

# Portland Friends Meeting Newsletter

## Second Month 2024

**Meeting for Worship:** 10:00 am Sundays (childcare available)

**Note recent change in time to 10:00 am.**



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## Contents

Page 1 Calendar

- 2 PFM Retreat
- 2 Request from Friends Camp
- 3 Gun Safety Awareness
- 4 Leap into action on Leap Day
- 4 Please Save This Date!
- 5 Poor People's Campaign
- 6 MIRC Update
- 6 Family Promise Update
- 7 Emergency Family Shelter is Opening
- 7 News from Portland Friends School
- 9 Meet the Man...
- 9 Our New Sign!
- 10 High Schoolers Hanging Out
- 10 PFM Teens Perform!
- 11 Climate Justice Camp
- 11 First Day Morning in January

## Connections

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If we want a better world, we must be prepared to do some careful thinking. It is time we stopped being sketchy on a matter which really touches us all so closely. For in reality this matter of handling conflict constructively is of immediate interest to everyone who has ever been angry or afraid, resentful, revengeful or bitter; who has ever taken part in a fight, mob-violence or war; or who has been the object of anger, hatred, exploitation or oppression. It touches all who are troubled lest the great economic, political and social questions which are pressing upon all nations will issue in appalling violence and increased insecurity for everyone. It is also important to those who hope that somehow the ideals and conduct of mankind can be harmonised, and ideals be made practical.

~ Richard B. Gregg, *The Power of Non-Violence*

## Calendar



### Upcoming Events

Sunday, Feb. 25, 10:00 am

First Day School for high schoolers

Sunday, Feb. 25, Rise of Meeting (RoM)

Zoom call regarding one-time donation to aid AFSC in meeting the emergency in Gaza

Thursday, Feb. 29, 7:00 pm

Zoom Letter Writing Party for Maine Gun Safety

Saturday, Mar. 2, 10:00 am

Poor People's March, Augusta

Sunday, Mar. 3, RoM

Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business

March 8-10, schedule TBD

PFM Retreat, Meeting House

Tuesday, Mar. 19, 6:00 pm

Zoom call with Friends Fiduciary

June 30-July 6

Friends General Conference, Haverford PA

### Every Month

Every Sunday, 10:00 am

Meeting for Worship\* at the Meetinghouse and separately on Zoom

**Note recent time change to 10:00 am**

Second & Fourth Sundays, 10:00 am

First Day School for high schoolers

Every Weekday, 10:30 am

Meeting for Worship on Zoom\*

First Thursdays & Third

Meeting for Healing on Zoom\*

Tuesdays, 7:00 pm

\*contact Clerk for online Meeting for Worship links



Harvesting mustard flowers for the Basant Panchami festival in India

## PFM Retreat!

Our meeting retreat is coming soon! You can [register yourself and your family members here](#).

We can share with you [this draft schedule](#), which is still subject to change, but will give you a sense of what the retreat might be like. We hope that many of us can attend all parts of the weekend, though we understand this may not be possible for everyone. Friday night will be a joyful time for us to play, build trust, get comfy as a group, and center down so that on Saturday we can jump right into the spiritual deep end. We know that for some, extended worship will be an important way to reveal the fruits of our time together, and so we welcome you to come begin Sunday worship early, at 9:00 a.m., to blend seamlessly into our usual 10:00 a.m. worship.

Here is a little of what has been guiding our planning work, and what you can come hungry for:

- We gather together to feel God's unconditional love for us, through one another, expecting to be transformed by that. There are so many ways to do that during a weekend retreat! Worship, singing, lingering conversations over tea, learning a new game, caring for our children, washing dishes, going for a walk with a new friend...
- If we play, be silly, have fun, and learn from our inner child, this may help us let our guards down, be our authentic selves, and see one another through God's eyes.
- Whether we have been at PFM for 30 years or 3 weeks, we can show up to this retreat with a beginner's mind, ready to greet one another anew.
- When we feel our inherent belovedness, we can do hard things. This time in retreat together prepares us for the hard work we do in the future.
- **We're showing up to this retreat expecting to be changed.** It might feel weird or corny or unfamiliar at first, but when we push through that, we may reach a deeper communion with each other and Spirit.

Feel free to reach out if anything above doesn't make total sense to you or if you want to chat to figure out if this retreat feels right for you or your family.

Please make sure you sign up as soon as you can, as this will give us more time to plan and more helpful info about what everyone needs to have a great retreat experience. It's especially helpful to know about all dietary restrictions and how many kids will attend with a couple weeks in advance.

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## Request from Friends Camp

Friends Camp is seeking Registered Nurses! FC is looking for RNs who are available to help out on a day or two throughout the summer, or who could work a two-week session in July or August. If you are interested in learning more, please reach out to Friends Camp at [director@friendscamp.org](mailto:director@friendscamp.org) or by calling 207-877-4302.

***Friends Camp*** is a Quaker youth camp of the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends. We offer overnight camp sessions for youth ages 7-17 on China Lake in South China, Maine.

## Gun Safety Awareness

The weekend of February 16-18, 2024, faith communities in Maine are participating in a “Gun Safety Awareness Sabbath,” praying in unity for safety from gun violence for our families, communities, and state.

In the last decade, the rate of gun deaths in Maine grew by 20% and the rate of suicide by gun grew 27%. In an average year, guns kill nearly 150 Mainers, 8 of them children. Every 67 hours here in Maine, someone kills themselves using a gun. Every 67 hours.

We can do better. We *must* do better. Let us begin by joining our voices in prayer this Gun Safety Awareness Sabbath weekend. And then, let our prayers inspire action to ensure that Mainers who own guns do so safely and responsibly, that those who sell firearms are empowered and required to protect our communities from those who are unable to practice safe and responsible gun ownership, and that the capacity of guns to inflict mass casualties is limited.

For information about getting involved in advocacy efforts: [Maine Gun Safety Coalition](#)

For faith-based resources: [Maine Council of Churches](#) and remember that each denomination and faith tradition has resources specifically designed for your community of faith.



## Leap into action on Leap Day...

... by joining our Zoom Letter Writing Party for Maine Gun Safety. Here are the details:

- Thursday, February 29, 7 to 8-ish pm
- To register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMvdu-grD0rHdXBsyoa-ISvKkY9BriDTNlk> (to avoid zoom bombing you'll have to quickly take a moment to register)
- Not sure what to say in your letter? We'll send you a template you could use, or you can write your own if you feel inspired!

Come spend an hour with Quakers and others throughout Maine by writing letters to your legislators, Janet Mills, or the newspaper, to promote the [four priorities of the Maine Gun Safety Coalition](#).

Make it even more of a party by invite friends to join you in person at your home, and then log on together! And feel free to share this email invite.

Can't make the party? That's ok, you can write a letter on your own time. We have a Letter to the Editor Toolkit, and you can also use that to help you reach out to Janet Mills or your legislator. Find your legislators here:

<https://nrcm.salsalabs.org/mainelegislatorlookup/index.html>.

We also have a list of high-priority legislators who could use more nudging on this issue. Most of them are outside of Greater Portland (although one is in part of Westbrook and Windham). But please take a few minutes with the list, and if you know someone who lives in one of these towns, please reach out to them to contact their legislator, and invite them to this zoom party. This is how the work gets done!

Hosted by members of Portland Friends Meeting and Durham Friends Meeting, open to all!

Rob Levin and Heather Denkmire and Valerie Todd and Leslie Manning

For the Toolkit or the list, or if you have questions: email [rob@roblevin.net](mailto:rob@roblevin.net).

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## Please save this date!

Tuesday, March 19th, 6-7 pm

Learn from Friends Fiduciary about the ways in which Quaker values influence its approaches to investing and shareholder advocacy.

Amy Carr, Friends Fiduciary Senior Shareholder Advocate, and Eston Griffin, Director of Constituent Relations, will offer information and insights, and respond to our questions. This program will be held via Zoom.

Both Portland Friends Meeting and Friends School of Portland entrust management of their invested funds to Friends Fiduciary. Members of both communities are welcome to participate in this virtual event.

An email link and program reminder will be provided closer to the event date.

We hope that many within our community will take advantage of this learning opportunity. Please feel free to contact me at [jmmmaine@aol.com](mailto:jmmmaine@aol.com) with questions.

Sent with appreciation,

Jane Mullen, Co-Treasurer, on behalf of the Financial Stewardship Committee

p.s. If the 6-7 pm timing of this event overlaps with your evening mealtime, please feel free to enjoy your meal while participating in the program!

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## Poor People's Campaign

Dear Friends,

We received the following letter from Vassalboro Quarter. Details (time, place, registration, how to support if you cannot attend) about the gathering are at the end of this email.

Love fritz

Last Sunday, Feb. 11, Acadia Friends Meeting and Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting overwhelmingly found clearness to endorse the Poor People's Campaign (PPC) and a State House Assembly to be held in Augusta on Saturday, March 2, 2024. Assemblies will be held in 31 state capitals and the District of Columbia on the same day.

The March 2 Augusta campaign will be led by Maine people. All are "low income and poor," struggling to pay their bills.

They will tell personal stories (3 minutes each). All the rest of us are there as faith leaders and activists to support them.

We are empowering low income people to vote and to speak to legislative leaders.

As every state is independent, they all have different laws. The Assembly will focus on legislative goals that our Maine Legislature can pass this session regarding:

1. A living wage
2. Voting Rights
3. Gun Laws
4. Health Care

On Saturday, March 2, we will be speaking through the press and our presence to the Maine Legislature.

With Monthly Meeting carpools, would you join us for this one day to travel to Augusta? As the capital is closed, it will be a Saturday outdoors (unless we seek shelter together in a restaurant or church.) If good weather, we might all bring our bag lunch and have a picnic together.

I attended by Zoom the national leadership training with hundreds from all over the nation. Tonight, Feb 15 at 7 pm, I will go to the Maine state training.

Will you join me in making it clear to those who represent us in Augusta that Maine citizens of faith, including Quakers, care that laws are passed allowing "low wage and the poor among us" to have a fair chance to join the middle class?

Please let me know if you can attend or wish to endorse the March 2 Assembly.

In friendship,

Carole Beale [carolebeal@gmail.com](mailto:carolebeal@gmail.com)

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The Organizers Plan is as follows:

- 10 am gather in Capitol Park.
- 11 am begin a half mile march to the Capitol.
- 11:30 - noon Begin speakers lasting 1 1/2 hours and perhaps 2 hours.

There will be:

1. porta potties in Capitol Park, half mile away from the speakers.
2. they suggest bringing a chair as there are none.
3. they suggest dressing warmly as it amounts to a long time in the cold.
4. they plan to provide streaming (and a crew is arriving to set it up.)

The request is that if you plan to attend, register at this link:

<https://actionnetwork.org/events/mass-poor-peoples-and-low-wage-workers-state-house-assembly>

If you know you cannot attend in person, but want to register your support, go to:

[www.poorpeoplescampaign.org](http://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org)



## MIRC Update

The monthly membership meeting of the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC) was held on February 13, 2024. Dorothy Grannell, Ann Dodd-Collins and Fritz Weiss attended for PFM.

Important items of discussion included:

- The Office for New Americans (ONA) bill has been reported out of committee and will come to the floor. The Governor supports this. On 2-12 the Republican press conference complained about money being spent providing “Taj Mahals” for immigrant families while ordinary Mainers struggle to find housing, so this seems to be becoming a partisan issue in this election year in Maine.
- Portland City Council unanimously approved full funding for the city resettlement team.
- Mufalo will be on Sabbatical leave until mid-May; and interim Executive Director, Emmanuel Sungubele, has been named.
- Effective 2-12, asylum seeking families who arrive in Portland are directed to a “self-directed housing search” as the hotel stays are continuing to be phased out and there is no room in any of the family shelters.

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## Family Promise Update

Ann Dodd-Collins reports the following:

Dear PFMers who have been involved with Family Promise,

I am planning to visit the offices of Senators Collins and King next week during Congress's February recess, and I am inviting you to join me and Family Promise staff and volunteers to advocate for a humane migration policy.

Last October I went to Washington DC for a workshop on Migration Justice which was offered by Friends Committee on National Legislation. Since then I have attended follow-up meetings on zoom. FCNL is now asking for people to visit their senators' local offices during Congress's February break.

Lawmakers—on both sides of the aisle—seem determined to pass damaging policies that would make it almost impossible for people to seek asylum in the United States. We must never close the door on communities escaping harrowing tragedies, devastation, and persecution.

Our visit would be what is called a “drop-by” visit, which is low stress and very short. We would simply state why we are there and leave behind an FCNL handout on Migration Justice and a cover letter saying what Greater Portland Family Promise is and why we care. The FCNL handout includes a request to provide \$800 million for the Shelter and Services Programs in the FY 2024 Department of Homeland Security budget. This funding could impact GPFM because it is designated for community and faith organizations sheltering and working with asylum seekers.

The handout is available at <https://www.fcnl.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/migration-feb-recess.pdf>.

We're currently planning to visit this coming Friday (February 23<sup>rd</sup>) and I'm happy to talk with you about this. Contact me by email, phone, or text.

Ann

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## The emergency family shelter at State Street Church in Portland is opening on March 17!

Faith communities have signed up to cover the first four weeks, and Portland Friends Meeting has been asked to cover a week (perhaps with a partner) as well. Our next Meeting for Worship with Concern for Business is on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, but we can sign up as individuals now to help fill in open slots. Three volunteers are needed each evening, one to join a staff member in welcoming families and two to stay overnight.

If you would like more information, or if you already know you want to help, please contact Ann Dodd-Collins at [doddco@gmail.com](mailto:doddco@gmail.com) or 207-232-9576. I've already signed up to help when Trinity Episcopal hosts in April.

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## News from Portland Friends School



*Seventh and eighth-grade students singing the song about Bayard Rustin they wrote at a recent morning meeting share of "Inspirational Change Makers"*

### 1. Friends School Rolling Admissions:

Friends School of Portland is still accepting students for 2024-2025 school year on a rolling basis for limited openings. Interested in learning more? Reach out to Enrollment Director, Megan Campbell by email: [megan@friendsschoolportland.org](mailto:megan@friendsschoolportland.org)

### 2. Friends School Summer Camp

Friends School Summer Camp registration has closed. You can email Summer Camp Director, Laura, for information about wait lists for the following camps: Chickadee Camp (Ages 4-5), Crow Camp (Ages 9-11), and CIT Camp (Ages 12-14). All Fox Camp (Ages 6-8) Wait Lists are closed.

FSP is also hiring summer camp counselors! Interested in learning more? Visit FSP's Summer Camp website pages:

<https://www.friendsschoolportland.org>

and reach out to Camp Director, Laura, at [laura@friendsschoolportland.org](mailto:laura@friendsschoolportland.org).



### 3. Friends School of Portland Annual Fundraising Auction

You are invited to the Annual Friends School Fundraising Auction!

This year, the online auction begins Monday, May 5 and runs through Friday, May 10.

After the bidding is over, we hope that you will join us for a celebration at FSP on Saturday, May 11. This will include food, music by the Rodney Mashia Project, kids' activities, and auction item pick-up.



We hope that you will consider donating to the auction this year! The auction is Friends School of Portland's most important fundraising event. Proceeds go directly to FSP's Annual Fund, which supports the most essential aspects of FSP supplements tuition aid and supports our amazing teachers' salaries and classroom activities. Last year, we had a successful auction because of all the generous donations of items and services.

The deadline to contribute items to be auctioned is Friday, April 26! Get the creative juices flowing! Think of a way you love to spend your time, build community and being kind to others - is it sitting around a campfire? Donate a professionally built stone fire pit. Is it taking time to relax with family? Donate a week stay at a cabin. Is it enjoying delicious homemade food? Donate a homemade pie or cake! Is it spending time in nature learning new things? Donate a plant ID or mushroom walk. Is it making art? Donate a photograph, watercolor, or piece of art made by you.

Learn more about this year's auction and how to donate an item on the Friends School of Portland website here:

<https://www.friendsschoolportland.org/annual-auction>

Last day to donate an item is Friday, April 26.

Items can be dropped off at Friends School of Portland during the school day (Mon-Friday 8am-5:30 pm) or reach out to Development Director, Brooke Burkett to arrange an alternate pick up on a Sunday at PFM. Reach out with any questions to Brooke Burkett at [brooke@friendsschoolportland.org](mailto:brooke@friendsschoolportland.org), by phone at 207-558-6214, or in person (at meeting).



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## Meet the man who keeps our grounds snow- and ice-free!

After a thorough search by your Building & Grounds Committee in late 2022, Gaël Taty, CEO of G Services of Portland, was selected as our new snow removal contractor.

Gaël Taty arrived in the United States as an asylum seeker in 2014. Houston was his first stop, but he moved to Maine six months later. He launched his business, Painting & Services, in 2016, but it wasn't until 2019 that Painting & Services really began to take off. Because Taty's English was limited in 2016, he received lots of negative feedback from potential clients, who wouldn't give him a chance when he picked up the phone and they heard his accent; some even hung up on him. So he decided to work as a Direct Service Provider (DSP) for a while, and also had a job with the airlines. Meanwhile, he honed his language skills.

Taty encourages Americans not to be afraid of people whose English is weak. "Give people a chance – let them prove to you that they are capable. In my case, early on a manager trusted me despite my weak English. He liked me, and trusted me – and that made all the difference. People need to get a chance, no matter what," he said.

If you happen to see Gaël at our meeting house in the course of his duties, take a moment to reach out and thank him for his excellent service over the past fourteen months. Gaël and his team also do house painting (interior and exterior), and deep cleaning. Visit his website: <https://www.gpaintingandservices.com/>



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## Our New Sign!



Many thanks to Wayne Cobb and the Buildings & Grounds Committee for this update!

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## High Schoolers Hanging Out

Heather Denkmire reports the following:

In January, five high schoolers met with me in the teen room (masking or COVID negative test). We tried using Quaker process to decide what activities they'd like to do together, and when and where they'd like to meet. The 2nd and 4th Sundays during Meeting for Worship is the general plan, with other activities to happen on other days and times. This month, we talked through group agreements to be sure everyone feels welcome and safe in our group. One of my favorites that ended up on the dry erase board of agreements was

“take space/make space” to ensure everyone has a voice. Here is a picture from that first day. There were six present on the 2nd Sunday in February (imagine this photo plus one high school senior). The energy is positive, warm, and open. We hope to do some arts and crafts with Family Promise children in the near future.



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## PFM Teens Perform!



Here we see Martin Eller Fitze (in bed, Grampa Joe) and Althea Denkmire (standing, Mrs. Bucket) who were in the smash hit, Willy Wonka, put on by Casco Bay High School. There were great contingents of Portland Friends Meeting folks in attendance for most of the shows, thanks everyone!

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## Climate Justice Camp

Although we still have a long time before summer returns, it is never too early to start planning, especially when your young people are involved. This year, the BTS Center is thrilled to be offering a Climate Justice Camp for teens in partnership with Pilgrim Lodge on beautiful Lake Cobbosseecontee in West Gardiner, Maine. Registration is now open, so please spread the word to any high schoolers you know!



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## First Day Morning in January

The sounds and smells of him  
baking bread  
in the background.

Feet shuffling, chair shifting of people  
worshiping together  
in the fore ground.

a cough  
a sneeze  
a gentle breeze

While a wintery mix -- snow  
waits to descend  
from the clouds above ground.

Wrapped in silent expectation,  
centering Friends plant faith-filled roots  
in the indigenous ground.

~ Jo Linder

**Address Service Requested**

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Portland, ME 04103**

**Next newsletter deadline:**

*Wednesday, March 6, 11:58 pm*

**submissions: [dhingston@comcast.net](mailto:dhingston@comcast.net)**

*Please note "PFM Newsletter" in the subject line.*



*Kites flying at the Basant Panchami festival in India*