

Bethesda Friends Meeting Newsletter for September 2020

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Query for September: Fostering Community

What helps our Meeting build trust of one another? How do we get to know one another in community? How do we make time in our lives for our faith community? How does conflict enrich the life of our community? How do we provide for spiritual refreshment at all stages of the spiritual journey?

September 2020 Calendar

As we all know, these are challenging times in which the future is murkier than usual. For the time being, the Meeting House remains closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The ad hoc COVID-19 Committee will work with the co-clerks during the fall to discern issues and address the possibility of eventual in-person worship. In the meantime, there have been creative responses to continuing Sunday Meeting for Worship at 11:00 a.m., committee meetings, and other activities via Zoom. We have a stay-at-home mid-week worship on Wednesdays at 8:00 p.m.

2	Wed	8:00 p.m.	Mid-Week Worship
6	Sun	11:00 a.m.	Meeting for Worship (via Zoom)
9	Wed	8:00 p.m.	Mid-Week Worship
12	Sat	1:30 p.m.	Quaker Book Group (via Zoom)
13	Sun	9:00 a.m.	Meeting for Business (via Zoom)
		11:00 a.m.	Meeting for Worship (via Zoom)
		12:30 p.m.	Interfaith Unity Walk (virtual)
		7:30 p.m.	Experiment With Light (via e-mail/phone)
		8:30 p.m.	October Newsletter Deadline
16	Wed	8:00 p.m.	Mid-Week Worship

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20	Sun	9:00 a.m.	Committee Day: Pastoral Care (via Zoom)
		9:15 a.m.	Committee Day: Ministry & Worship, Stewardship & F.
		9:30 a.m.	Committee Day: Outreach & Communications
		11:00 a.m.	Meeting for Worship (via Zoom)
23	Wed	8:00 p.m.	Mid-Week Worship
27	Sun	9:15 a.m.	Committee Day: Peace & Social Justice (via Zoom)
		11:00 a.m.	Meeting for Worship (via Zoom)
		12:30 p.m.	Coordinating Gathering, Meeting Room
		7:30 p.m.	Experiment With Light (via e-mail/phone)
30	Wed	8:00 p.m.	Mid-Week Worship

The Social Concerns Box

The September Social Concerns Box is for the Mary Jane Simpson Scholarship Fund, which each year awards college scholarships to DC public school seniors with high potential, who are coping with difficult backgrounds and have very low incomes. This fund is managed jointly by Bethesda Friends Meeting, Friends Meeting of Washington, and Langley Hill Friends Meeting. BFM plays a vital role in mobilizing funding, selecting the awardees, and making decisions about the program's policies and practices. Since the scholarship fund first began, it has awarded 128 scholarships to graduates from 27 DC Public schools. The amount of each scholarship is now \$6,000, and each year the program supports about 20 students through their four years of college. Please be generous.

In the June Social Concerns box, \$365 was donated to Right Sharing of World Resources.

A Poem to Share

Music

Let me go where're I will,
I hear a sky-born music still:
It sounds from all things old,
It sounds from all things young,
From all that's fair, from all that's foul,
Peals out a cheerful song.

It is not only in the rose,
It is not only in the bird,
Not only where the rainbow glows,
Nor in the song of woman heard,
But in the darkest, meanest things,
There always, always something sings.

'T is not in the high stars alone,
Nor in the cup of budding flowers,
Nor in the redbreast's mellow tone,
Nor in the bow that shines in showers,

But in the mud and scum of things
There alway, alway something sings.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Religious Education for Children

The First Day School teachers continue to hold children and families in the light. Soon after schools closed, some families shared that the screentime requirements of virtual school meant parents were less enthusiastic about virtual First Day School classes. Parents are using Sunday mornings for family time, especially outdoors. However, thanks to the community service food drive led by BFM families and zoom break out sessions during Meeting for Worship in May and June, families, FDS teachers, and members of the Religious Education and Ministry and Worship Committees have enjoyed social time together.

Looking ahead, please check the bulletin each week for family program updates. Currently, we are in conversation on directions for the First Day School. We've found valuable resources from the Quaker Religious Education Collaborative (QREC) website, lessons and links from their annual conference in August. One recommended resource for parents, and others in the BFM community is this seminal document about the current challenge and future of religious education by Melinda Wenner Bradley, the Youth Religious Life Coordinator for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and a member of West Chester Meeting:

<http://www.pym.org/religious-education/wp-content/uploads/sites/86/2020/08/RE-Planning-in-Uncertain-Times.pdf>

Food Drive. Thanks to organizers, their families, and the more than 30 additional families who participated in the food drive in June. The children were able to collect and donate over 600 pounds of food to Manna Food Center. It was a wonderful way to reconnect our families, whether or not they have been participating in Zoom gatherings.

Events

2nd/9th/16th/23rd/30th: Mid-Week Worship

Over-zoomed? Join BFM Friends' "low tech" email mid-week worship on Wednesdays from 8:00 to 8:30 p.m. Each of us worships in our homes without video or audio. While some simply join in spirit, those wishing to touch base with the others receive emails at the start and end of worship. At rise of meeting, email participants are invited to worship-share via reply-all with the evening's email group.

6th/13th/20th/27th: Meeting for Worship

Bethesda Friends continue worship together each Sunday, either by entering into silent worship at home, and then joining on the listserv for Joys and Sorrows, or by worshipping with Zoom, where we can see one another. It has been a real joy to see so many people, including out-of-town Friends, and some families with kids, joining us each week. The link will be in the weekly bulletin.

You do not need to have downloaded Zoom to join this meeting. If you have not downloaded Zoom, when you click on the link, you will see a box that says, "Open with Zoom," and "Allow." Click on "Allow." Then you will be prompted to "open with computer video;" click on that.

Then you will be prompted to “open with computer audio;” click on that. You will then see and hear others and be part of the Meeting.

If you would like to join by phone only: You can also join the Zoom Meeting for Worship by telephone (without video) by following the directions in the weekly bulletin.

Joys and Sorrows. For those Bethesda Friends worshipping by Zoom, there will be an opportunity to share joys and sorrows with one another in the Zoom meeting. Bear in mind that other Bethesda Friends are worshipping at home on their own, without connecting to Zoom, and then sharing joys and sorrows on the listserv. You may want to check the listserv after the Zoom meeting is over and see what other Friends have said; you might want to add your own joys and sorrows to the listserv as well.

12th: 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 (September 12) 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. Recent selections that the Quaker Book Group has read include: *Radical Acceptance: Embracing your life with the heart of a Buddha*, by Tara Brach; *Jesus and the Disinherited*, by Howard Thurman; and *Seeds that Change the World: Essays on Quakerism, Spirituality, Faith and Culture*, by Debbie L. Humphries. The group will be voting soon on books to read this fall. The group is invited to share announcements, summaries, and thoughts about the readings through an online mailing list.

13th: Meeting for Business

On Sunday, September 13, at 9:00 a.m. Bethesda F(f)riends will consider various business items at its Zoom Meeting for Business. 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 in our worship. Meeting for Business will include reports from the Yearly Meeting Annual Gathering and the Mary Jane Simpson Fund and the Nominating Committee.

13th: Interfaith Unity Walk

On Sunday, September 13, 12:30 to 5:30 p.m., join neighbors from around the greater DC area online in this year's Virtual Interfaith Unity Walk and Resource Fair, “Building a Loving and Just DMV.” A thousand attendees are anticipated, representing local faith and secular communities. This year's participants will not only be able to visit houses of worship “virtually” (ranging from Baha'i to Zoroastrian), but also to enjoy additional online programming. Join a dialogue on race and faith, take a cooking workshop from a local chef, learn more about interfaith perspectives on climate change, and more. o register, visit: www.ifcmw.org/

13th & 27th: 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. All are welcome to attend. Firsttime participants find the process quite easy to follow and, often, richly rewarding.

This is an invitation to two Sunday evening sessions, September 13 and 27, from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. People will listen to the prompts on their own at their own homes. The following link should work to hear the words in audio format:

<https://www.experiment-with-light.org.uk/modindos.mp3>. There will be a phone call or e-mail reminder at about 7:15 p.m. followed by a phone or e-mail check-in at about 8:30 p.m.

27th: Peace & Social Justice Committee

The Peace & Social Justice Committee is a self-constituted group of folks interested in deepening the Meeting's engagement with peace building and social justice, as individuals and as a community on all levels – personal, interpersonal, local, national, and international. Advocacy, education, vigils, and financial support of community groups are among the ways the committee pursues its mission. Please join us. We meet on the fourth Sunday of the month, by Zoom during the pandemic, at 9:15 a.m. During the fall, we are particularly focused on voting rights, but we are also conscious of the need to confront racism everywhere.

27th: 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 on Sunday, September 27, at 1:00 p.m., via Zoom, in preparation for the Meeting for Business on October 4.

Into the Future

Bible Study

Bible Study will begin again in October with the *Great Courses series, Understanding the Old Testament*. We will meet once a week by Zoom, day and time to be determined by participants, for the 24 half-hour lectures with an additional half hour discussion. A group of 8 to 10 of us met from February through July learning about and discussing the New Testament, and we greatly enjoyed the fellowship as much as the lessons.

Committee Notes

Nominating

The Nominating Committee proposed to the July business meeting some changes which should improve the alignment between BFM's committee work and the school/BFM's fiscal year (July to June). The proposal was laid over for approval at the September business meeting. Under the new proposal, the committee will develop the list of committee recommendations in the spring (March/April) instead of the fall as heretofore. If approved by the September Business Meeting, the changes will become effective for fiscal year 2021-2022. Beginning in 2021, the list of committee memberships will be finished in April, the slate will be presented to the May 2021 Meeting for Business, laid over until June for approval, and the new committee members will begin their work in July.

In order to transition to the new committee calendar, this coming September, members whose terms would normally end in December 2020, will have a choice to remain on their committees through June 2021 or leave their committees this December. Those who decide to leave will be replaced this fall by new members who will join the committees in January 2021. The slate of replacements will be presented at the November Meeting for Business, to be laid over for approval at the December meeting. The committees will resume their work in January 2021.

The Nominating Committee plans to take advantage of the digitization of the Meeting records by keeping its records on-line, allowing the committee members to work more effectively in selecting new members for each committee. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the co-clerks of the committee.

Stewardship & Finance

Liaisons for Quaker Organizations. The Stewardship & Finance (S&F) Committee has reviewed its process for deciding to which Quaker organizations it will propose giving grants in the BFM budget. We have concluded that it is best practice for each organization to have a liaison from BFM who is familiar with the organization and can speak to its status each year at budget time. The following organizations, which BFM has supported financially for many years (including this fiscal year, which ends June 30, 2021), are currently without liaisons:

Friends Journal

Friends World Committee for Consultation Section of the Americas

Pendle Hill

Friends General Conference

Friends of Ramallah Friends Meeting (Quaker) (distinct from Ramallah Friends School)

Are you familiar enough with any of the organizations to serve as its liaison to BFM? A liaison's primary responsibility is to let S&F know, in early spring each year, whether or not BFM funds would be well spent in supporting the organization.

Managing Committee Budgets Effectively.

Conserving Meeting resources and budget discipline are a good policies, especially now when the coronavirus may affect the income and expenses of BFM. S&F reminds committee clerks that they each have an agreed-on budget through this fiscal year, which ends June 30, 2021.

If the need arises, committee clerks can obtain a budget increase when there is a compelling reason, providing funds are available.

If you see that expenses are likely to exceed your committee's budget, please get in touch with S&F before committing to spend the money. If, at some point during the fiscal year, you know that you have made all of your expenditures and still have extra money in your budget, please let S&F know that as well.

Submitting Expense Forms. Before incurring an expense of more than \$50, a committee member should ask their committee clerk to send an email approving the request to our Assistant Treasurer, with a copy to our Treasurer. This procedure helps clerks meet their responsibility for good stewardship of their committees' budgets.

Receipts. When committee members incur expenses while carrying out committee functions and activities for BFM, they should save receipts. Receipts for all expenses are required by the BFM auditors and support the annual auditor reports.

Expense forms. Submitting an expense form is encouraged because it provides information that is useful to S&F when planning the annual budget. Whether the information conveys a request for reimbursement or a desire to make an in-kind donation, it is the only way S&F can know the true costs of Meeting activities. (In-kind donations are donations of goods and services in lieu of donations of money to buy the goods and services. One of the most common in-kind donations at BFM occurs when a committee member buys food for hospitality and decides to donate the food.) In addition, expense forms are essential for auditing. Every year, the auditors are required to assess the expense process, something they cannot accomplish fully if there are expenses for which there are no records. Please note the following information:

Expense forms are available online (as a pdf) at <https://www.bethesdafriends.org/Hospitality>. Scroll down to the third paragraph under “General Hospitality Instructions” for a link to the “BFM Expense Reimbursement Request Form” in a pdf format.

Please send in expense forms within two weeks, if possible.

Pastoral Care

In times of stress and medical or other challenges, many people turn for solace and support to their professional clergy. At a Friends Meeting, it may not be clear that members of the Pastoral Care Committee are eager to fill that role.

We are lay people, not professionals, but we can listen with love and help to make Friends’ spiritual resources available to anyone in Meeting who asks. Simply contact the co-clerks of the Pastoral Care Committee.

Outreach & Communications

Diversity Change Group. The Diversity Change Group has been working diligently to plot a course leading to greater diversity and more anti-racism work. We have been looking at how to incorporate the BYM Declaration as an Anti- Racist Faith Community, and especially the four queries that were included with it, to help our Meeting, committees, and individuals keep focused on our own behavior and actions. Here are the four queries:

1. How could this decision affect those who have been harmed by racist behavior?
2. To what degree have privilege, class, stereotypes, assumptions, and our ability to include other perspectives affected this decision? Will this decision promote equity, diversity, and inclusiveness? Will it enable us to be more friendly and whole?
3. How will we provide opportunities for those most likely to be directly affected by our decision to influence that decision?
4. How does this decision support the declaration of our Yearly Meeting that we are an anti-racist faith community? We have been energized by the BYM Call for Action Against Systemic Racism. The Change Group hopes to focus on queries, actions, and conversations we can initiate in support of Spirit-motivated inner change, which could serve as a foundation to support the other ways the Meeting responds to the opportunities of anti-racism work at BFM. How are we doing?

Peace & Social Justice

Safeguarding Our Elections. Please support the following four organizations, which are active in safeguarding everyone’s right to vote and getting everyone’s vote counted:

The League of Women Voters: <https://www.lwv.org/covid-elections-fund>

Common Cause: <https://www.commoncause.org/responding-to-covid-19/>

The Brennan Center for Justice:

<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/dirty-tricks-eight-falsehoods-could-undermine-2020-election>

Reclaim Our Vote which encourages underrepresented people by writing individual postcards encouraging them to register and to vote:

(<https://actionnetwork.org/forms/reclaim-our-vote-signup>) Laurie Wilner of Langley Hill Meeting is one of the regional organizers in the District, Maryland, and Virginia area. You can contact her to get involved: rov.dcmv@gmail.com

Meeting Matters

Peace Action: Writing FCNL Postcards

If you would like to write postcards/letters to Members of Congress on an issue of importance to FCNL, this month they ask that we write to ask Members to include Rep. Hank Johnson's 1033 reform amendment in the final defense spending bill as a first step toward police reform. Background: The Pentagon's 1033 program funnels military equipment from the Pentagon to local police departments, thus contributing to racist violence in our communities. The Senate did not include Senator Brian Schatz's amendment to limit this police militarization through the Pentagon's 1033 program in the National Defense Authorization Act, but there is a second chance by voting to include Rep. Johnson's 1033 reform amendment in the final legislation. For details:

https://www.fcnl.org/updates/advocates-are-calling-on-congress-to-demilitarize-policing-here-s-the-next-step-2885?utm_campaign=contacts&utm_medium=email&utm_source=ak&utm_term=13531.209196.zwblcz

Thinking about Race

Have you ever wondered how to characterize "white culture," or if there is such a thing? This widely circulated paper by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun focuses on organizations – which can include faith groups. "White supremacy culture" refers to a culture where white people are mostly in charge and where white people are considered normal.

"This is a list of characteristics of white supremacy culture that show up in our organizations. Culture is powerful precisely because it is so present and at the same time so very difficult to name or identify. The characteristics listed below are damaging because they are used as norms and standards without being proactively named or chosen by the group. They are damaging because they promote white supremacy thinking. Because we all live in a white supremacy culture, these characteristics show up in the attitudes and behaviors of all of us – people of color and white people. Therefore, these attitudes and behaviors can show up in any group or organization, whether it is white-led or predominantly white or people of color-led or predominantly people of color."

- Perfectionism
- Right to comfort
- Fear of open conflict
- Defensiveness
- Quantity over quality
- Worship of the written word

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- Only one right way
- Either/or thinking
- Individualism
- Progress is bigger, more
- Objectivity
- Paternalism
- Power hoarding
- I'm the only one
- Sense of urgency

The paper contains descriptions of each of these 15 characteristics as well as “antidotes” to them. It is online at:

[https://www.dismantlingracism.org/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/okun - white sup culture.pdf](https://www.dismantlingracism.org/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/okun_-_white_sup_culture.pdf)

From Dismantling Racism: A Workbook Social Change Groups. The paper's title is “The Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture,” by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001. Okun is now with the organization Dismantling Racism. Its website has many other resources.