Ann Arbor Friends Meeting Newsletter  
September 2020  
1420 Hill St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104 | 734-761-7435 | www.annarborfriends.org  
Vol. 69, no. 9

The Ann Arbor Friends Meeting Newsletter is published monthly on the first Sunday of the month by the Ann Arbor Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

**DONATIONS** (Tax Deductible): Friends can donate to the Meeting at www.annarborfriends.org/Donate.shtml via PayPal (which takes 1.9% plus 30c per transaction). You can also contribute by cash or a check in the contributions basket on the lobby table or US mail: c/o Treasurer, Ann Arbor Friends Meeting, 1420 Hill St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

To subscribe to this newsletter or to send announcements, contact Rabindar Subbian, at comm-cood@annarborfriends.org.

Deadline for announcements: 3rd Sunday of the month by 12 noon ET.

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**CALENDAR**  
[† = See “Weekly Handout” link on AAFM website for further details]

**Sunday, September 6 [1st Sunday]**  
9:00 Meeting for Worship  
Fellowship Hour at rise of meeting.  
10:05 Earthcare  
Membership and Outreach  
Peace and Social Concerns  
10:30 Family Check-In  
11:00 Meeting for Worship  
First Day School. Online †  
Fellowship Hour at rise of meeting  
4:00 Care and Visitation

**Thursday, September 10**  
7:15 (pm) Quaker House Committee

**Sunday, September 13 [2nd Sunday]**  
9:00 Meeting for Worship  
Fellowship Hour at rise of meeting.  
10:05 Finance  
10:30 Family Check-In  
11:00 Meeting for Worship  
First Day School. Online †  
Fellowship Hour at rise of meeting.  
12:45 Committee for Children and Families

**Sunday, September 20 [3rd Sunday]**  
7:45 Meeting for Worship.  
9:00 Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business  
10:30 Family Check-In  
11:00 Meeting for Worship  
First Day School. Online †  
Fellowship Hour at rise of meeting

**Sunday, September 27 [4th Sunday]**  
9:00 Meeting for Worship  
Fellowship Hour at rise of meeting  
10:05 Reading & Discussion. (Repeat of Saturday) †  
10:30 Family Check-In  
11:00 Meeting for Worship  
First Day School. Online †  
Fellowship Hour at rise of meeting  
12:45 Forum: Latinx Perspectives on Racism and Discrimination

**ADDITIONAL WEEKLY EVENTS & WORSHIP**

**Mondays** (till September 14)  
12:30 Fellowship Hour

**Tuesdays**  
10:00 Meeting for Worship  
6:00 Justice Action Group

**Wednesdays** (from September 23)  
11:00 Fellowship Hour

**Saturdays**  
3:30 Reading & Discussion. (New discussion) †

**SAVE THE DATE**

Seekers’ Session, Sunday, October 11, 12:45 pm – 2:00 pm, via Zoom. Come learn more about Ann Arbor Friends Meeting and the history of Quakers. The theme for the session is History of Quakers: Issues of Social Justice and Injustice.

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MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fellowship Hour hosted by Membership and Outreach Committee on Sundays after rise of meeting for worship for F/friends to chat and enjoy each other’s company. Ad additional Fellowship Hour will also be held during the week (this week: Monday, September 7, 12:30 pm).

Reading and Discussion: Saturdays at 3:30 pm and 4th Sundays at 10:05 am. All welcome. Lisa Klopf leads the discussion.
- Saturday, September 5, 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm, and Tuesday, September 8, 11:30 am – 12:30 pm: We will discuss “the importance of Retreats and how to reshape our relationship with time”.
- Saturday, September 12, 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm. We will discuss ‘Active Quietism’ from Amor vincat.

See the Meeting’s Reading and Discussion page for more information and Zoom connection details: annarborfriends.org/wp/reading-discussion/

Palestine-Israel Action Group (PIAG) continues to share news and maintain connections with Quaker and other organizations working for Palestinian human rights and equality. Considering our smaller numbers and Covid-19 concerns, we will meet quarterly on Zoom for the near future. However, we appreciate the Meeting’s involvement in peace and justice issues in Palestine-Israel, regardless of whether F/friends come to meetings. PIAG asks F/friends to consider giving a donation to UNRWA USA (ph: 202-223-5756) so they may continue to provide urgent relief for refugees following the massive explosion in Beirut, Lebanon on August 4. Donations may be sent to UNRWA USA, 1875 Connecticut Ave.,NW, Tenth Floor, Washington, D.C. 20009. F/friends may also be interested in The Virtual Gaza 5k + Digital Festival 2020, a fun family-friendly event, will take place on Saturday, September 12. Funds raised will primarily go to helping fund the salaries of UNRWA counselors in UNRWA's mental health program working with children in refugee families. (Please Google for details on how to donate, or participate by check.)

Meeting for Canoeing will take place on Friday, September 18. Meet at Kent Lake dam, Island Lake Rec area off Kensington Rd (one mile south of I-96). Car spotting starts at 10 am. Bring kayak or canoe, lunch, water, life saving device, sun and rain protection, paddle and mask. Qs? Contact Thomas Taylor. If you cannot go, perhaps you have a craft someone else might borrow.

Forum: Latinx Perspectives on Racism and Discrimination, Sunday, September 27, 12:45 pm, via Zoom. Recognizing that anti-Black racism is central to the way racism developed and is practiced today in the United States, AAFM continues to explore and expand its understanding of how racism impacts everyone in our community. We will be hosting a panel of our neighbors of Latin American heritage, where they can share their stories about the challenges they face, and the strategies that help them cope with racism and discrimination here in Washtenaw County.

Family Check-In hosted by Committee for Children and Families (CCF) will be half hour prior to Sunday 11:00 am meeting for worship (from 10:00 am meeting for worship on 5th Sundays). Families with children are invited to share a little about how they are doing, and, if they wish, share a story or song or activity or recipe they’ve been enjoying. Please see the “Changes” webpage (annarborfriends.org/wp/changes) for details.

Committee for Children and Families (CCF): First Day School features online Storytelling and discussion with Ben Kuipers (email Ben kuipers@umich.edu for link to BlueJeans) at 11:00 am this Sunday.

Friends are encouraged to participate in Membership & Outreach’s “smallworld” project, designed to widen our connections. Friends are paired for casual conversation (at time and place of their choosing). “smallworld” facilitates high-quality conversations between community members who are paired every three weeks with a ‘partner’. For more information visit: smallworldapp.org/aafm.

Ministry & Counsel invites Friends to submit proposed Readings for Reflection to Mark Hoover (convener) at mnc@annarborfriends.org. Friends are invited to provide their submissions to the committee in electronic form along with the source of the material (to enable the committee to obtain publication permission) and an optional short commentary on what in the content moves you. Contact Ben Kuipers (email Ben kuipers@umich.edu) for details.

Care & Visitation Committee would like to know if you need help with transportation, food shopping, care of the house, etc. Please contact Nancy Taylor (Convener) at ntaylor324@gmail.com or 734-995-6803) if you do or know of a Friend who may benefit from such help.

Young Adult Friends (YAF): Want to join? Have a question? E-mail us at aa-yaf@googlegroups.com.

Communications & Website: Friends can opt out of having their name, or contact information, or image being published in the Meeting’s external communications (handout, newsletter, website etc.). To opt out, please send email to comm-cood@annarborfriends.org with the communications (weekly handout, monthly newsletter, website etc.) and the selective information (name, phone, email, photo etc.) you want to opt out.

AMONG FRIENDS

Karen Connor and John Barrie would like to announce the marriage of their daughter, Colleen Leigh Connor Barrie, and Patrick Lee Vaughn, on July 11, 2020, in Gasport, New York. The Vaughns live in rural Gasport, with seven chickens, and their dog Hank. Colleen works at Yahoo! in nearby Lockport, New York (although currently working from home). Pat and his business partner own and operate the Liten Buffel winery, in Gasport, which makes natural wines.
Phil Volk and Bill Riccobono will be facilitating a ‘Bible Worship Sharing’, Thursdays, 9:30 am, from September 3 onward. They plan “an open discussion on various Bible verses” to offer an “opportunity to discuss [the Bible] with other Quakers”. All welcome. (Zoom Meeting ID 872 8493 7438 | us02web.zoom.us/j/87284937438.)

Friends in active fire zones of California

Doug Hamm, who grew up in our Meeting, and his partner, Dorothy Henderson, were both very active in AAFM in the 1980s & 90s and remain close to many Friends here. They moved to Nevada City, California to work at Sierra Friends Center (previously the John Woolman School) and they had recently built a “sustainable” home there. Doug writes, “What has come to be named the ‘Jones Fire’... came up to our house (which is now) surrounded by scorched earth; our 10 acres were almost entirely burned over. The well head and pump shed were both caught in the burn, but we got help yesterday so the house now has water and we were able to move back in today (Aug.24). The fire started with a lightning strike ... (and a few hours after midnight) and we woke to smoke. The fire crews ... made every effort to get the fire contained and controlled as fast as they could. At this time the Jones fire is 70% contained, and most of the firefighters have gone to help with other fires. We were some of the first to be evacuated and among the last to be let back in. At the Sierra Friends Center all but one of the (A-frame sleeping) cabins was lost along with a bathhouse, Madronne Hall (the largest building on campus), Cedar House, the garden structures, and livestock barn were consumed.” Friends can send a note of friendship, Doug’s email is douglasjhamm@gmail.com.

Within the last year Susan Wilson and Bob Fisher moved to Ben Lomond, California to become Co-Directors of the Quaker Center, beautifully situated in a redwood grove there. When they lived in Ann Arbor a decade ago, Susan worked with our Meeting’s children & parents for a number of years while she was teaching at UM, and Bob, with his deep commitment to peace & justice issues, served faithfully on several of our committees. Quaker Center offers a place of retreat and contemplation, renewal and growth, for individuals, families, Friends meetings and other organizations or groups who unite with the Quaker principles of simplicity, justice, peace and respect for “that of God” in every person.

As the fires in Santa Cruz County moved toward the Center, everyone was evacuated and they still await the final decision to move back in. As far as the Capstone Fire Management group can tell, no major structures at the Center have been lost. We are grateful to learn this, and send Susan and Bob our heartfelt good wishes as they return home to continue wrestling with the challenges of running a program during Covid. They can be reached at BobFisher@QuakerCenter.org.

LARGER CIRCLES OF FRIENDS

Volunteers needed. Donations appreciated. Interfaith Council on Peace and Justice (ICPJ) Voting Access Group offers tools and supports to voters that have been developed by its members. Tools developed include the Non-Partisan Voter Tool Kit that covers many possible issues and questions about voting. The Voting Access Group is particularly focused on increasing voter turnout in traditionally low turnout areas, prioritizing Zip Codes 48197 and 48198. Tools developed for distribution by the UUAA include post cards, posters, a Voting Kit and Voting Helpline. Information about those tools are at: tinyurl.com/Non-Partisan-Voting-Guide.

Volunteers are needed for multiple tasks on this project. Persons interested in helping may volunteer by emailing: VotingHelpline@gmail.com. Funds are also needed to purchase stamps and items for the Voting Kits, which are a high cost item. The Voting Access Group is a collaborative effort of members of multiple organizations, including the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor (UUAA), WeROC, Circles of Washtenaw, St. Clare’s Church of Ann Arbor, Friends of Restorative Justice (FORJ), Washtenaw PPC, and others.

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting (LEYM) Spiritual Formation Program Retreat, will be held Friday – Saturday, September 11 – 13. The theme is Spiritual Companions within an Ecology of Quaker Practice. It is being led by our Meeting’s Cassie Cammann, Mark Hoover, and Buffalo Friends Meeting’s Nadine Hoover. More information is at: leym.org/spiritual-formation. Contact Valerie Groszmann, Spiritual Formation Program Committee Clerk at valerie.groszmann@gmail.com or 269-366-2517 to register.

LEYM Clerk Jo Posti will be resuming weekly Zoom calls, Fridays, 9:00 – 10:00 am, for any LEYM Friend to check in, share any concerns and talk about creative ideas that may help meetings, committees or LEYM as a whole. Zoom Meeting ID 175 173 666, passcode leymexec, us02web.zoom.us/j/175173666.

Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting (GPQM) Fall Quarterly Meeting, will be held on Saturday, September 19, 9:00 am via Zoom. More information available at: leym.org/green-pastures-quarterly-meeting-of-the-religious-society-of-friends-quaker. In addition to items for business, Blair Ellis from Ann Arbor Friends Meeting will facilitate a short presentation and discussion about his practice of holding Meeting for Worship outside of the jail in Richmond, Indiana, where he is in seminary at Earlham School of Religion. To add an item to the agenda, please contact GPQM Co-Clerks, Deb Wickerling (wickedeb@aquinas.edu) or Elliott Brannon (esbrannon@gmail.com). Zoom Meeting ID: 989 6528 2665, umich-health.zoom.us/j/98965282665.

Pendle Hill offers a free Zoom lecture on The Road to Pendle Hill, Saturday, September 19, 7:00 pm via Zoom. The lecture is on the history of American Quakers’ decision, ninety years ago, to ‘open a study center that
would meld contemplation and activism” – Pendle Hill. The lecture is the 2020 Stephen G. Cary Memorial Lecture. It will be led by Tom Hamm, Professor of History, Trueblood Chair in Christian Thought, and Director of Special Collections, Earlham College. For more information and to register for this free event see: https://pendlehill.org/events/stephen-g-cary-memorial-lecture-2020-the-road-to-pendle-hill.

Quaker Books features among its many new arrivals, Anti-Racist Baby by Ibram X. Kendi with illustrations by Ashley Lukashesky and Unfolding Towards Love by Martin Willitts Jr. Kendi’s Anti-Racist Baby is “a fresh new board book that empowers parents and children to uproot racism in our society and in ourselves”. Unfolding Towards Love is “a collection of spiritual poetry about the presence of God as well as God’s hidden presence and God’s voice speaking within us if we are willing to listen”. Both books are available for purchase via the Quaker Books website: quakerbooks.org.

COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS
Interfaith Roundtable (IRT) of Washtenaw County invites all to join in the following event via Zoom:

- **Spiritually Grounded in Times of Transition:** Inter-spiritual Student Panel, Wednesday, September 9, 7:00 – 8:30 pm, a conversation with students sharing questions and practices guiding them in these days. Contact Rene Roederer (roederer@umich.edu) for Zoom information.

United Way of Washtenaw County (UWWC), has a vision that by 2030 your zip code will no longer determine your opportunity in life. At present, in Washtenaw County and our State, it does. In response to newly available data on the wellbeing of households in our State who are Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, and Employed (ALICE), United Ways across Michigan are launching a special State Edition of the 21 Day Equity Challenge. It runs September 8 – 28. More information and to signup: uwwashtenaw.org/equity-michigan

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS
News from AFSC
Report from John Deikis, AAFM’s Representative to AFSC

The report describes the conditions of confinement at this time of pandemic, the lack of prophylactic and medical care resources, and the Michigan governor’s unwillingness to take any significant actions to limit the spread of the virus or the exposure of inmates. The report also suggests possible mechanisms for decarceration, mutual aid and alternatives to punishment. It ends with conclusions of their long study and recommendations.

The report is illustrated with artwork from incarcerated persons, as well as comments from people on living in prison and awaiting death from the spread of COVID-19 when social distancing is impossible and all activities and out-of-cell opportunities have been suspended.

Authors of the report include AFSC’s Natalie Holbrook and Jaqueline Williams, Midwest Executive Committee member Pete Martel, and Megan Wilson of Ann Arbor Friends Meeting.

AFSC: OPEN MI DOOR
Open MI Door is a campaign to end solitary confinement in all Michigan prisons, jails and juvenile facilities, and advance safer, more therapeutic alternatives. In Michigan, over 3,200 people are subjected to solitary confinement in prison every year. Also known as segregation, isolation, or social and sensory deprivation (SSD), solitary is defined as: isolated confinement for more than 20 hours per day without meaningful human contact.

In solitary, people can expect to experience:

- Confinement behind a solid steel door for 20 to 24 hours a day
- Water shut-off and restrictions on food
- Inadequate medical and mental health treatment
- Physical torture such as top of bed restraints, hog-tying and restraint chairs
- “No-touch torture,” such as sensory deprivation, permanent bright lighting, extreme temperatures, extreme noise and forced insomnia
- Chemical torture, pepper spray, tasers and forced cell extraction
- Sexual intimidation and other forms of brutality and humiliation
- Infrequent phone calls and non-contact family visits
- Extremely limited access to rehabilitative or educational programming
- Restrictions on reading material, paper and mail

Solitary confinement causes extreme and often permanent damage to the individuals who endure it, including severe anxiety, depression, paranoia, hallucinations and delusions, cognitive difficulties (such as confusion and memory loss), uncontrollable feelings of rage and fear, psychosis and increased risk of suicide and self-mutilation.

People of color are particularly impacted by harsh solitary policies. Black prisoners are more likely to be held in solitary confinement and held there repeatedly.

Vulnerable and marginalized populations are also exceptionally at risk in solitary confinement, including people with intellectual or physical disabilities, mental illness, cognitive or sensory impairment, youth and
people over age 55, pregnant women and new mothers, and people who identify as LGBTQI.

Families, especially children, are harmed by severely limiting their ability to maintain connections with a loved one in solitary confinement.

Solitary confinement increases the risk of prison violence, placing corrections officers directly in harm’s way and negatively impacting officers’ mental health.

Humane, effective, and safe alternatives do exist! Numerous states have already implemented policy changes to reduce or end their use of solitary confinement in order to reduce prison violence and drive down recidivism.

It is time for Michigan leaders to prioritize the safety of Michigan prisons and communities by prohibiting Solitary confinement in all its forms and creating safer, more therapeutic alternatives to isolation.

AFSC asks Friends to support the following petition to end solitary confinement in Michigan: change.org/p/governor-whitmer-end-solitary-confinement-in-michigan

**MESSAGE FROM MEETING CLERK**

Hearing each other over Zoom

It is likely that we will be meeting via Zoom for the foreseeable future, so this seems a good time to consider how we keep faith with our Light and with each other when we meet this way. One problem that has come up occasionally is that when we use electronic communication, we lose many of the cues that shared presence provides. Friends can talk over each other or not be attentive to quieter voices and what they wish to say. This came up in last Sunday’s Fellowship time, when a number of Friends were left concerned about the questioning of a Friend’s experience with aggressive police action in Detroit.

We do not have a good way to replace what physical presence provides, but there are a few steps that might help us in these times:

1. We should make sure that each meeting we sponsor has a host (and, if possible, a co-host) who have and should use the ability to mute people. Usually this will be relevant for people who forget that their microphones are on, but it may also be helpful if Friends don’t listen to others trying to speak.

2. At the same time, we are all responsible for each of the meetings we are involved in. Unprogrammed Friends don’t have ministers, and that means that we are all the ministers of our Meeting.

3. We can use the “chat” window on Zoom for private messages where needed, and Friends should watch that if possible.

4. Friends have the practice of settling into silence when discussion gets fraught and we are in danger of losing the Light. We should remember this, and everyone should feel called to ask us to settle into silence whenever it might be needed.

A larger point I hope we can keep in mind whenever we meet, is that we should listen with humility and patience, resisting the impulse to foreground our own concerns or questions, or to debate.

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**PEACE & SOCIAL CONCERNS**

A reminder from **Peace & Social Concerns Committee** to “Let them hear from YOU!” Keep your legislators aware of your and the Meeting’s values and priorities.

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Toll-free numbers:

US Capitol Switchboard: 866-220-0044
White House Comment Line: 888-225-8418
CALLED MEETING FOR WORSHIP

A Called Meeting on Social Learning Groups for children, called at the request of Laoma Beck and some Friends who have been organizing a plan to use part of our Meetinghouse once a week to provide some in-person social learning experience for the children of our Meeting was held on Sunday, August 9, 3:00 pm. The minutes of this meeting follow and are being reproduced here at the request of the clerks.

Ann Arbor Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
Special Called Meeting for Worship for Business, August 9, 2020

Present: Kevin Miller (clerk), Laura Lein (assistant clerk), Peggy Daub (recording clerk), Laoma Beck, Tom Blackwell, Jeff Cooper, James Crowfoot, John Deikis, Lynn Drickamer, Margot Finn, Susan Hartman, Cynthia Lempert, Pat Micks, Christa Williams, John Williams

All Friends participated remotely through an internet conference room.

The meeting began at 3:05 p.m. with worship. The Clerk explained that the purposes of today’s special called meeting for business are to consider a request to use the Meetinghouse to support our children and how our building can be used in a safe way at present.

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Laoma Beck brought a request to use the Meetinghouse for in-person social learning experiences for small groups of children while schools have limited in-person learning during the pandemic. Children from families in the Meeting are invited to join, along with a few other families known to Laoma, and there is no charge. There are two age-arranged groups forming at present, including one group for elementary grades and another for middle school. Four or more children from Meeting families are interested in participating, with others still considering it. Two parents would be present with each group, with no more than ten persons total gathered at a time, following current limits from state government.

The Ann Arbor school system plans to have synchronized online instruction on Monday-Tuesday and Thursday-Friday. The proposed groups would meet at the Meetinghouse on Wednesdays for three hours each, one group in the morning, and one in the afternoon, unless the number of participants is so small that they can be combined. They will meet outdoors as weather permits and will all use the same designated restroom downstairs. When indoors, they would use the Meetingroom, Corner Room, and Lobby. Food would be kept out of the Meetingroom. Parents will provide supervision on a rotating basis, and will also take responsibility for cleaning the spaces, probably before and after each use. Each participating family will sign an agreement to abide by terms that will help ensure the safety of all children and their families, including expectations for behavior onsite and when it will be appropriate to quarantine. Laoma will serve as the point of connection between parents within the Meeting and those not affiliated with our Meeting community.

In discussion, Friends asked how Quaker House residents feel about this request and Jeff Cooper (convener of Quaker House Committee) answered that they had been consulted, are interested in going forward cooperatively, and are prepared to use only the spaces designated for their use, probably the Fellowship Room and kitchen downstairs. A Friend asked the group to abide by our Meeting’s child safety policy. ICPJ staff are using their offices onsite at times, and they would need to be informed and asked to use a specific restroom in the building.

A Friend brought concerns about whether our insurance company would cover us in case of people contracting the coronavirus in our building, and whether Michigan statutes on educational groups and educational buildings would apply to this activity. In answer to questions about cleaning, Laoma said she plans to have a list of tasks that must be done regularly and has a contact in the CDC who has provided her with information on how to clean/disinfect effectively in spaces children use. In answer to a question about offering a similar opportunity to younger children, it was felt that those younger than school age may not be able to stay masked. It seems best to approach this activity as a trial, to see how it works. Friends asked to be shown the terms of agreement for families.

Our current practice is to have the Meetinghouse open some hours during the week. We would like to change this to be closed except by special arrangement. Pat Micks, Meeting Worker, has received some requests from other groups to use our indoor and outdoor spaces. It feels too soon to let any other groups use the space, and we choose to have each space used by only one, known group of people, the children’s groups and Quaker House residents; this can be reconsidered as we go forward and circumstances change.

The Meeting approved Laoma Beck’s request to use our Meetinghouse space in a carefully controlled way to allow children to have some social learning time together during the current pandemic, with the understanding that participating families will agree to specific terms to provide a safe environment, will be responsible for cleaning the areas used, and will be outside as much as possible. No rent will be charged in return for inviting Meeting children to participate. The building will be closed to other uses for now (apart from known uses by Meeting employees and contractors, Quaker House residents, and ICPJ staff). We will review and evaluate this arrangement after a month of use by the children’s social learning group.

Meeting closed with worship at 4:10 p.m.
RUMBLINGS: A SPECIAL FEATURE

Ed.: The writings and the other features in this section ask many Friends to challenge their own privileges. This month ‘Rumblings’ brings you witness from our Meeting’s Lindsay Dikema (‘Unprogrammed Journeys’).

UNPROGRAMMED JOURNEYS

LINDSAY DYEKEMA

I have worked as a psychiatrist for the last 15 years. I began witnessing the criminalization of mental illness and poverty very early on in my career, as my patients, many of whom had severe mental health conditions (such as schizophrenia), shared stories about being caged, beaten, and tortured during incarcerations or interactions with police. However, it was only when I started practicing at a public mental health clinic in Detroit in early 2019 when I began to fully appreciate the brutality of state violence, and how disproportionately it has affected people of color.

Last weekend, I facilitated a break-out session at LEYM on the topic “The Carceral State and Micah 6:8.” I’d somewhat over-prepared for what turned out to be a Zoom chat with just three other Friends, all of them AAFM members. So, if you’ll pardon the double-dipping, I would like to summarize the things we reflected on during that session.

First, because I understand a little bit about Quakers by now, a note on language. Though I often use other phrases (including “the punishment industry” and “the prison industrial complex”), I chose the term “carceral state” here because it conveniently rhymed with Micah 6:8, the oft-cited-by-Quaker Bible verse around which I state here because it conveniently rhymed with Micah 6:8, the oft-cited-by-Quaker Bible verse around which I

moving on to God’s requirement that we love mercy, I launched into my own love story with Richard Wright’s 1940 novel Native Son. For those unfamiliar, Native Son is the horrifyingly bleak story of Bigger Thomas, a young African-American Chicagoan who is rescued from destitute poverty by a wealthy real-estate mogul who hires him to be his driver. His new boss’s daughter Mary is a leftist college student whose obliviousness to her privilege and cruel microaggressions make for some cringeworthy moments despite her “good” intentions. On his first night of work, Mary asks Bigger to drive her to a party, where she gets sloppy-drunk, leaving Bigger to try to get her safely to her bed without waking anyone. To silence her, he accidentally suffocates her to death with a pillow, then panics and burns her body in the furnace. After a manhunt, during which Bigger goes on to commit even more violent acts of escalating desperation, he is found guilty of Mary’s murder and sentenced to death.

Notwithstanding Bigger’s apparent lack of empathy or remorse, the reader is led to sympathize with him; through Wright’s masterful prose, even Bigger’s most troubling actions are viewed through the context of the hopeless state of affairs into which he was born. Bigger’s only moment of warmth in the novel, of true human connection, comes after he is interviewed by an elderly Communist lawyer named Max who is trying to spare him the death penalty. Max’s efforts are doomed, of course, but he fights hard for Bigger, and it is clear Bigger appreciates his kindness. After their first interview, Bigger returns to his cell:

“The darkness round him lived, breathed. And he was in the midst of it, wanting again to let his body taste of that short respite of rest he had felt after talking with Max. He sat down on the cot; he had to grasp this thing. Why had Max asked him all those questions? He knew that Max was seeking facts to tell the judge; but in Max’s asking of those questions he had felt a recognition of his life, of his feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered

“...Before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off his guard. But this, this—confidence? He had captured feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before. What was this?...He felt as though he had been caught off

When I first read Native Son several years ago, I read those words as a psychiatrist, not as a Quaker. I remember seeing them as, quite simply, a testament to the power of empathy, and vowed to interview each and every one of my patients with a similar intentional recognition of their dignity as human beings. Today I have different terms for that same concept: the Light Within, the Inner Light, that of God within you, that of God within me. Whatever it is, when we honor its sacredness, we love mercy.
When someone has committed a wrongful act, we must keep working our way backward to truly understand how that person’s circumstances led them to commit harm, and how those circumstances must be addressed in order to usher in true healing for everyone involved. When we take it a step further and start walking humbly, we can recognize how our own actions—whether intentional or unintentional, conscious or unconscious—have contributed to that person’s circumstances. We may sit with the uncomfortable knowledge that many of us are where we are today because the system has been rigged in our favor our entire lives. And then, armed with that recognition, we must ask God what he requires of us now.

As I have delved deeper into Quaker faith and practice over the last two years, my perspective has evolved. It is my hope it will continue to evolve as I continue to walk humbly with God. During periods of frenzied work and expectant silence alike, may each of us remain open to following where the spirit leads us.

(‘Unprogrammed Journeys’ is brought to Friends by the Meeting’s Justice Action Group – JAG.)
READING FOR REFLECTION

Native Americans of the Haudenosaunee (or Iroquois) Confederacy offer the “Thanksgiving Address” Robin Wall Kimmerer describes here before gatherings or meetings, giving thanks to all of the elements and beings that make our life possible (winds, waters, trees, food plants, and many more) The author, Native American herself, though from a different tradition, talks about Native Americans’ reciprocal and sacred relationship with the world and how different its implications are from our stance of scientific objectivity and viewing the natural world as a resource.

This passage touches me deeply as it describes what our relationship to the natural world and to each other could be/should be. As Friends in this culture we are inevitably influenced by the economy of scarcity, grasping, and control that we live in, but I think our roots influence us to grow toward a different way of relating to the world. I find myself deeply drawn to this affirmation of gratitude and mutual caring for the earth as it cares for us.

– Jan Wright

[T]he Thanksgiving Address [is] a river of words as old as the people themselves, known more accurately in the Onondaga language as the Words That Come Before All Else…. This ancient order of protocol sets gratitude as the highest priority….

You can’t listen to the Thanksgiving Address without feeling wealthy. And, while expressing gratitude seems innocent enough, it is a revolutionary idea. In a consumer society, contentment is a radical proposition. Recognizing abundance rather than scarcity undermines an economy that thrives by creating unmet desires. Gratitude cultivates an ethic of fullness, but the economy needs emptiness. The Thanksgiving Address reminds you that you already have everything you need. Gratitude doesn’t send you out shopping to find satisfaction; it comes as a gift rather than a commodity, subverting the foundation of the whole economy. That’s good medicine for land and people alike….

What would it be like to be raised on gratitude, to speak to the natural world as a member of the democracy of species, to raise a pledge of interdependence? No declarations of political loyalty are required, just a response to a repeated question: “Can we agree to be grateful for all that is given?” In the Thanksgiving Address, I hear respect toward all our nonhuman relatives, not one political entity, but to all of life. What happens to nationalism, to political boundaries, when allegiance lies with winds and waters that know no boundaries, that cannot be bought or sold?...

Cultures of gratitude must also be cultures of reciprocity. Each person, human or no, is bound to every other in a reciprocal relationship. Just as all beings have a duty to me, I have a duty to them. If any animal gives its life to feed me, I am in turn bound to support its life. If I receive a stream’s gift of pure water, then I am responsible for returning a gift in kind. An integral part of a human’s education is to know those duties and how to perform them….

If we want to grow good citizens, then let us teach reciprocity. If what we aspire to is justice for all, then let it be justice for all of Creation.


QUERY OF THE MONTH

Query on EDUCATION

How do we welcome children and teenagers into the loving care of the Meeting? Do we listen to them, share our spiritual seeking with them, and bring them under such influences as tend to develop their religious life? Do we explore together the Bible, Christianity, and other religions? Do we offer a balanced account of the history and principles of Friends? Do we endeavor together to witness to Friends’ testimonies?

How do we show our concern for the improvement of education in our community and in the world? Are we informed and active contributors to the public education system? Do we give proper consideration to supporting Friends schools? Are we concerned that all children receive a sound education in a nurturing and respectful environment?
**Advises for Participating in Online Meeting for Worship:** Please consider and keep in mind the following when you attend online Meeting for Worship. If you can use headphones, please do so. If you use your computer’s speaker and microphone, there can be feedback or an echo.

- When you connect, please type your name into Zoom. This will help Friends know who is speaking, should you speak.
- Enter the meeting in silence as you would for an in-person meeting for worship. **Do not** introduce yourself when you enter.
- Many etiquette norms that apply to in-person Meeting for Worship also apply to the online version. Once you are in Meeting for Worship, please refrain from moving in and out of the video, talking to other people (even if you are on mute), engaging in other activities etc. Some Friends might find this distracting and/or disruptive of the spirit of worship.
- Keep your device on mute unless you are speaking. There is a microphone icon on top or bottom of the window showing you, which you can click to toggle on or off. Background noise such as dogs barking or cell phones ringing can be very disruptive to the spirit of worship and make it hard to hear ministry offered during worship.
- **Vocal Ministry:** If you are led to speak:
  - As always, allow some silence after any preceding message to allow it to settle in our hearts.
  - Unmute your device. (click on the microphone icon in your window). Introduce yourself, simply saying “This is _your name_ (this helps visually impaired Friends and those who participate by phone).
  - Pause briefly in case someone else has also started to speak. If so, wait for the clerk to recognize you. Otherwise, start speaking.
  - Mute your device when you are done. (The host may do so if you forget.)
- **Afterthoughts, joys and sorrows:** Continuing in worship, the meeting closer will invite afterthoughts and joys and concerns as usual. Continue to follow the same advices as for speaking.
- **Rise of Meeting:** The closer will close Meeting with a few words of closure. There will be time for introductions, announcements, and discussion after the meeting.
- If you need to get the attention of the host or clerk for any reason, use the chat feature and choose to whom to address your message or use the raise hand feature. If you are using only a phone to connect, consider texting the host first (if you have access to Meeting directory); unmute and speak if necessary.

Note: These advices are adapted from that provided by Patapsco Friends Meeting, and slightly modified by Lake Erie Yearly Meeting (LEYM). We are grateful for their leadership and service in this important work.