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Query for March: Social Concerns

How have I expressed my faith in action? How are my actions grounded in my faith? To what extent is my sense of justice based in love? In what ways do I endeavor to respond to my own pain and suffering, that of others, and in the wider world? How do we teach our children, and show through our way of living, that love of God includes our affirming the humanity and dignity of everyone and seeking that of God within every person? How do we prepare ourselves and our children to play active roles in a changing world?

March 2021 Calendar

Our Meeting House remains closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic but our Meeting continues its worship and other activities, relying principally on meeting via Zoom. Sunday Meeting for Worship is held at 11:00 a.m., with opportunities to socialize before and after Meeting; Mid-week worship on Wednesdays; Bible Study on Thursdays. Unless otherwise indicated, all of the following events are virtual.

2	Tues	4:00 p.m.	A White Historian Confronts Residential Segregation
		6:00 p.m.	FCNL: Learn to Lobby in 30 Minutes
3	Weds	8:00 p.m.	Mid-Week Worship (check-in by e-mail)
4	Thurs	11:00 a.m.	Back from the Brink Conference
		7:00 p.m.	Bible Study (every Thursday in March)
6	Sat	9:00 a.m.	Baltimore Yearly Meeting Interim Meeting
		4:00 p.m.	Nominating Committee (every Saturday in March)
7	Sun	9:00 a.m.	Meeting for Business
13/14		10:00 a.m.	BYM Junior Young Friends Conference
13	Sat	1:30 p.m.	Quaker Book Group
		8:30 p.m.	April Newsletter Deadline
14	Sun	1:00 p.m.	Library Committee
		7:30 p.m.	Experiment with Light (via phone/e-mail, Zoom sharing)
16	Tues	4:00 p.m.	FCNL: Learn to Lobby in 30 Minutes
20	Sat	1:30 p.m.	Spiritual Formation Program Gathering
21	Sun	9:00 a.m.	Committee Day: Pastoral Care
		9:15 a.m.	Committee Day: Ministry & Worship, Stewardship
		12:00 noon	Reflecting on The Gathered Meeting (QuakerSpeak Video)
28	Sun	9:00 a.m.	Peace & Social Justice Committee
		1:00 p.m.	Coordinating Gathering
		7:30 p.m.	Experiment with Light (via phone/e-mail, Zoom sharing)

For details, see www.bethesdafriends.org

The Social Concerns Box

The March Social Concerns Box is for Bethesda Help. Hunger in our community comes in many forms and is probably more widespread than most of us realize. Approximately 63,000 of our neighbors in Montgomery County are not always sure where their next meal is coming from. The pandemic and lockdowns have greatly increased the need. Bethesda Help offers immediate short-term food and financial assistance for rent (to prevent eviction), utility bills (to prevent service interruption), and prescription medicines (as needed) to residents in southern Montgomery County. For details and volunteer opportunities, see: www.bethesdahelp.org

In January, Chesapeake Climate Action Network received \$725 via the Social Concerns Box.

Religious Education for Children

For many months, community service has been the main focus and guide for First Day School, parents and children, and the Religious Education Committee. It is heartwarming to see the energy, enthusiasm, and leadership that children bring to these important projects. We are grateful to them and the help of so many in the Meeting to make these efforts successful. In warmer months ahead, we look forward to gathering outdoors for games and reflection on Friends Testimonies of environmental stewardship, peace, and social justice. Please check the weekly bulletin for details.

Events

2nd: A White Historian Confronts Residential Segregation

Susan Strasser, who has been doing a number of interesting presentations on anti-black racism and white supremacy will be giving a Zoom talk on Residential Segregation on Tuesday, March 2, at 4:00 p.m. Although neighborhood segregation is now so common in the United States that it almost seems natural, black and white people lived in close proximity in early American cities. This illustrated talk explores how separate neighborhoods developed. Racial segregation was deliberately organized by the actors in the real estate system: cities through zoning; the Federal government through the FHA, the GI Bill, and the 1949 Housing Act; developers through restrictive covenants; realtors through block busting; and banks, chambers of commerce, landlords, and public housing administrators. Segregation was enforced by violence and terror. Register at this link: https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJckc-qqrDojHtbu8qczpilVBrTkaXprP_Wu For more details: www.susanstrasser.net

2nd/16th: Learn to Lobby in 30 Minutes

Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) is offering a number of online opportunities to join a 30-minute interactive call where we will share inspiring stories from our grassroots network, conduct a short skills training, and answer questions about how to schedule and plan your "visit" with members of Congress. One is on Tuesday, March 2, at 6:00 p.m. Another is on Tuesday, March 16, at 4:00 p.m. Here is the link: https://www.fcnl.org/events/learn-to-lobby?akid=15572.1479.MJ58h4&rd=1&t=20&utm_campaign=lam&utm_medium=email&utm_source=ak&utm_term=15572.1479.MJ58h4

4th: Back from the Brink

Back from the Brink and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons is sponsoring a conference on "Ending Nuclear Weapons Before They End Us: Opportunities Under the Biden Administration to Take Action" on Thursday, March 4, at 11:00 a.m. The conference will feature an expert panel and Q&A followed by interactive workshop sessions to provide activists with the tools and information required to make change under this administration. The workshops will cover a variety of topics, from Nuclear Weapons & Racism to Divesting from Nuclear Weapons. Here is the link to view the full program and register: <https://preventnuclearwar.org/end-nuclear-weapons-before-they-end-us/>

4th/11th/18th/25th and April 1: Bible Study

Bible Study will meet on Thursdays in March at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom with the Great Courses series, Understanding the Old Testament. The final class in this lecture series will occur on April 1. The lectures cover Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and a Conclusion. Newcomers are welcome. For details, contact Alex Bell at alexbell55@hotmail.com

6th: Baltimore Yearly Meeting Interim Meeting

The BYM Interim Meeting will be a virtual one on Saturday, March 6, gathering by Zoom at 9:00 a.m, with formal sessions beginning at 9:30 a.m. Attendance offers a chance to get to know Friends from across the Yearly Meeting and be part of the decision-making. Those who register at: <https://www.bym-rsf.org/events/interim/third21.html> will be sent the Zoom link for the meeting. For other details, see www.bym-rsf.org

7th: Meeting for Business

On Sunday, March 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. We will hear the draft of our Spiritual State of the Meeting report and an update from our Treasurer. All who come to Meeting for Worship are welcome and encouraged to participate in our worshipful sharing of Meeting for Business.

13th/14th: Junior Young Friends Conference

Baltimore Yearly Meeting hosts a gathering of 6th to 8th graders from Friends Meetings in this area three or four times per year. This is a fun way to see friends from other Meetings or camp, make new friends, and retreat from the pressures of teenage life, while still developing skills around living in community and having a lot of fun. There will be a virtual gathering on Saturday and Sunday, March 13 and 14. Please register as soon as possible. For more details: Sunshine Klein (301-774-7663, youthprograms@bym-rsf.org) The next one will be April 30 to May 2.

13th: Quaker Book Group

The Quaker Book Group meets monthly on second Saturdays, via Zoom, from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. We will meet on Saturday, March 13. The book is *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. 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 Sessions

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 Sunday evening sessions in March, on March 14 and 28, from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. Starting at 7:30 p.m., you can follow the prompts at home and write or draw responses you have experienced during those prompts. Here is the link to the prompts:

<https://experiment-with-light.org.uk/meditations/>

We usually use the meditation on the individual in modern language, full length, 37-minute version. Then around 8:30 p.m., if you would like to worship-share from your meditation experience and want to join in a Zoom gathering, please use the links below (remember to "unmute" your device). We anticipate that part of the gathering could go until 9:15 p.m.

20th: Spiritual Formation Program Gathering

The current Spiritual Formation program underway at Bethesda Friends will hold its sixth gathering on Saturday, March 20, at 1:30 p.m. by Zoom. The group will select a reading at the February meeting to share in preparation. (Prior readings have included Meditations of the Heart by Howard Thurman; Four Doors to Meeting for Worship, by William Taber; and Love Poems from God: Twelve sacred voices from East and

West, ed. by Daniel Ladinsky). Smaller friendship circles of program participants will meet between the gatherings to share personal support on the spiritual journey. The program is led by Margaret Benefiel.

21st: Reflecting on The Gathered Meeting

Patapsco Friends Meeting invites us to join them on Sunday, March 21, at noon, via Zoom to view a short QuakerSpeak video on The Gathered Meeting, followed by a discussion to hear what experiences and reflections Friends are led to share. What are Quakers trying to achieve when sitting in silence on Sunday in a Quaker Worship Service? A Gathered Quaker Meeting is a particularly powerful experience. Please register in advance at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUocemurzgrE9ZxjgNDmbCf3T9D7rN5W4qY> Here is a link to the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2G40lmLraNw>

28th: Coordinating Gathering

Representatives of most BFM committees meet during the week before Meeting for Business to discuss the upcoming agenda and to share our reflections on the spiritual state of our community, specific tasks, and Quaker processes. These meetings are open to all who wish to attend. There will be one at 1:00 p.m. on Sunday, March 28.

Committee Notes

Nominating

We first want to thank all of you who served for four and a half years to accommodate our change of schedule for appointing new committee members. New appointees will begin work in July 2021.

We are now entering our nominating season, the time of the year when the Nominating Committee makes recommendations to the Business Meeting to fill the openings of the Meeting's officers, committees members, and liaison positions with Quaker organizations.

For people who have not been involved in committee work before, we strongly encourage you to join a committee. We have found that working with others on committees is one of the most rewarding ways of deepening our relationships within the Meeting community and putting our Quaker principles into practice. BFM committees are always eager to have new faces, new ideas, and new energy.

We would like to learn about the interests of members who are interested in participating in the life of the Meeting. The last time we solicited the cooperation of our members to become active, many of you had requested to take a year off. We hope that you will reconsider that decision as we need to have all hands-on deck to prepare the Meeting to get back to "normal", soon.

During March and April the Nominating Committee will identify nominees to begin serving in July 2021. Nominations will be presented at the May Meeting for Business and approved at the June Committee. Members typically serve for a two-year term, renewable for another two years.

To learn more about your joining at least one committee, please see the list of committees with descriptions of their activities and responsibilities on pages 2 to 10 in the BFM Directory or go to: <https://www.bethesdafriends.org/Officers-&-Committees>.

In the next couple of months, you will be contacted directly by a member of the Nominating Committee by phone or email. If you have any questions, you can also reach one of the co-clerks of the Committee.

Peace & Social Justice

FCNL Postcard-Writing Initiative. If you are inclined to take pen to paper or fingers to keyboard for a good cause this month, please support Dreamers. Five Quaker organizations recently issued a statement laying out a Quaker vision for migration justice. From this common faith, powerful work for migration justice can flourish. See A Quaker Statement on Migration, December 2020:

<https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2020-12/quaker-statement-migration>) This month, Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) is calling on Friends to act in faith and solidarity with Dreamers, their families, and communities by advocating for the Dream and Promise Act (H.R. 6). In 2019, the House passed this act to create a path to legal status for many of these young people. But this legislation must be renewed at the

beginning of the 117th Congress. Urge Congress to re-introduce and pass the Dream and Promise Act, or a similar bill that creates a pathway to citizenship for undocumented youth and TPS (Temporary Protected Status) and DED (Deferred Enforced Departure) holders. A letter template, call script, and email template can be found at this link:

https://fcn1.quorum.us/campaign/28605/?utm_campaign=contacts&utm_medium=email&utm_source=ak&utm_term=15874.209196.Yj8Bj1

Meeting Notes

Thinking About Race

In her book *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love* (2020), Valarie Kaur begins with some questions:

- What if the story of America is one long labor?
- Will we birth a nation that has never been – multi-racial, multi-faith, multi-cultural, multi-gendered, where power is shared, and we strive to protect the dignity of every person? Or will we continue to descend into a kind of civil war? Will we marshal the vision, skill, and solidarity to solve... problems together?

Valarie Kaur tells her own story of moving into activism immediately after 9/11 and her richly inspiring journey since. She writes that Revolutionary Love is the call of our times. Revolutionary Love is labor for others, for our opponents, for ourselves, for our future. It is practiced in community and each of us has a role. She offers 10 core teachings: Wonder, Grieve, Fight (nonviolent action), Rage, Listen, Reimagine, Breathe, Push, Transition, and Joy.

In the chapter “Reimagine” she asks:

What is your vision for our world? Which institutions need to be reformed? Which need to be dismantled and rebuilt? What might your roles be in this labor of Revolutionary Love?

In a TED Talk, Kaur introduces her work. She founded the Revolutionary Love Project to collaborate with other activists to help ground our social justice work in the ethic of love. Here is the link:

https://www.ted.com/talks/valarie_kaur_3_lessons_of_revolutionary_love_in_a_time_of_rage?language=en