowship to follow for all to attend. More information will be coming soon. There will likely be an opportunity to donate to the education of Bradly Iwungu, through Friends of Kakamega.

Virtual Meeting for Worship will also take place on that day as usual, via Zoom.

6. **Closing.** Our meeting closed in silent worship at 10:00 a.m., purposing to meet again, God willing, at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, April 11, 2021. (This is a change from our usual First Sunday date, due to the Easter holiday and gathering sponsored by YREC.)

Easter Sunday Gathering

We invite you to join us on Easter Sunday morning April 4th, at 10:30 am for in-person worship and fellowship (socially distanced) at Hideaway Acres Riding School in Cumberland. We plan to worship together for the first half-hour (10:30 - 11:00) and for those choosing - parents and youth - as an alternative to worship, there will be an opportunity to take a hike. Following worship, there will be an opportunity to enjoy hot drinks and catching up.

Sunday, April 4th
10:30 am to 11:30 A.M
Hideaway Acres Riding School
34 Rosa Way, Cumberland, ME 04201
RSVP to Andy Grannell

This will occur in a large horse riding barn at Hideaway Acres Riding School, located at 34 Rosa Way in Cumberland - which is a laneway directly across from the Cumberland County Fairgrounds. This is the same venue we had hope to use in early December for our Advent Gardens gathering - which had to be canceled. Please use your Google Map to plot out your best route to this site. There is ample parking and greeters will aid with navigating to the barn. For a quick look at the venue go to <https://www.hideawayacres.org/facilities>

Provided by friends of Chris Fitze, this venue is a very large (size of a soccer field) horse riding barn that will allow us to - maintain physical distancing in family clusters and with masks - while offering shelter from the elements.

As we have in the past Easter events - if you are able - we will be asking for donations toward the scholarship needs of Bradly Iwungu, our young Kakamega Care Center Young Friend.

Coffee, tea and wrapped donuts/pastries will be provided. Each member of your family should bring their own chair, a blanket to keep warm, dress for outdoor weather (boots for mud-it is mud season after all), and a mug/thermos.

If you are able to join us, please RSVP to Andy Grannell via email grannell90@gmail.com

We do hope you can join us!



Portland Friends Meeting State of Society 2020 Final

If our physical building, the Meetinghouse, and our community structure, “the way we have always done things,” create the loom, then this year we are the cloth that has been cut free.

In January our meeting was disrupted by a pair of visitors who rose repeatedly during worship and spoke in ways that were first alienating then abusive to community members. We are grateful that we were initially led to vocal ministry and then, in the moment, to stand silently as a body against this language. Our weeks of processing the event led us to affirm the gift of meeting for worship and the importance of ongoing discernment on how best to care for it. Some imagined that our biggest challenge was behind us.

But then in March, the COVID global pandemic changed everything, requiring us to find a way to stay safe. We were suddenly discerning whether we could hold Meeting for Worship online. The answer was and is “Yes,” with some gains and some losses. Many Friends have enjoyed the benefits of no need to travel, having everyone’s name connected to their image, and being with participants from faraway places such as England, Florida, Texas, and California. Many have found a sense of gathered worship—an experience that can be elusive even in person. Others have found their worship elsewhere but joined us for the chance to connect to community. Finally, there are a number of friends for whom Zoom just hasn’t worked in any way. They might connect with community in other ways, and find their worshipful spaces on the beach, in their living room, or in their art studio. Or their sense of Divine companionship might come with their dogs in the woods, or in their kitchen, shining in their children’s faces.

We began the year with our Racial Learning Circles studying Robin DiAngelo’s *White Fragility* and watching NEYM videos on “Noticing Patterns of Oppression & Faithfulness.” In the spring, the need to reckon with our nation’s history of racial oppression demanded our attention, driving a search for how to live into a response. We wrestled, largely without success, with how to give timely corporate voice to our concerns. Meanwhile, individuals and ad hoc groups stepped up to address social and political issues as they arose in the wider community in this very troubled and troubling year, which included what may have been the most tumultuous election season in our country’s history. Our weekly email of announcements from the rise of Meeting kept us informed about the life of the Meeting and about community events. Our separate e-group called PFM Wider Community allowed sharing on a range of topics and was particularly valuable in the pandemic for activists addressing Indigenous Rights, Climate Change, and other concerns. In the fall, our studies continued with Ibram X. Kendi’s *How to Be an Anti-Racist*.

We have worked to stay connected. As the country went into lockdown, Co-clerks and Ministry and Counsel worked with Pastoral Care to create a survey and identify Friends most in need of support. Pastoral Care then worked with volunteers to make follow-up emails or phone calls to ensure that needs for groceries and emotional support were met. In the fall, we began a Friendly Connection Project to have one-on-one conversations with all who are active in Meeting. We wanted to make sure that everyone knows that they are a treasured member of our community. Callers and “callees” reported rich conversations. We heard a variety of responses to the question “How are you, Friend?” Many folks have been doing well, others managing day to day, while about one person in five has needed some additional support. Some are challenged by lives that are very full, for example, working from home while supporting kids doing school. Others live alone and miss connection with people. Reduced mobility and health issues can lead to further loneliness and stress. Overall, this outreach effort meant that 160 individuals had the opportunity to give voice to how they were doing and to share any ideas they had regarding the life of the meeting and their spiritual journeys. We are continuing this project in 2021.

We are busy. Sunday morning Zoom worship was attended by an average of about sixty-two people, and Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business by an average of thirty-nine. Meanwhile, many of our committees continued to function well. The Library, Buildings and Grounds, and Cemetery Committees and a spontaneous gardening group used this fallow time for maintenance projects, such as installing bookshelves, surveying burial plots, paving our eroding parking lot, and transforming the plantings around the grounds. Each spring Nominating Committee finds the right person for each of our more than one hundred positions to keep us going throughout the year. They stepped nimbly online to complete their work in 2020. Meanwhile, the Youth Religious Education Committee struggled. It has been largely composed of parents who were now juggling work, schooling that was often online, and children needing extra care. Home life might be rich, but extra energy for Meeting activities was not always there. We also have had an extended family, long very active with programs and in our community, which needed and continues to need to support a family member with a serious illness. The usual end of First Day School celebration in June and the Advent Gardens in December were planned but then canceled, for safety reasons. Although a fall survey showed more than half the families likely to participate in First Day School, there just wasn’t the energy and a clear way to actually create and deliver a program. Fortunately, the NEYM online youth programs have nurtured a number of our children.

(cont-)

Sometimes we found new ways to join together. Last winter PFM had two intergenerational family game nights. When use of the Meetinghouse ended, tech savvy folks created music and story nights, an art party, and a Quaker trivia night via Zoom. Family Promise, a program that provides temporary housing and support so that un-housed families can stay together and get the help they need to move out of homelessness, went through changes also. With COVID, we weren't able to provide the usual four weeks per year of housing and meals at our Meetinghouse, as was true for the whole of a consortium of churches to which we belong. Instead, we gave and continue to give needed support to one graduate family living in their own apartment.

Friends School of Portland is an independent organization that relies on the Meeting for spiritual and practical support. They have been able to continue to be an in-person place of learning by creatively clustering students in small groups, expanding outdoor learning, and using their new well-ventilated building.

We had fewer places to be together. We could not greet one another in the front lobby or during coffee hour at the rise of meeting. Instead we found other ways to deepen our connections. Everyone was invited to stay after our Zoom Meetings for Worship and join one of several small, breakout groups to talk about their spiritual journeys, their joys and concerns. Also, other online worship services were added: a half-hour worship each weekday morning and a Meeting for Healing each Thursday evening. On two Sundays in the Fall, safe-distanced and masked meetings for worship were held outside at the back of the Meetinghouse. Also, PFM launched a variety of small ongoing gatherings, such as Faithfulness groups and Curiosity groups, which have been feeding many Friends. Looking ahead, Ministry and Counsel, and the Health and Wellbeing Committee, and the Welcoming Committee are all envisioning hybrid meetings for worship and for other purposes, once we are able to safely gather in-person again.

We have found ourselves in the last few years a big and growing Meeting, which is something to celebrate. For the second year, we added ten new members. However, as we reflect, many are concerned that we may be dividing into separate "neighborhoods", separate conversations. We have long-time Friends who call one another with joys and concerns, young adult Friends who choose to live near each other and share a midweek worship, families with young children creating First Day classes and supporting each other. We share a Sunday morning meeting, but some feel like outsiders in the meeting. We will be looking to build more bridges between the neighborhoods.

Soon after we had moved online, we received two gifts when the families of two longtime Friends whose deaths were near used Zoom to bring them to meeting for worship a few days before they passed. Technology reached across miles and gave us the opportunity as a community to join the sacred circle of hospice and be together in saying goodbye. In the next days, technology was put aside with all attending masked and safely distanced as each of the Friends had a simple, natural burial in our cemetery.

If our physical building, the Meetinghouse, and our community structure, "the way we have always done things," create the loom, then this year we are the cloth that has been cut free.

We are the cloth cut free.

Loosed from the loom,

We are vulnerable to unravelling but now useful to serve,

Liberated to take new shapes and meet new purposes.

We are a wrap for lonely shoulders and a picnic blanket on the meetinghouse lawn.

We are a cozy colorful throw for each of our Meeting children

And winter coats for a family seeking safety here.

We cover our loved ones deep within the Earth as they journey ahead.

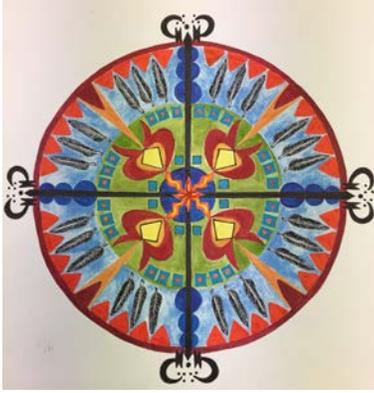
We reach out to join the world in grief and honor our connected threads.

We reach within to understand the living and the wounds we are called to bind.

We worship with a rising joy practicing new, even awkward motions.

We are imperfect, tattered, beautiful.

We are the cloth, the banner flung high and free, our colors luminous against the sun.



INDIGENOUS MATTERS

by Wayne Cobb (wcobb2@gmail.com)

Lots of activity to report this month!

Because of a hiatus caused by the pandemic, last year's legislative session ended without a vote on the comprehensive bill LD 2094, which would have amended the Maine Settlement Act of 1980 and restored a large measure of self-determination to the Tribes in Maine.

As one legislator put it, using a baseball analogy, "We were leading in the bottom of the ninth inning with two out when the game was called." As a result, the bill will be resubmitted in the current session, with minor modifications. Passage of this bill is a top priority of the Wabanaki Alliance (<https://wabanakialliance.com>)

At least ten other bills relating to the Wabanaki Tribal communities are in the works. The Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy is following all of these closely, and will be submitting testimony at several hearings. Be in touch with me if you would like a listing of those bills.

I strongly recommend watching the one-hour video recording of Tribal Sovereignty and the Maine Legislature, a very informative panel discussion held recently. Joined by many of the Tribal leaders in Maine, it clearly explains the Settlement Act and the need for change. The video is available here: <https://youtu.be/7gVGeCchl8Y> This would be an excellent link to send to your legislators with the recommendation that they watch it and support the needed changes.

The Maine Indigenous Awareness Group (<https://www.miag-group.org/>) in Brunswick is a great source for learning about Native history and lifeways. Their book group, now three years running, has been attended by a number of Portland Friends. They will begin discussing *Women of the Dawn* by Bunny McBride on April 2. The book tells the stories of four remarkable Wabanaki women who lived during the four centuries that devastated their traditional world. Their courageous responses to tragedies brought on by European contact make up the heart of the book. Meetings are on Fridays from 10 AM to noon, and there is no charge. Group membership is limited, so register soon by contacting Mia Beale at matzatlx@gmail.com

Finally, New Moon Teachings is sponsored by Friends of Katahdin Woods and Waters. This month's online session is titled "Wabanaki Place Names-Understanding Wabanaki Landscape." The series, which takes place monthly on the new moon, will convene next on Saturday, March 13th from 6:00pm to 7:30pm. Panel members are James E. Francis, Sr. (Director of Cultural and Historic Preservation, Penobscot Nation) and Donald Soctomah (Passamaquoddy Tribal Historic Preservation Officer).

Register at

[https://www.friendsofkww.org/new-moon/?](https://www.friendsofkww.org/new-moon/?fbclid=IwAR0i8uHFw2av7mbmZLRYGlell05_IRGAHRZeC-2T2_oUsnloEgD89aqzoYs)

[fbclid=IwAR0i8uHFw2av7mbmZLRYGlell05_IRGAHRZeC-2T2_oUsnloEgD89aqzoYs](https://www.friendsofkww.org/new-moon/?fbclid=IwAR0i8uHFw2av7mbmZLRYGlell05_IRGAHRZeC-2T2_oUsnloEgD89aqzoYs)

Love: It's in the fresh air

Forged by outdoor adventures shared together in Maine, we bring you three love stories on Valentine's Day.

By Deirdre Fleming

excerpted from Maine Sunday Telegram, 2/14/21, link below

Maine is full of couples who camp, hike, fish, hunt and ski together. But how many met while enjoying their favorite outdoor activity? Or how many couples spent their first date in the wild natural area that is a favorite for both?

This Sunday we bring you the love stories of three such couples, and not just because it's Valentine's Day. But because now, more than ever, we all need stories of how love prevails.

These couples credit their shared love of Maine's wild areas with the deep connection they found with the hiking or paddle partner who eventually became their life partner. They said finding the calming, centering, hopeful spirit in the Maine outdoors made plotting a future with this person a no-brainer.

Perhaps Rob Levin of Portland said it best: "I don't know what would have happened if we didn't paddle (the Maine coast) together. Maybe we would have gotten together. But the tide and the rhythm of the Maine coast was a big part of it."

SARAH AND ROB

Sarah Cushman and Rob Levin were only acquaintances when they met in college in Philadelphia in the mid-1990s. But two years after college, Rob was on his way to Washington, D.C., and stopped on a whim to visit Sarah in Maryland, where she lived at the time.

She suggested they go kayaking on a nearby river. And on that paddle in 1998, Sarah shared her dream of paddling the Maine Island Trail, a network of 200 wild islands where kayakers can camp. She once led trips to the islands as a camp counselor near her home in Woolwich, and longed to return. Rob offered to paddle the island trail with her that summer, and they planned a twoweek adventure.

That wilderness trip didn't lead immediately to courtship, but they both said it made it inevitable.

They left from Castine and headed Down East, with porpoises following them at the start.

"We talked about giving each other space with independent walks, and separate journaling time. Instead, it was two weeks of this soul-mate conversation,"

Sarah said. "I never had anything like that. We had the most powerful experience."

The charmed adventure was not without mishap. Near the end of the trip, the high Down East tides pulled their kayaks off an island and set them afloat at sea, leaving the two stranded. They flagged down a lobsterman and his sternman, who rescued them and brought them to Milbridge.

Turns out, the abrupt end to their trip was serendipitous. Rob later retrieved Sarah's kayak from another helpful lobsterman – providing him the perfect excuse to see her again.

They started dating soon after, and three years later they married and moved to Maine.

"Some sparks had flown, but it wasn't like we planned to spend the rest of our lives together," Rob said.

"It took another year. But I'm fully convinced, I owe my life to the Maine coast."

Excerpted from https://edition.pagesuite.com/popovers/dynamic_article_popover.aspx?artguid=d4a70065-2079-4594-b698-c3cfe932ff17&appid=3533

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Address Service Requested

Next newsletter deadline:
Tuesday, April 13, 11:59pm

submissions: pfmnewsletter@grantwinners.net

