

BFM Newsletter

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Jane M.C., Editor

Query for May: Outreach

As the way opens, how do I share Friends' principles with others? In what ways do I make everyone, including newcomers, feel welcome in meetings for worship? How can I find ways to encourage a sense of community within the Meeting?

May 2020 Calendar

As we all know, these are challenging times in which the future is murkier than usual. We do know that 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 online.

May 3	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
9	Sat	1:30 p.m. Quaker Book Group (via Zoom)
10	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 (via e-mail)
13	Wed	8:30 p.m. June Newsletter Deadline (301-320-5083)
17	Sun	9:00 a.m. Committee Day: Pastoral Care (via Zoom) 9:15 a.m. Committee Day: Ministry & Worship (via Zoom) 9:30 a.m. Com. Day: Outreach & C., Stewardship & F. (via Zoom) 11:00 a.m. Meeting for Worship (via Zoom)
24	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)
31	Sun	11:00 a.m. Meeting for Worship (via Zoom) 1:00 p.m. Coordinating Gathering (via Zoom)

For further information, see www.bethesdafriends.org

Bethesda Friends Meeting May 2020 Social Concerns Box

The May Social Concerns box is for the Asylum Seekers Assistance Project (ASAP). To donate, please go to: www.bethesdafriends.org and clearly designate that it is for the social concerns box. If you prefer, you may send your check, made payable to Bethesda Friends Meeting, to Marion B. (see Directory).

Founded in 2016, ASAP's office is located at Friends Meeting of Washington. ASAP helps in three areas: 1) Social work provides emotional support and identifies resources for finding a job and starting a life in this new location; 2) community engagement connects people with other asylum seekers; and 3) employment assistance delivers 30 hours of sessions to write a resume, participate in mock interviews, practice networking and receive coaching. ASAP's highly committed and skilled staff provide practical support.

With donor support in the last year, ASAP has transformed from a fledgling nonprofit to an effective, efficient, and established organization. This year, ASAP served nearly 300 asylum seeking men, women, and children from 35 different countries. ASAP worked tirelessly to address basic needs, obtain living wage employment, and connect with their new community. This is an era of unprecedented attacks on asylum seekers. Seemingly overnight, long-standing legal norms were replaced by new policies designed to detain, criminalize, and delegitimize asylum seekers.

Today the situation is stark: asylum seekers do not have a safety net to protect them from COVID-19. In recent weeks, nearly 70% of ASAP clients have lost the jobs they've worked so hard to secure. Their legal status means they will not benefit from emergency measures enacted by the state or federal government. ASAP clients now face the following dilemma: Do I stay at home and starve or go to work and risk contagion? To guide asylum seekers through this crisis, ASAP has created the COVID-19 Emergency Food and Medicine Fund to address the short-term survival needs of clients. Because ASAP is a small and young organization, our support can have a great impact. For more information: Tia D. (see Directory) or www.asylumprojectdc.org In March, we raised \$145 (in the two weeks people were able to come to Meeting) for hunger relief in Montgomery County.

Personal Notes

Do You Have a Graduate in Your Family?

Each year at this time we like to celebrate the graduates from high school and college and those receiving advanced degrees. Please let us know by sending an e-mail to Jane M.C. by no later than May 10 for recognition in the June newsletter. For those graduating from high school, BFM would like to give them a student subscription to the *Friends Journal* for the next four years.

Events

3rd: Meeting for Business

On Sunday, May 3 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. On the agenda this month are these reports: the final budget for the next year, and reports from Pastoral Care and the Library Committee. All who come to Meeting for Worship are welcome and encouraged to participate in our worship. For details: Lee I. or Jabez M.

3rd: 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. For details: Alex B.

9th: 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 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. To join the group, please contact Leslie S.

10th/24th: 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 on 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 May, on Sundays, from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. Probably they will both meet virtually, with an e-mail check-in at about 8:30 p.m. If there is a change, the information will be available in the weekly bulletin.

31st: Coordinating Gathering

Representatives of most BFM committees meet during the week before Meeting for Business to discuss the upcoming agenda. These meetings are open to all who wish to attend. There will be one at 1:00 p.m., probably via Zoom, on Sunday, May 31. For details: Lee I. or Jabez M.

Committee Notes

Ministry & Worship

Since Sunday, March 14, we have held virtual meetings for worship using Zoom from 11:00 a.m. to noon, with as many as 64 participants able to hear or convey messages. Simultaneously, Friends who may wish to worship in other settings, can 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. Anyone with a telephone or computer with internet can join using Zoom. To join the Zoom Meeting for Worship by computer, see the instructions in the weekly bulletin.

Because the Sidwell Friends School has decided to close the campus for the remainder of the school year, it is unclear when we will be able to access the Meeting House again. Using Zoom, it has been a joy to be able to include Friends far and wide in our meeting for worship: Lauren Brownlee from North Carolina, Ann Tickner's three daughters (one in Brooklyn NY, one in Newton MA, and the other local), Juliet Bryant in France, Deedie Runkel in Oregon, and others. We may continue the Zoom option even after the crisis has passed.

Pastoral Care

At BFM's Business Meeting on April 5, the Pastoral Care Committee was asked to report on the actions we were taking with respect to the Covid-19 pandemic.

1. We have been contacting all households in the directory to ask how the household is doing, especially with respect to the Covid-19 disease, and letting them know we are available to help them should they need assistance or just want to talk about their situation. Pending the effect on families caused by the pandemic in the near future, we are contemplating yet another round of contacting everyone in the directory.
2. We are making an ever-growing list of people offering to pick up and deliver groceries or prescriptions to households in need. Currently we have seven or so people on this list plus many of us who are on the Pastoral Care Committee.

3. We have asked Stewardship & Finance to renew the amount of money budgeted in BFM's Personal Aid Fund so that we can make emergency funds available, usually on a one-time basis, to people who are out of work, or otherwise in need of assistance due to the pandemic.

4. We are meeting ever other weekly via Zoom to share updates on challenging situations.

5. We have shared useful information:

a) Reminding people about the personal aid fund in the BFM weekly bulletin: Although BFM funds are limited in terms of giving direct emergency financial assistance to Bethesda Friends, there are some funds available and there are other resources we can call on. If you are having difficulty paying bills or meeting other expenses due to the coronavirus emergency, please be in touch with David W.

The personal assistance subcommittee of Pastoral Care handles these requests, which are confidential. For example, if you have no paid sick leave, please don't go to work. Let us know. If your freelance income has dried up because of cancelled jobs, let us know. If you absolutely must work and need help with childcare expenses (because school is out), let us know.

b) Frequently Asked Questions about the Coronavirus Stimulus Package: Rob M. can send a pdf of the New York Times article: <https://www.nytimes.com/article/coronavirus-stimulus-package-questions-answers.html>

c) Rob is a volunteer with Maryland Legal Aid. During this time of uncertainty, Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) remains operational and fully committed to serving people with the following kinds of concerns, including, but not limited to: illegal evictions, protective orders, bankruptcy filings, debt collection disputes, denials or terminations of unemployment and public benefits, and family law matters. For details: www.mdlab.org, or 240-314-0373.

Stewardship & Finance

Urgent BFM Spring Appeal. "Our hearts and connections are so deep and so worldwide." A Friend offered this message in Bethesda Friends Meeting's first "virtual meeting for worship" in response to the coronavirus emergency. This spiritual truth also underlies the daily work and philanthropy of BFM – and its need for financial support. When the Stewardship & Finance Committee met in March by video-conference, one member likened our financial situation to that of a house on fire. With little more than three months left in our financial year, we have received less than half the funds we need to cover this year's operating expenses and commitments to our philanthropic partners. These costs remain whether or not we enjoy the security of the meetinghouse roof each Sunday. We also feel honor bound to continue payments to our hourly wage earners in child care during the hiatus of our in-person meetings. We must secure an additional \$30,000 by June 30 (as of April 1).

Times of crisis multiply our responsibilities to all: our families and friends, neighbors and co-workers, our communities great and small. Even as we shelter in place, we are not 'socially distant.' We are still connected to one another. Our meetinghouse is temporarily shuttered, but the spirit and work of the Meeting go on together.

Our Meeting needs the support of all Friends now. Meeting our budget relies on the renewed and increased support of current donors as well as gifts from new contributors. We encourage Friends and attenders alike to join and strengthen our community of supporters. Your prompt and generous response will be greatly appreciated and lessen the need and expense of further requests and mailings.

Please go to: www.bethesdafriends.org/Donate-Online-Now . If you prefer, send your check, made payable to Bethesda Friends Meeting, to Marion B.

Meeting Notes

How is the Manna Food Center Managing during this Public Health and Economic Crisis?

As many of us know, Jackie DeCarlo, a member of BFM, is executive director of the Manna Food Center. The Meeting recently agreed to provide \$2,000 to the capital campaign to reach more of the 63,000 people in Montgomery County who were food insecure before the new challenges of recent months. Here is Jackie's response re the impact of the changes:

With the consistent support of Bethesda Friends Meeting and other generous donors in recent years, Manna Food Center has built the capacity to scale up rapidly to meet the needs of neighbors impacted by the Covid-19 crisis. In a typical month, Manna receives 225 new requests for assistance, and in March 2020 that number shot to 427. Approximately 200 of those requests were in the final week of the month, once Gov. Hogan's stay at home order came into effect. Due to physical distancing needs and safety protocols related to COVID-19, Manna had to modify and consolidate our services, offering food in different formats and locations. Learning from models like Meals on Wheels, and re-engineering our Community Food Rescue technology, we have begun deliveries to seniors and people with disabilities and health concerns. The closure of the 58 schools in which we operated "Smart Sacks" means that we have had to develop a new partnership with MCPS to reach 9 neighborhoods of poverty with bags of food for families. We will continue to evolve our operations until or unless we receive guidance from government officials that staying open is not safe.

It is an honor for Manna to serve the people of Montgomery County during these unsettling times. Community support makes that service possible, and the entire Manna Food Center team is grateful to BFM for your financial resources and your commitment to hold our team in the Light.

Thinking about Race: The Hidden History of Slavery That Surrounds Us

Why does it matter so much to preserve these [slave auction] sites, many of which have already been built over?

If in 2020, we agree that all lives matter, then all lives mattered then, too, so we should find a way to demonstrate that. One way is to democratize our landscape. At present, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, there are over 1,800 Confederate monuments and memorials; at the same time we have found fewer than 50 marked auction sites. If we are a nation committed to justice and a sense of fairness, this should bother us. We ought to balance the scales and acknowledge what these people endured yet still contributed to this country. Adeel Hassan interviewed Ann C. Bailey, Professor of History at Binghamton University, who wrote a *New York Times Magazine* article, "They Sold Human Beings Here," part of the Times' The 1619 Project: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/29/us/the-hidden-history-of-slavery-that-surrounds-us.html?searchResultPosition=4>