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FMW Newsletter - March 2021

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MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP ~ ALL ARE WELCOME

Sundays: 9:00 - 10:00 a.m. and 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Tuesdays: 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Monthly Meeting for Business: 12:15 p.m. March 14 (2nd Sunday)

All meetings for worship are being held via Zoom due to the pandemic.

For more information, go to www.QuakersDC.org or email admin@QuakersDC.org.

3rd Month Query: The Meeting Community

Are love and harmony within the Meeting community fostered by a spirit of open sharing? Do you endeavor to widen your circle of friendships within the Meeting, seeking to know persons of all ages and at all stages of the spiritual journey? Does the Meeting provide for the spiritual refreshment of all members and attenders? Do Friends provide spiritual and practical care for the elderly, the lonely, and others with special needs? (For more see: *Statement on Spiritual Unity, 1964; The Meeting as Caring Community; Fellowship and Community*) Source: BYM Faith & Practice, Part II The Queries.

In Memoriam:

Pablo Sanchez, father of FMW members Lucia Sanchez Norman and Jorge Sanchez, has passed away from COVID. Please hold the family in the light.

News

Freezin' for a Reason: FMW's Quaking Quakers

Ten intrepid FMW members and attenders joined the Chesapeake Climate Action Network's 16th Annual Polar Bear Plunge, raising over **\$14,000** for CCAN's important regional climate campaigns and FMW's own climate and social justice work. This year's Plunge was "BRRR-Tual"--meaning, de-centralized, with teams and individuals (some 300 in total), investing their own icy but pandemic safe dousing methods. When the February 13 Plunge day dawned a treacherous mix of freezing rain and glare ice, friends chose discretion over valor and postponed the team effort, but several "plunged from the safety of their own front and back yards. The Quaking Quakers Plunge Team team finally met to fulfill its pledge as a group in FMW's east garden on February 20. Here's the **proof**.

Virginia Will Become 1st Southern State to Abolish the Death Penalty

On February 16, Friends Meeting of Washington sent these **thank-you letters** to the Virginia legislators who led the effort to abolish Virginia's death penalty, culminating in successful votes in Virginia's Senate (on February 3) and House of Delegates (on February 5). FMW clerks also thanked Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, which has worked tirelessly on this fight. VADP director Michael Stone responded, "*We at VADP are deeply grateful for the faithful financial support and local activist work by Friends Meetings across the Commonwealth of Virginia over our 30 year history. Without your contributions, advocacy, and prayers we would not have won this historic victory.*"

VA Governor Ralph Northam has pledged to sign the death penalty abolition bill into law soon, to make Virginia the first southern state to end the death penalty.

Racial Equity and FMW

FMW's Change Group on Racial Equity, a taskforce under Ministry & Worship, supports the efforts of individual Friends and the Meeting as a whole to examine how racism is showing up in our lives and work, and looks for ways that our lives and our Meeting can address and reduce

racial injustice. In that spirit members Debby Churchman and David Etheridge have prepared this **history of FMW efforts on race issues**. Membership in the Change Group includes David Etheridge (clerk), Debby Churchman, Claire Kelloway, Andy Miller, and Susan Griffin, but all are welcome at meetings.

First Day School Citizen Science on Climate

Climate scientists are increasingly concerned about the impact of so-called natural gas, on both climate and public health, and about lack of certain timeframe for DC's transition off gas to electric energy --despite the fact that we know the District must end the burning of fossil fuels to reach our climate commitments.

On February 7, FMW's First Day school kids became citizen scientists. They learned how to use a methane detector (purchased as part of a collaboration between FMW's Committee on Peace & Social Concerns and DC Sierra Club) and surveyed the neighborhood around FMW for gas leaks. They used the "gas sniffer" to check every gas access point and opening in the sidewalk. First they found nothing, but then, on Florida Avenue, the detector registered a leak of 350 parts per million ("normal" would be 1 or 2 parts per million), then they found another leak. Then, just a block from FMW at the corner of S Street and Florida, the leak detector started beeping and blinking red. The kids asked, "What's going on?" They had found a leak that had crossed into the hazardous zone of greater than 50,000 parts per million, or over 5% methane. We returned to the Meeting House and called Washington Gas.

Last Friday, February 19, the places where the kids had detected methane were still leaking, including the big leak, where gas concentration was still above 50,000 ppm (5% of air). The spots where the kids found methane leaks on S Street were mapped in 2011. It is likely that they have been spewing greenhouse gas into the atmosphere for over 10 years!

The District's natural gas distribution system is over 80 years old and crumbling beneath our streets. Replacing it would cost DC ratepayers some \$5 billion over the next 10 years. While spot repairs will be needed, climate, public health and urban planning experts increasingly believe that investing in gas infrastructure--fast becoming uncompetitive and obsolete--makes no sense, and that DC and other cities must devote all available funds to transitioning the transition to electricity.

Some Px:





Events

Quaker Spiritual Development Programs - Full schedule for March 2021

FCNL Training: Learn to Lobby [Virtually!] in 30 minutes, March 2, 6:00 pm

Learn to organize a virtual meeting with your member of Congress, and how to carry out an effective lobby visit. Friends Committee on National Legislation is our country's oldest faith-based lobbying organization. They're the pros, and have taught thousands how to engage effectively with their members of Congress. [Register here.](#)

Peace & Social Concerns Monthly Meeting, next Sunday, March 7, 12:15 pm - all are welcome! FMW's Committee that focuses on social justice issues is very active, and looking for members and collaborators. [Join on Zoom.](#) For more information, contact clerk Barbara Briggs, (412) 417-9384.

Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples workshop, March 21, 12:30-2:30 pm

[Register here](#) for this important workshop about building relationships among Native and non-Native communities based on truth, respect, justice and our shared humanity. **Roots of Justice, Seeds of Change: Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples** will be led by Jerilyn DeCoteau (Turtle Mountain Chippewa) and Kat Griffith (co-clerk of Northern Yearly Meeting), co-directors of Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples, a program of Friends Peace Teams. For more information contact Steve Chase, SteveChase338@gmail.com

FCNL Spring Lobby Weekend, March 20-22 - Registration is open now!

Quakers, and young adults will gather to learn and lobby. This year, we'll be calling on Congress to **demilitarize the police and end police violence**. There will be scheduled programming on Saturday, March 20 and Sunday, March 21, followed by a day of action on March 22. [Learn more and register here!](#)

Thinking about Race, March 2021: Revolutionary Love

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 – multiracial, multifaith, multicultural, multigendered, 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.

This column is prepared by the BYM Working Group on Racism (WGR) and sent to the designated liaison at each local Meeting. The BYM WGR meets most months on the first Saturday from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, currently via Zoom. If you would like to attend, contact clerk David Etheridge, david.etheridge@verizon.net.

Meeting for Business Minutes - February 2021

Friends Meeting of Washington

Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business

February 14, 2021

Query for Worship Sharing: How do we practice the testimony of equality during a vaccine rollout?

Clerk's Report, February 2021

In Memoriam

- David Shipp, Attender, very active on the Peace & Social Concerns Committee in the 1990s.

Upcoming Events

- **Book Talk: “Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents” February 17, 6:00 pm:** Discussion with author, Isabel Wilkerson, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and storyteller, author of Warmth of Other Suns and now Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents. Please spread the word. To attend contact: Beth Cogswell, bethcogswell8@gmail.com, (571) 344-8055 or Lucy Steinitz, berndlucy@gmail.com, (443) 410-2008.
- **Second Ignatian Prayer Workshop, Sunday, February 21, 3:00 - 4:30pm** - All are welcome! **Join Zoom Meeting.** By phone dial: (301) 715-8592. Enter Meeting ID: 849 4478 0612# on prompt. Contact: Sabrina McCarthy, sabrina.mccarthy@verizon.net, cell 240.778.5234, beforehand in order for workshop materials to be e-mailed to you.
- **Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples workshop, March 21** Led by Jerilyn DeCoteau (Turtle Mountain Chippewa) and Kat Griffith (co-clerk of Northern Yearly Meeting), co-directors of Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples, a program of Friends Peace Teams. Details on how to register will follow. For more

information contact Steve Chase, SteveChase338@gmail.com [Note: Registration link above. -ed.]

FMW Community Highlights & Kudos

- On February 7 the kids of FMW's First Day School continued to learn about methane gas and climate. They used a methane sniffer (purchased as part of a joint project with FMW's Peace and Social Concerns) to find gas leaks, including a BIG leak in the hazardous range on S Street, which they reported to Washington Gas.
- FMW has been granted a 2nd Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan of \$42,523. The application was prepared by FMW's wonderful new accountant, Henok Tedla.
- Yesterday (2/13) FMW "Quaking Quakers" team participated in the Chesapeake Climate Action Network's polar bear plunge, raising over **\$11,000** for CCAN and FMW's own climate and justice work. (You can still **Donate!**)

Tenant Updates- Activities at our Meeting House

- All office spaces are rented to a combination of small businesses and nonprofit organizations. We continue to slightly outpace our FY21 budget for office rentals. For events, we are receiving numerous inquiries for weddings and other celebrations later in 2021 and in early 2022. We're planning for some of these to be larger events, but the space users understand COVID-19 risks and will commit to scaling back as needed when it is more clear how the ongoing pandemic may impact their event. If it is safe to do so, it's not out of the question that we will have a wedding or other celebration each weekend. But we are proceeding carefully forward.

Major Business

Nominations -Virginia Avanesyan

- Viticia (Tish) Thames, Ministry & Worship Committee, 2nd presentation--Friends approve this nomination.
- Aaron Johnson, Personnel, 2nd presentation--Friends approve this nomination.
- Marsha Holliday, Religious Education--Friends approve this nomination.
- Bill Parker, Library, Records & Handbook--Friends approve this nomination.

Organizations to which FMW sends representatives

- **Washington Interfaith Network (WIN):** FMW has active engagement with WIN.

There is a Meeting Liaisons section of the FMW officers website: (<http://quakersdc.org/Officers>), which lists FMW members who act as points of contact with Quaker or other religious organizations.

Virginia explained that many of our members are active in WIN, which is not listed on the website as an organization that FMW has a relationship with. She proposes putting WIN and the committee members active with WIN on the FMW website, and stating on the website that WIN is an organization FMW has active engagement with.

A Friend clarified that this website does not in and of itself create an ongoing, formalized obligation to WIN. The Meeting has already joined WIN, and is now a dues paying member.

Friends made clear that WIN is associated with the Peace & Social concerns committee. One Friend noted that she would like to see WIN on the website, noting that we are congregation members, not individual members. Friends agreed that WIN, and members active with WIN, would be placed in this section of the website.

- **Right Sharing of World Resources** - We no longer have active engagement. Propose to remove from list of liaisons on FMW's website.

Virginia explained that neither the Meeting nor its members have an active relationship with Right Sharing of World Resources, but it is listed as a Quaker organization with which we liaise. A friend explained that the Right Sharing of World Resource is a Quaker-affiliated organization. Another Friend clarified that currently FMW's relationship with Right Sharing of World Resources is inactive. If that relationship once again becomes active, the website can list members who are involved with it.

Friends clarified that the officers listed on the website were not necessarily nominated by the Nominating Committee. The officers on the website are meant to be an informal resource for who to contact.

Sabrina McCarthy has volunteered to rekindle the relationship with Right Sharing of World Resources.

Further discussion on the officer section of the website and nominating processes will continue to take place.

Membership - Rob Farr

- **Katie Breslin** has requested that Membership be transferred to West Richmond Friends Meeting in Indiana. She has recently relocated to West Richmond. Friends expressed a wish that FMW become Katie Bresden's second spiritual home.

One Friend questioned whether Katie needs to submit a formal letter, requesting transfer. Friends agreed that an e-mail was sufficiently formal. One Friend proposed that assuming the proper process was followed, Meeting for Business approves the transfer.

Another Friend said there is a formal process for requesting and effectuating transfer, and that Meeting for Business can only approve a transfer after that process is carried out. Friends agreed the handbook's procedure would be followed, and that the transfer request would be taken up by Meeting for Business next month

- **Bobby Trice**, first request
Robb Farr read a portion of Bobby's membership letter. Bobby said he was honored to have his membership considered. He began attending FMW over a year ago and is overjoyed to have received clearness that he feels at home at FMW.

Friends said that Bobby has been a valuable addition to the community. This membership request lays over for a month, as is our custom.

Donation to Friends House - Dan Dozier

Clerk recapped that in January 2021 Meeting for Business, there was discussion of whether \$2,000 should be donated to Friends House from a restricted fund established by donors for a

Senior Center that is no longer in operation. F&S has vetted and supports a request to donate \$2000 from this restricted fund dedicated to the Senior Center (\$4,400 total in that fund). The money is not donated to Friends House as an institution; instead, Friends House will hold and use the money for its residents who cannot afford certain things. Dan explained that he believed that this donation aligns with the donor's original intent. Friends agreed that this was an appropriate use of \$2,000, from the \$4,400 fund.

A Friend asks what the status and thinking was around the remaining balance. Dan Dozier explained that \$2,000 is being given to Friends House because that is the donation amount they requested. F&S will consider making an annual contribution in the future. For now, the remaining funds will be held, and potentially given to other organizations that request a donation. Any future donations will follow the formal procedures, vetted by F&S and then approved by MfB.

Friends approve the \$2,000 donation to Friends House.

Other Business

Thank-you Letters to Virginia legislators (Peace & Social Concerns)

At the suggestion of Debby Churchman (who is a Virginia resident) Peace & Social Concerns has drafted and approved letters of thanks to Virginia Senator Scott Surovell and Delegate Mike Mullen who led the effort to pass state legislation abolishing the death penalty, which is, of course, a deeply held Quaker value. Identical bills SB 1135 and HB 2263 passed in Virginia's Senate and House of Delegates on February 3 and 5, respectively. It is expected that VA Governor Ralph Northam will soon sign this legislation, making Virginia the first southern state to end the death penalty.

Peace & Social Concerns asks Meeting for Business to agree that these letters should be sent out in the name of the entire Meeting.

Barbara Briggs, clerk of Peace & Social Concerns, noted that the Committee wrote and approved the letters (**attached below**) and requested that the letters be signed by all of FMW, not just Peace and Social Concerns.

Friends approved sending this letter from FMW.

One Friend commented that other organizations have also been instrumental in Virginia's abolishing the Death Penalty, mainly Virginia's Alternative to the Death Penalty. Friends agreed that FMW should send this organization the letter expressing thanks for its work and advocacy on this issue. Friends approved also sending a letter to Virginia's Alternative to the Death Penalty, from all of FMW.

Sixth Day (Friday) Meeting for Worship (Ministry & Worship)

The Ministry & Worship Committee reports that the Sixth Day 12pm Meeting for Worship is laid down for lack of attendance. The Committee thanks Friend Bertrand Rossert, Convener of that meeting for worship, for his diligent and generous commitment to making a space available for Friends' spiritual support at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Friends are invited to approach the Committee if they have concerns about the meeting for worship being laid down.

*Sabrina noted that M&W began offering Meetings for Suffering. One was held weekly on the 6th Day. Over time, attendance at that meeting has diminished. M&W is laying down that meeting for lack of attendance. Many thanks are given to Bertie for his commitment to that meeting. Bertie has worked tirelessly to organize this Sixth Day Meeting, and FMW is grateful.

Re-opening (Debby)

Possibility of re-opening the building in late March/April for an indoor worship for those who have had the vaccine and an outdoor worship for those who have not. In both cases, following masking and social distancing guidelines. Weather permitting, we may be able to start outdoor worship earlier. Clerks will be consulting over the next month, with a particular concern for First Day School. All of this is dependent on the Covid numbers and how quickly the vaccine rollout is going. We will continue to require folks to check in, wear a mask and stay at least 6 feet away from others. We will comply with city requirements concerning religious gatherings.

All of this is very tentative, and the Clerks will continue to keep the Meeting updated on the latest thinking and timelines. One Friend noted that the health situation in March could get dramatically better or dramatically worse.

ADDENDA: ATTACHED COMMITTEE REPORTS

Letters to Virginia Legislators who led effort to end the state's death penalty

[To: Senator Scott Surovell (804) 698-7536, email: district36@senate.virginia.gov]

The Honorable Scott Surovell
P. O. Box 289
Mount Vernon, VA 22121

Dear Senator Surovell

Thank you for your leadership in the February 3 Senate vote to abolish the death penalty in Virginia. As Quakers we believe that there is “the light of God in everybody” and so have long opposed violence against persons, including capital punishment. We are also cognizant of the fact our justice system still deals more harshly with people of color, especially Black men, meting out longer sentences and a far higher proportion of death sentences to these fellow-citizens. We agree with you that the electric chair belongs in a museum, with the stocks and auction block.

Thank you for your leadership in winning passage of SB 1165. This is truly an historic step, and one critical for racial healing.

Sincerely

#####

[TO: Delegate Mike Mullin (804) 698-1093, email: DelMMullin@house.virginia.gov]

The Honorable Mike Mullin
566 Denbigh Boulevard, Suite C
Newport News, VA 23608

Dear Representative Mullin,

Thank you for your leadership in the February 5 House of Delegates vote to abolish the death penalty in Virginia. As Quakers we believe that there is “the light of God in everybody” and so have long opposed violence against persons, including capital punishment. We are also cognizant of the fact our justice system still deals more harshly with people of color, especially Black men, meting out longer sentences and a far higher proportion of death sentences to these fellow citizens. We agree with you that after better than four decades of efforts, it is high time to abolish this inhumane and unjust practice.

Thank you for your leadership in winning passage of HB 2263. This is truly an historic step, and one critical for racial healing.

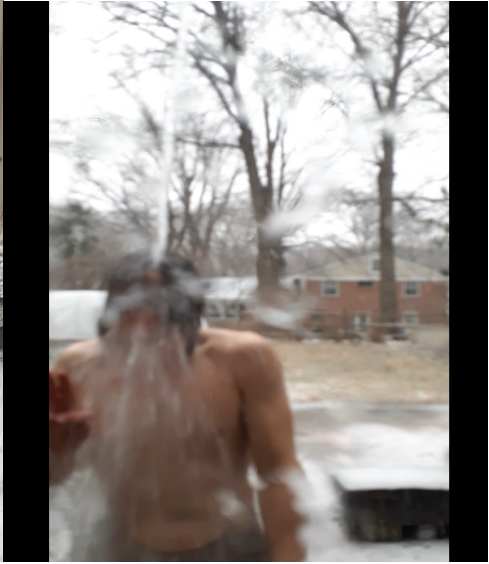
Sincerely
Debby Churchman, co-clerk, FMW
Rebecca Nelson, co-clerk, FMW
Barbara Briggs, clerk, FMW Peace & Social Concerns

Photo Gallery - February 2021



Washington Interfaith Network acknowledges Friends Meeting of Washington as one of WIN's most active and fastest growing chapters.

FMW's Quaking Quakers Plunge Team raised over \$14,000. Here's how!





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