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Query for June: Stewardship

How do we cherish and protect the beauty and balance of the natural world? How do we demonstrate our belief that our lives, talents, and resources are gifts from God, to be held in trust and shared according to the Light we are given? How do we as individuals and as a Meeting support one another in nurturing those gifts and in our search for a simpler life?

June 2020 Calendar

As we all know, these are challenging times in which the future is murkier than usual. The Meeting House is unavailable until at least mid-June and perhaps beyond that. In the meantime, there have been creative responses to continuing Meeting for Worship, Tuesday online Bible Study, mid-week worship, committee meetings, and other activities. Meeting for Worship is held at 11:00 a.m. every First Day (via Zoom). We have a stay-at-home mid-week worship on Wednesdays at 8:00 p.m.

7	Sun	9:00 a.m.	Meeting for Business (via Zoom)
		11:00 a.m.	Meeting for Worship (via Zoom)
		1:00 p.m.	Online Bible Study (via Zoom)
13	Sat	1:30 p.m.	BFM Book Group (via Zoom)
		8:30 p.m.	Summer Newsletter Deadline
14	Sun	11:00 a.m.	Meeting for Worship (via Zoom)
		1:00 p.m.	Library Committee, (via Zoom)
		7:30 p.m.	Experiment with Light Session (via e-mail/phone)
21	Sun	9:00 a.m.	Committee Day: Pastoral Care (via Zoom)
		9:15 a.m.	Committee Day: Ministry & Worship; Stewardship & Fin.
		9:30 a.m.	Committee Day: Religious Ed.; Outreach & Com.
		11:00 a.m.	Meeting for Worship (via Zoom)
28	Sun	9:15 a.m.	Peace & Social Justice Committee (via Zoom)
		11:00 a.m.	Meeting for Worship (via Zoom)
		7:30 p.m.	Experiment with Light (via e-mail/phone)
28 to July 4			Friends General Conference (virtually)

For details, please check the BFM website: www.bethesdafriends.org

The Social Concerns Box

The Social Concerns Box for June is Right Sharing of World Resources (RSWR). RSWR is a Quaker micro-credit organization that supports grassroots income-generating projects led by women, many of whom are making less than a dollar a day. Their mission statement reads: God calls us to the right sharing of world resources, from the burdens of materialism and poverty into the abundance of God's love, to work for equity through partnership with our sisters and brothers throughout the world. In 2019, RSWR made 41 grants totaling \$453,550 to fund groups which supported 1,092 women to start small businesses in India, Kenya and Sierra Leone. Stay-at-home orders during the pandemic are having an immediate and adverse effect on these families. RSWR has released \$60,000 from its reserves and hopes to send another \$50,000 from donations for emergency food relief to its women partners to tide them over until they can start working again. www.rswr.org

In April, we raised \$47,305 for Ramallah Friends School scholarships in the Social Concerns Box, thanks to one donation of \$40,000, another of \$1,500, and sixteen others. The organizers of Spring Fling are especially grateful that so much is going to Ramallah Friends School scholarships without our having to lift a finger!

Events

7th: Meeting for Business

On Sunday, June 7 at 9:00 a.m. Bethesda F(f)riends will consider various business items via Zoom. How the Spirit will lead us in discernment of issues both large and small is part of the mystery that is the Religious Society of Friends. All who come to Meeting for Worship are welcome and encouraged to participate. On the agenda this month are a report from the Library Committee and the appointment of the ad hoc Committee to Nominate the Nominating Committee.

7th/14th/21st/28th: Meetings for Worship

There will be a Zoom meeting for worship from 11:00 a.m. to noon. Simultaneously, Friends who wish to worship in other settings should do so knowing that others are sharing in worship. At noon, all are welcome to open the BFM list serve and share their messages, joys and sorrows, and announcements. At 10:45 a.m., we will open the link for Friends who may want guidance in the use of Zoom. To join the Zoom Meeting for Worship, please use the "Contact Us" form at <https://www.bethesdafriends.org/Contact-Us>

7th: Online Bible Study

A Bible Study class using Great Courses lectures on Understanding the New Testament began in February. On the first Sunday of the month at 1:00 p.m. we will meet by Zoom to discuss the lectures of the previous month. Every Tuesday at 8:00 p.m. there will be a Zoom meeting with a new lecture. Lecture notes will also be distributed. Please join anytime.

13th: Quaker Book Group

The Quaker Book Group meets monthly, in this case, via Zoom, from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. on the second Saturday (June 13) of the month. Newcomers are always welcome (even if you have not read the book!). We read a mix of books by Quakers, books about Quakerism, and books that speak to Quaker values and concerns. The group is invited to share announcements, summaries, and thoughts about the readings through an online mailing list.

14th/28th: Experiment with Light

How do we quiet our brains enough to hear the still, small voice within us? How might we deepen our experience of Meeting for Worship? Experiment with Light is a meditative and centering practice based upon Rex Ambler's book *Light to Live By*, which describes early Quaker meditative habits and translates them into a highly accessible process of clearness and understanding.

There will be two sessions in June, on Sundays June 14 and 28, from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. People listen to the prompts of the guided meditation in the comfort of their own homes, take time to write down reflections, and then, at about 8:30 p.m., check in with others who have participated via phone or e-mail. Please join us if you can!

June 28th to July 4th: Friends General Conference (FGC) Gathering

The FGC Gathering this year will be virtual during the week of June 28 to July 4. The theme is "Sink Down to the Seed Sown in the Heart." Look up the program for this year at:

<https://www.fgcquaker.org/connect/gathering>

By way of background, Friends General Conference nurtures the spiritual vitality of the Religious Society of Friends by providing programs and services for Friends, meetings, and seekers. The work of FGC can be summarized into three areas of endeavor:

- Help meetings deepen Quaker worship and practice
- Support a loving Quaker community
- Support Quaker outreach

FGC is a volunteer-led association of regional Quaker organizations, primarily in the United States and Canada. Founded in 1900, FGC has grown from a voluntary organization of seven yearly meetings, created to hold a "general conference" every other year, to an association of fourteen yearly meetings, supplemented with regional groups and individual meetings. FGC continues to sponsor an annual Gathering of Friends. FGC seeks to use resources effectively with a concern for simplicity and openness. It is funded through the support of Quaker meetings, individuals, and foundations. FGC is a 501(c)3 organization. For details: www.fgcquaker.org

Into the Future

Baltimore Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions

Annual Sessions, normally held in early August, have been canceled as an in person gathering. Instead, there will be a variety of virtual/online opportunities for Friends to meet together. The Presiding Clerk of the Yearly Meeting, in consultation with others, will decide on holding virtual/online meetings for worship with a concern for business or otherwise carry forward the Yearly Meeting's business. For details, see: <https://www.bym-rsf.org/>

BYM Camps have been canceled for the summer.

Committee Notes

Stewardship & Finance

Urgent BFM Spring Appeal. As of May 14, we still have a funding gap of about \$25,000 for this fiscal year, which ends in a few weeks on June 30, 2020. At the beginning of May, the Meeting had received just over \$100,000. Thank you to those who have contributed! However, after projecting likely actual expenditures, contributions totaling \$125,000 are required to fund the budget we adopted last May.

This notice is a gentle reminder to those who have yet to make a contribution. We recognize that these are uncertain times, but if you can give generously, it will help to fill the gap. To those who have already contributed and can spare a little more, your gift will also help the Meeting to achieve its goal.

Please go to www.bethesdafriends.org and click “Contact and Donate” on the right side of the green header bar and follow the prompts. If you prefer, you may send your check, made payable to Bethesda Friends Meeting, to Assistant Treasurer, Bethesda Friends Meeting, 4413 Chalfont Place, Bethesda, MD 20816.

Pastoral Care

End of Life Care. In the midst of this time of a pandemic, in which many people are dying within a short period of time, many of us are reflecting on what it is we want at the end of life. Recently, the daughter of one of our members who died asked if we knew what her wishes were regarding burial or cremation. It is really helpful to have thought ahead about these matters and informed relatives and medical personnel of your wishes in life-threatening situations. One way to do that is through Five Wishes:

<https://fivewishes.org/docs/default-source/Samples/five-wishes-sample.pdf>

Welcoming Newborns and New Members.

The Pastoral Care Committee has sent congratulatory notes on behalf of Bethesda Friends Meeting to families of newborns and new members

Peace & Social Justice

At the end of the newsletter are suggestions from the Peace & Social Justice Committee of some organizations in need of support and doing especially important work at this time.

Meeting Notes

Olive Oil Ministry

Thanks to all who have purchased Palestinian olive oil at Meeting in the last year. As you may know, the olive oil is part of the fair-trade movement, so most of the money goes back to Palestinian farmers. We pay an extra \$4 per bottle to support additional community efforts in Palestine. Last year our contribution plus that of sales from the 23 other participating congregations went to the following organizations:

- \$9,500 to Tent of Nations for general operations in 2020. TON has been our primary beneficiary and is a dramatic symbol of Palestinians' ongoing struggle to protect their rights, land ownership, and economic well-being through nonviolent resistance to the continued official and unofficial pressures of Israeli occupation.
- \$5,000 to American Near East Refugee Aid (Anera) for its Gaza Food Security Program, which will finance the construction of two-family greenhouses and ongoing technical support, and
- \$4,000 for medical supplies to the Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza, a hospital supported by the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, in anticipation of Covid-19 patients.

From the sales at BFM in November and December, \$740 went to Ramallah Friends School scholarships.

Thinking About Race

The “We Are Not At-Risk” Campaign. “...AFSC’s Youth in Action (YIA) global network [is working] to change perceptions of youth in their respective communities. In 2018, YIA launched the ‘We Are Not At-Risk’ social-media campaign to transform the words and narrative we use to talk about youth in our everyday conversations: in schools, non-profits, and other institutions; and in the media.

“ ‘Historically words have been used to oppress Black and brown people and help those in power maintain their power,’ says Nia Eubanks- Dixon, AFSC director of youth programs. ‘Today, words like ‘at-risk,’ ‘marginalized’ and ‘minority’ are used for the same purposes. Not only do these terms dehumanize youth, they shift blame to young people instead of to the oppressive racist systems that exploit them, their families, and communities.’

“The ‘We Are Not At-Risk’ campaign was created to call out and change those linguistic behaviors, urging people to take a pledge to rethink their words, attend local education events, and share what they’ve learned with others.”

From the American Friends Service Committee’s Quaker Action, Spring 2020, “The power of words,” by Ronna Bolante, pp. 12-13.

Peace & Social Justice Committee Pandemic Donations Recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused tremendous suffering in our community, including economic hardship, food shortage, job loss and uncertainty of the future. The needs are tremendous, and it can be hard to discern if, how, and where to put our precious resources. Bethesda Friends Meeting’s Peace & Social Justice Committee has compiled this list of local and national organizations that are helping to meet the pressing needs of so many.

(* These organizations receive funds through BFM’s annual budget.)

Aging

Iona (<https://www.iona.org/>) Iona supports people as they experience the challenges and opportunities of aging. They educate, advocate, and provide community-based services to help people age well and live well.

Food

DC Central Kitchen (<https://dccentralkitchen.org/learn/>) The DCCCK combats hunger and poverty through job training and job creation, providing hands-on culinary job training for

individuals facing high barriers to employment while creating living wage jobs and bringing nutritious, dignified food where it is most needed.

Manna * (<https://www.mannafood.org/>) Manna is the premier food bank of Montgomery County, providing food to 32,000 individuals each year and helping distribute rescued food to soup kitchens, food pantries and emergency shelters countywide.

Homeless/Housing

Christ House DC (<https://christhouse.org/>)

Christ House provides comprehensive and compassionate health care to sick, homeless persons in the District of Columbia, and assists them in addressing critical issues to help break the cycle of homelessness.

Interfaith Works *

(<https://www.iworksmc.org/about-interfaith-works/>) Interfaith Works is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit agency and a non-sectarian interfaith coalition of more than 165 affiliated congregations of diverse faiths, working together to meet the needs of the poor and homeless in Montgomery County MD. Their housing program helps the homeless transition to more stable situations.

Joseph's House DC

(<https://josephshouse.org/>) Joseph's House provides healing care to homeless men and women with late-stage and end-stage AIDS and terminal cancer.

Montgomery

Housing

Partnership

(<https://www.mhpartners.org/mhp-missionandvalues/>) MHP is committed to housing people, empowering families, and strengthening neighborhoods. Since 1989, MHP's mission has been to preserve and expand access to quality, affordable housing.

Shepherd's Table

(<https://www.shepherdstable.org/about/>) Shepherd's Table provides help to people who are homeless or in need by providing basic services, including meals, social services, medical support, clothing, and other assistance in an effective and compassionate manner.

Immigration

Asylum Seekers Assistance Project * (<https://www.asylumprojectdc.org/>) ASAP serves the estimated 50,000 asylum seekers living in the Washington, D.C. region with social, employment, and community engagement services.

Ayuda (<https://ayuda.com/>) Ayuda provides legal, social, and language services to help vulnerable immigrants access justice and transform their lives.

Casa de Maryland *

(<http://cdm.nonprofitsoapbox.com/>) CASA works to improve the quality of life and fight for equal treatment and full access to resources and opportunities for low-income Latinos and their families.

International Rescue Committee (<https://www.rescue.org/>) IRC works in 40 countries and 26 US cities to help people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and gain control of their future.

La Clinica del Pueblo

(<https://www.lcdp.org/>) La Clínica del Pueblo addresses the health needs of Latino immigrants through comprehensive primary medical care with wrap-around services across the life spectrum.

Mary's Center

(<https://www.maryscenter.org/>) Mary's Center embraces all communities and provides high-quality healthcare, education, and social services to build better futures.

St. Camillus Catholic Church in Silver Spring

(<https://stcamilluschurch.org/justice-peace-and-integrity-of-creation>) St. Camillus reaches out to immigrants in Langley Park MD, providing them with a host of services including English classes and legal service. They partner with SHARE, Meals on Wheels, and Manna Food and operate two food pantries.

Poverty

A Wider Circle * (<https://awidercircle.org/>) The mission of A Wider Circle is to end poverty through on-the-ground programs and services. AWC focuses on the creation of stable homes; workforce development programming to move families to economic self-sufficiency; neighborhood revitalization; and the creation of greater awareness and engagement by the community, as a whole.

More Excerpts from Outreach & Communication's QuakerSpeak Glossary

The Outreach and Communications Committee has produced a comprehensive Quaker Speak Glossary after its members consulted with many others. It's a living document: anyone who wishes to add new entries or edit existing ones should contact Gale T.

You can see it at:

<https://www.bethesdafriends.org/FAQs#vocabulary> and
<https://www.bethesdafriends.org/resources/Documents/Quaker-Speak-2019.pdf>

Attender. Someone who attends meeting for worship and participates in meeting but has not chosen to formally join. (See Member and Clearness Committee below).

Birthright Quaker. A Quaker who was born into a practicing Quaker family (as contrasted with a "convinced" Quaker who made the decision to become a member). Historically, a birthright Quaker was automatically considered to be a Quaker. However, within Baltimore Yearly Meeting, even someone born into a Quaker family needs to make a positive choice to identify themselves as a Quaker and seek formal membership.

Calling. A sense that you are being guided by Spirit to take an action. See Led as well.

Centering down. A process of becoming still and focused yet open to hearing the guidance of the Spirit or Inner Teacher.

Clearness Committee. Quakers put a value on "discerning" whether something is the right thing to do or not –seeking to hear whether it is Spirit-led and grounded in truth vs. ego-led. Clearness committees are convened routinely when someone asks to become a member or to be married under the care of a Meeting. A Clearness Committee can also be convened at someone's request to help them discern whether some course of action they are contemplating is well-grounded or not.

Clerk. The person who presides at business or committee meetings is a clerk. This role includes setting the agenda (in consultation with others), keeping track of issues and schedule, discerning/articulating the "sense" of the group on the issue at hand, and ensuring minutes are generated which document the activities of the group.

Concern. An interest or concern based in Spirit.

Continuing Revelation. While in current Quaker practice, there is varying interest in and authority given to the Bible as a source of spiritual guidance, initially the Quaker movement used

the Bible extensively as a source of inspiration and guidance. Even then, Quakers believed the Spirit that inspired the writers of the Bible continued to be active in the world and was accessible to all. Deeper understandings unfold as we allow ourselves to be guided. As Quakers, we believe we are meant to listen for continuing revelation and to help that emerge. For example, the Quaker testimony of equality initially applied to gender and social status, then was applied to race and later sexual orientation. It continues to unfold, as we consider the humanity of every individual.

Convinced Quaker. A Quaker who has gone through the formal process of becoming a member by having a clearness committee created to discern whether the person has a clear leading for wanting to become a Quaker and aspires to live according to Quaker values.

Covered Meeting. A covered meeting goes further than a gathered meeting; not only does it infuse the group with the presence of Spirit, but there is also a sense that Spirit is conveying a deeply important sense of things or mobilizing the group in a specific direction.

Discern or discernment. Quakers are focused on distinguishing the right course of action. This involves listening deeply to the Inner Guide, or Spirit. This process takes patience and faith that a deeper truth will be revealed. Quakers engage in discernment both as individuals, in clearness committees, and in Meeting for Business.