

Bethesda Friends Meeting Newsletter for December 2021

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Query for December: Meetings for Business

Are our Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business held in the spirit of worship, seeking the guidance of God? In what ways do we each take our right share of responsibility in the service of the Meeting?

December 2021 Calendar

Sunday Meeting for Worship is held at 11:00 a.m. in a hybrid format. Most friends participate via Zoom. Some friends participate in person at Bethesda Friends Meeting. (See guidelines under events.) Unless otherwise indicated, all of the other following events are virtual.

1	Wed	8:00 p.m.	Mid-week Worship (check by email)
4	Sat	4:00 p.m.	Mission: Joy Discussion
5	Sun	9:00 a.m.	Meeting for Business (All invited)
7	Tues	7:00 p.m.	Religions of the Axial Age
8	Wed	8:00 p.m.	Mid-week Worship (check by e-mail)
11	Sat	10:00 a.m.	BYM: Called Interim Meeting
		1:30 p.m.	Quaker Book Group
12	Sun	9:30 a.m.	Exploring & Deepening Our Quaker Faith & Practice
		1:00 p.m.	Library Committee
		7:30 p.m.	Experiment with Light (via e-mail/phone, Zoom Sharing)
13	Mon	8:30 p.m.	January Newsletter Deadline
14	Tues	7:00 p.m.	Religions of the Axial Age
15	Wed	8:00 p.m.	Mid-week Worship (check by e-mail)
18	Sat	1:30 p.m.	Spiritual Formation Group
19	Sun	9:00 a.m.	Committee Day: Pastoral Care
		9:15 a.m.	Committee Day: Ministry & Worship, Stewardship & Finance
		9:30 a.m.	Committee Day: Outreach & Communications
		1:00 p.m.	Coordinating Gathering
21	Tues	8:00 p.m.	Candlelight Meeting for Worship (via Zoom)
29	Wed	8:00 p.m.	Mid-week Worship (check by e-mail)

Details are available on our web site: www.bethesdafriends.org

The Social Concerns Box

The Social Concerns Box for December is Bread for the City. Bread for the City is a major provider of food, clothing, medical care and legal and social services for thousands of low-income DC residents. Its greatest pandemic-period surge, as reported by its centers in Shaw and Anacostia, is a 400 percent increase over last year in families needing free food. Also up sharply: demand for legal services involving evictions, debt disputes, and withheld government benefits. Bread for the City also provides free COVID tests on demand for walk-ins. Its advocacy unit last month won a federal lawsuit restoring for 20,000 DC residents SNAP (food stamp) benefits that the U.S. Department of Agriculture planned to eliminate in April. To donate to the Social Concerns Box, please go to: www.bethesdafriends.org and clearly designate that your contribution is for the Social Concerns Box. If you prefer, you may send your check, made payable to Bethesda Friends Meeting, to Assistant Treasurer, Bethesda Friends Meeting, 3050 Military Road, NW, Apartment 834, Washington DC 20015.

The First Day School Walkathon raised \$1,175, and the October Social Concerns Box received \$250 for the Interfaith Works program for the homeless.

Religious Education for Children

Religious Education had a small but mighty group for our annual walkathon this year! About 10 of us learned about homelessness in Montgomery County and the many ways that Interfaith Works provides assistance. We walked with our signs held high, and our youngest held the big banner all by himself! The walkathon raised a record \$1,175 to add to the total that BFM will donate to Interfaith Works. Thank you to everyone who participated by walking or donating or both.

The Religious Education Committee continues to work together and with First Day School teachers to think about ways for children, families, and the Meeting to stay connected to each other. Please continue to check the weekly bulletin for updates.

Events

1st/8th/15th/29th: 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.

4th: Mission: Joy Discussion

On Saturday, December 4, at 4:00 p.m., the Outreach & Communication Committee will host a discussion of the documentary *Mission: Joy* (Finding happiness in troubled times). Reviews say: "Deeply moving and laugh-out-loud funny, *Mission: Joy* is a documentary with unprecedented access to the unlikely friendship of two international icons who transcend religion: His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu. In their final joint mission, these self-described mischievous brothers give a master class in how to create joy in a world that was never easy for them. They offer neuroscience-backed wisdom to help each of us live with more joy, despite circumstances."

To see the documentary, register online for your ticket to view the movie free of charge. Note that viewing is only from November 19 to December 2. First register with Interfaith Power and Light (IPL) by clicking this link:

<https://interfaithpowerandlight.salsalabs.org/missionjoy/index.html> Then register a second time at the “film screening room.” They will email your ticket link to view the movie anytime, as often as you like.

5th: Meeting for Business

On Sunday, December 5, 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 Youth Safety, Library, Outreach & Communications, Fellowship & Hospitality, and BYM Interim Meeting.

5th/12th/19th/26th/: Meeting for Worship

Bethesda Friends worship together each Sunday at 11:00 a.m. Friends can participate remotely via Zoom, or meet in person at the Meeting House.

Participating in worship via Zoom. Friends wishing to join Meeting for Worship remotely can do so via Zoom.

Participating in worship at the Meeting House. Friends are invited to gather in person for Meeting for Worship at the Meeting House. The following COVID rules apply to all of those attending in person:

- You must be vaccinated against COVID-19.
- You must wear a mask and maintain social distancing.
- You must self-screen based on COVID symptoms or exposure. You may not attend in-person Meeting for Worship if you have a fever, have COVID symptoms, have tested positive for COVID, or have been exposed in the past 10 days to an individual testing positive for, or displaying symptoms of, COVID.
- You must sign in on a simple sign-in sheet.
- You must notify BFM promptly if you have a positive test after attending in person. BFM will provide notice to others who attended the same meeting of the COVID case (but will not identify the person testing positive).

7th/14th: Religions of the Axial Age

In December, the Comparative Religions class will finish Hinduism with a lecture on the Bhagavad-Gita on December 7, and begin Buddhism by looking at the life of the historic Buddha on December 14. Using the Great Courses series: Religions of the Axial Age, we meet once a week by Zoom on Tuesdays, at 7:00 p.m., for a half-hour lecture with an additional half-hour discussion. We will not meet on December 21 or 28. A group of 8 to 10 has been meeting, and we greatly enjoy the fellowship as much as the lessons. You are welcome to join anytime.

11th: Quaker Book Group

The Quaker Book Group meets monthly, via Zoom from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. In December, it meets on December 11. 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.

12th: Exploring and Deepening Our Quaker Faith & Practice

Do you sometimes wish you could have a deeper conversation with others about their experience in Meeting for Worship? Are you curious about what draws people to Quaker Meeting, and about how their Quaker faith and practice informs their lives? Would you like to feel a deeper connection spiritually to others in the Meeting?

Ministry & Worship is hosting an hour-long discussion of Quaker faith and practice on the second Sunday of the month. Exploring and Deepening Our Quaker Faith & Practice. The December session will take place on December 12, at 9:30 a.m., via Zoom. We will watch a short video from Quaker Speak, on the topic of Quaker testimonies. It is entitled “What are the Quaker SPICES?” Then we will share our responses to it. These sessions are intended for those new to the Meeting as well as for those looking to deepen their experience and their sense of connection with others.

12th: Experiment With Light Session

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. First-time participants find the process quite easy to follow and, often, richly rewarding.

This is an invitation to a session on Sunday evening, December 12, from 7:30 to 9:15 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://www.experiment-with-light.org.uk/modindos.mp3> 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 “un- mute” your device). We anticipate that part of the gathering could go until 9:15.

19th: Christmas Celebration Cancelled

Normally we would have our wonderful Christmas Celebration the Sunday before Christmas, when the children put on a play and an orchestra performs and leads us in song. We are not able to do that this year because of the restrictions caused by the pandemic. We suggest that you attend the Candlelight Meeting on December 21. Children are warmly invited (in pajamas if you like).

19th: 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, December 19, at 1:00 p.m., via Zoom, in preparation for the Meeting for Business on January 2.

21st: Candlelight Meeting for Worship

Please join us for our annual Candlelight Meeting for Worship at 8:00 p.m., on Tuesday, December 21. For more than 25 years, Friends have gathered for a peaceful hour of respite from the holiday rush. Now, after a year of anguish and uncertainty that has kept families and friends apart, we gather together once again (via Zoom). Light your own candles to shine in the darkness! Please be on time.

Into the Future

February 5th: BYM Women's Retreat

The Baltimore Yearly Meeting Women's Retreat is an annual event for Quakers in this area. This year it will be online via Zoom from 10:00 a.m. to noon on Saturday, February 5. Its purpose is to provide refreshment and spiritual insight to BYM women so that they may grow in the Spirit. In recent years, more than 100 women have attended each year. To learn more and to register: <https://womensretreat.bym-rsf.net/>

Committee Notes

Stewardship & Finance

In this season of giving thanks, let us remember that Bethesda Friends Meeting depends on the generosity of its members and attenders. All of the Meeting's activities (including child care and pastoral care, as well as its contributions to Quaker organizations and others) are matters of spiritual identity and shared commitment. None of it can happen without financial contributions from the people in this community of seekers. Of course, some of us have limited income, heavy expenses, or both, but contributions in any amount are always needed and deeply appreciated. Please donate as generously as possible either online at:

<https://www.bethesdafriends.org/Donate-Online-Now> or by check. Checks should be made payable to Bethesda Friends Meeting and mailed to BFM Assistant Treasurer, 3050 Military Road, NW, Apt. 834, Washington, DC 20015.

Book Table

In the absence of book table holiday offerings, grandparents/parents might like some ideas of books for kids. The New York Public Library has a nice little list of books for young children around kindness and sharing: <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2021/11/08/kind-reads-kind-kids>

They also posted a set of wonderful picture books for Indigenous Peoples day at: <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2021/09/30/picture-books-indigenous-peoples-day>

And here is a source for children's books about peace (many of which have been on the book table at various times: http://www.thepeacecompany.com/store/cat_books_children.php

Peace & Social Justice

Urge your member of Congress to extend the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit Expansions. Congress is in the final stages of negotiating the Build Back Better Act, once-in-a-generation legislation that would transform the U.S. economy to center children and families. We must keep up the pressure on our members of Congress until this vital legislation is signed into law. Unless the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) expansions are extended, these two highly effective anti-poverty programs will expire by December 31. Extending these expanded programs in the Build Back Better Act could cut child poverty in half and lift 4.1 million children above the poverty line, including 1.2 million Black children and 1.7 million Latino children. FCNL asks us to urge our members of Congress to extend the EITC and CTC expansions. Suggested letter and email templates can be found at this link:

https://fcnl.quorum.us/campaign/25332/?utm_campaign=contacts&utm_medium=email&utm_source=ak&utm_term=20246.209196.EstVrH

Meeting Notes

Supporting Ramallah Friends School

Palestinian olive oil is available for sale at \$20 per bottle. A bottle of olive oil makes a great gift and supports Palestinian farmers and Ramallah Friends School. Also on sale are Ramallah Friends School tee shirts and sweat shirts. Cost: \$20 for T-shirts, \$40 for hoodies. All proceeds go to Ramallah Friends School.

Quaker Motto Calendars

The calendars have been produced by the Scattergood family since 1884. The small calendars are filled with words to live by from a whole variety of people, ranging from the Bible, to Gandhi, to Quakers, to Native Americans, and many others. They cost \$16 for 10 calendars and \$28 for 25 for the calendars only. If you want the envelopes, \$17 for 10 and \$31 for 25. Please send a check to Brown & Associates, c/o The Motto Calendar, 9687 Gerwig Lane, Suite F, Columbia MD 21046 . For more information and questions: mottocalendarinternatl@comcast.net

Thinking about Race

The 2017 book *My Grandmother's Hands* by Resmaa Menakem is being widely read in Quaker circles. Its subtitle is "Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Minds." Each of its 24 chapters contains exercises to help with the mending. The following passages are from chapter 20, "Cultural Healing for African Americans."

"Practice and teach the art of disruptive healing. Genuine healing is a temporarily disruptive process. This is true not only for individual bodies, but for the collective Black body—and the collective American body—as well. Just as the human body creates inflammation to health, wise social activism creates the social and cultural disruptions that are needed to help a culture heal and grow up. These disruptions might also be called compassionate agitation...."

"It's often said that Americans care little about history. 'That's in the past,' white Americans often say. 'Let's focus on the here and now—or, better yet, on the future.' This is just another dodge created by white-body supremacy. It is yet another attempt to avoid growing up and healing from racialized trauma. History matters, and an awareness of it puts our lives into a context. A disdain for history sets us adrift, and makes us victims of ignorance and denial. History lives in and through our bodies right now, and in every moment."