

Portland Friends Meeting Newsletter

Sixth Month 2026

Meeting for Worship: 10:00 am Sundays (childcare available)
See Calendar below for additional
Meeting times.



1837 Forest Avenue
Portland, Maine 04103
portlandfriendsmeeting.org
207-200-6544

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Connections

Co-Clerks
Mary Bachman DeSilva and Jim Grace
coclerks@portlandfriendsmeeting.org

Recording Co-Clerks
Rob Levin & David N. Hingston
PFM.recordingclerk@gmail.com

Treasurer, Contributions
Kathy Beach, 207-233-2065
katherinegbeach@gmail.com

Treasurer, Operating Account
Dick Stratton, 860-539-5040
rstratton@megalink.net

Special Needs Fund
Elizabeth Szatkowski 207-274-3564
Stefanie Fairchild 207-272-6500

Co-Clerks, Ministry & Counsel Committee
Mags Fehr fehrmaggie@comcast.net
Judy Spross jaspross@gmail.com

Clerk, Pastoral Care Committee
Stefanie Fairchild, 207-272-6500
stefaniefairchild@yahoo.com

Youth Programs and Childcare
Beth Bussiere (Committee Clerk) and
Bart Czyz (Programs Coordinator)
youthprograms@portlandfriendsmeeting.org

Use of the Meetinghouse
Caroline Webster
coordinator@portlandfriendsmeeting.org

Email List Membership Changes
pfm.email.list.owner@gmail.com

Newsletter Submissions
David N. Hingston dhingston@comcast.net

Address/Directory Changes
directory@portlandfriendsmeeting.org

Struggle is a never ending process. Freedom is never really won, you earn it and win it in every generation.

~ Coretta Scott King

Calendar

Friday, June 19 th	Last day for Friends General Conference Gathering registration (see p. 11)
Saturday, June 20, 10:00 am	Pre-Parade Gathering at First Parish Church (see p. 8)
Saturday, June 20, 11:30 am	Pride Portland Parade and Festival (see p. 8)
Saturday, June 20, 4:30 pm	Juneteenth Celebration (see p. 9)
Wednesday, June 24, 9:30 am	Next Friends by the Forest Playdate (see p. 8)
Sunday, June 28, 2:00 pm	Interfaith Pride Service (see p. 11)
Tuesday, July 7 to July 12	FGC 2026 Gathering (see p. 11)
Sunday, July 26, 6:00 pm	PFM Summer Meeting for Business, preceded by potluck at 5:00 pm

Every Month

Every Sunday, 10:00 am	Meeting for Worship at the Meetinghouse (masks encouraged on Third Sundays) and on Zoom*
Most Second & Fourth Sundays, 8:15 am	Sunday Breakfast Gathering
Third Sundays, 8:45 am	Early Meeting for Worship at the Meetinghouse
Every Weekday, 10:30 am	Meeting for Worship on Zoom*
First Thursdays & Third Tuesdays, 7:00 pm	Meeting for Healing on Zoom*

*contact Co-Clerks for online Meeting for Worship links



Portland Friends Meetinghouse in the 1860's (see p. 11)

Portland Friends Meeting
Minutes of Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business
June 7, 2026

Mary Bachman DeSilva, Co-Clerk

Rob Levin, Recording Clerk

Members and attenders of Portland Friends Meeting gathered in worship at 11:57 pm. Some 47 Friends gathered in person at the Meetinghouse and remotely via Zoom. Mags Fehr held us in the Light.

1. CLERK'S COMMENTS

Mary offered some heartfelt reflections as she winds up her term. As Mary stated, our process will never be perfect, but we have done some lovely and meaningful discernment together over the past couple years and even this past week.

Mary invited us into worship with selected readings from *Winnie the Pooh* by A.A. Milne, and in particular from the chapter entitled *In Which Pooh Goes Visiting and Gets into a Tight Place*.

2. REVIEW OF MINUTES

The Meeting **approved** the minutes of Meeting for Business of May 3, 2026.

3. NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Jennifer Frick reported on the new slate of nominees. See Advance Materials for the full roster.

Jennifer began by recognizing Mary DeSilva's service these past two years. Jim Grace shared what a delight it has been to serve as Co-Clerk with Mary, and how they both have grown together. Others named and appreciated the joy that Mary radiated, as well as the integrity, vulnerability, and honest spirit she brought to the role.

Nominating Committee is happy to present Mary Tracy as the new Co-Clerk! Mary has been PFM member for a long time, and an attender since 1979. Members of the committee recognized Mary big heart, her organizational skills, and her intelligent attention to whatever is in front of her. Mary T brings a lot of love and experience and listening. One Friend fondly recollected showing up to Meeting for the first time and being greeted at the door by Mary and her warm smile.

Friends cheerfully approved Mary Tracy as Co-Clerk!

Friends also heartily approved Jim Grace as Co-Clerk for a third year.

Jennifer reviewed highlights from the rest of the nominations slate.

- ~ There are not a lot of new positions, which is a sign of stability and commitment at the committee level.

- ~ Kirk Read will join the FSP Resource Committee.
- ~ Concerns For Homeless Committee – Everyone is new here, because it's a newly established standing committee.
- ~ Pastoral Care and Leadings Committees still have a quite a number of openings.
- ~ Two openings remain on Ministry and Counsel, and Nominating is still discerning who will fill those vacancies.

Friends approved the rest of the Nominations Committee slate as proposed.

4. MINISTRY AND COUNSEL

A. Revisitation of Masking Policy

Mags Fehr presented for Ministry and Counsel Committee. A significant number of Friends have reached out to Ministry and Counsel to request that we cease wearing masks on third Sundays. But others have asked that we stay with the current practice. See Advance Materials for M&C's report.

Ministry and Counsel did not reach unity in its recent discussions, but decided to bring the question to Meeting for Business because many have asked to consider the issue as a whole Meeting. To be clear, M&C itself wasn't split between those who felt strongly on different sides of the issue. Rather, the committee members recognized the different views but were unable to come up with a recommendation that seemed to resolve the dilemma between competing needs.

Many Friends offered their views on how our masking policy is currently serving us well or not. Concerns were expressed about whether or how masking might make us physically uncomfortable, or interfere with rich vocal ministry, or cause some to stop attending the 10:00 a.m. worship. Others reflected on how masking once a month is an appreciated and heartfelt gesture of love for those who are immunocompromised.

One relative newcomer observed that when she first appeared on a third Sunday, she wasn't oriented as to the policy, and was initially confused about why everyone was masked. We acknowledged that we can do a better job of communicating the policy each month. Ministry and Counsel was asked to prepare a handout that concisely explains the policy to newcomers.

Ultimately, the sense of the Meeting emerged that we would like to continue our current practice of masking once a month on third Sundays at 10:00 a.m. worship, while the 8:45 a.m. worship will remain mask optional. We approved the following Minute:

The Meeting approved a renewed commitment to continue masking on third Sundays at 10:00 a.m. worship. Rather than focus on the challenges of masking, we seek a reframing and a new

understanding of what it means to be in solidarity and in worship with those who are vulnerable. Several suggestions were received on how to make third Sundays an improved experience for all attenders.

B. Summer Meeting for Business

We approved the holding of summer Meeting for Business on Sunday, July 26 at 6 p.m., preceded by a potluck at 5 p.m.

5. AD HOC COMMITTEE ON UNHOUSED VISITORS

Mary DeSilva opened this topic by explaining the context for the two different reports in the Advance Materials, one from the Ad Hoc Committee on the Unhoused and one from Buildings and Grounds Committee (Attachments 1 and 2). The two reports came in right as Mary was preparing the agenda, and there was not time to ask the two committees to confer further. Mary and Jim convened the Clerks Support Committee for advice on how to approach this issue at Meeting for Business. Rather than ask each committee to speak directly on their written reports, Mary invited Ann Dodd-Collins and Scott Simonds to present a factual update on the conditions with our campers, and then invited suggestions on how we might proceed. There was no expectation that we would reach unity on the specific proposals presented by the Ad Hoc Committee.

Ann and Scott gave a comprehensive update on conditions since last Meeting for Business. They have both spent many hours assisting the campers, including by accompanying one to a meeting with a case worker. This was an eye opening experience for Scott insofar as he came to appreciate the difficulty of getting consistent assistance when the case workers turn over with a high frequency.

Ann and Scott also intervened in two incidents where campers were in conflict with each other. One involved noise and music, another was a dispute over property. One camper, P seemed to be committed to moving forward with his life. But unfortunately he was involved in an altercation outside of our grounds a few days before Meeting for Business and was arrested and is currently in Cumberland County Jail awaiting charges. So he and his partner, B, are no longer camping the cemetery. One other camper remains, as of today, and Ann and Scott are working with her to try to get her licensed as a cosmetician in Maine so she can obtain employment. In addition, a couple who had slept on our grounds in past summers have returned; they plan to stay in the nearby shelter at night, but visit our grounds during the daytime.

Ann acknowledged that the campers are not fully safe on our grounds, but they are safer here than they are in other places. Ann asked the Meeting to be patient with the new standing committee as it seeks to help the existing campers.

In response to questions, it became apparent that we are not clear on our policy with respect to newcomers who arrive and seek to start camping on our grounds for the first time. A review of minutes from prior Meetings for Business suggested that the Cemetery Committee was charged with ensuring that no new campers took up overnight stays, in accordance with the language of the sign. There seems to be an ongoing lack of clarity as to whether the sign represents a request that people not camp on our grounds, or whether it is more of a requirement or demand.

Mary next asked for suggestions on next steps in our process. Ultimately, representatives of Buildings and Grounds and the Ad Hoc Committee agreed to get together to try to reconcile the different views expressed in the two reports submitted. The Cemetery Committee is also invited to be a part of this process. The goal is for these committees to bring a revised or new proposal to the July 26 Meeting for Business, although we also acknowledged that that might be a tight deadline.

6. RENEWING COMMITMENT TO GREATER PORTLAND FAMILY PROMISE

Ann Dodd-Collins presented. We are being asked to renew our commitment to Greater Portland Family Promise for another year. A lot is changing for GPFP. They have lost a lot of grants. They used to focus on asylum seekers, but there have been no new asylum seekers for a while due to changes in the federal administration's policies. They also didn't expect two different GPFP employees, and two fathers of GPFP families, to be detained by ICE. Meanwhile, the Clark House site remains a work in progress. In spite of these changes and uncertainties, our level of support would remain the same. Paul Rossvall, Sue Nelson, Mary Desilva, and Ann Dodd-Collins each play a different GPFP role, and GPFP is already included in our operating budget for 2026.

Friends approved renewing our commitment to GPFP for another year.

7. CLOSING WORSHIP

Mary finished with four short quotes from A.A. Milne:

- *I always get to where I'm going by walking away from where I've been.*
- *Sometimes, when I'm going somewhere, I wait. And then somewhere comes to me.*
- *Sometimes you have to rethink things you thought you thought through.*
- *If the person you are talking to doesn't appear to be listening, be patient. It may simply be that he has a small piece of fluff in his ear.*

Then, following a period of silence, the Meeting then rose at 2:16 pm, to meet again for the Conduct of Business on July 26, 2026, according to Divine will.

Attachment 1

Proposal from Ad Hoc Committee regarding campers on PFM grounds

For Meeting for Business, June 7, 2026

After much discussion, thought, and discernment, and considering the strong views expressed at the May 2026 Meeting for Business, we propose the following for discussion and approval by Portland Friends Meeting in support of the campers in our cemetery as they, we, and social services continue to try to find housing for them.

We propose the following actions in support of sanitation, cleanliness of our grounds, and communication by the campers with us, social workers/case managers, and job prospects:

1. A commercial dumpster will be placed on the property in the back of the cemetery.
2. The installation of a port-a-potty to maintain a sanitary situation.
3. Installation of an exterior plug for phone charging.
4. A small table and chair on the back porch to facilitate the use of the meeting wifi for the communication mentioned above.

Portland Friends Meeting

Building & Grounds Committee

Minute Regarding Campers on PFM Property

May 31, 2026

The Building & Grounds Committee supports compassionate relocation of the current campers at the soonest possible opportunity, and does not support the measures that have been proposed by the ad hoc camper committee. In summary, those measures include provision of a trash dumpster, a portable toilet, an outdoor electrical outlet, and a table and chair for internet access.

Our concerns are with practical and safety issues and include the following:

- Placement of a dumpster would require truck access and therefore be visible from Forest Avenue. Forest Avenue is a major route for pedestrians and bicyclists between downtown and social activities and services on Riverside Street and for points farther west. The road is also heavily used by Maine residents on their way to the City's Riverside Recycling Center, whose fees are substantial and continually increasing. A visible dumpster will inevitably become a target for unauthorized dumping.
- Placement of a portable toilet would also be visible and unmonitored. Cleanliness and frequency of servicing would be unpredictable.
- The monthly costs of placement and servicing of a dumpster and toilet are substantial. We are concerned that there are likely better ways that the Meeting's limited funds could be put to use in support of the City's homeless residents.
- Installation of an outdoor electrical receptacle would be costly and present safety challenges since there would be no way to ensure that extension cords or risky electrical heating equipment would not be used.
- If provided, internet access **must** be installed in a manner that will be completely and securely separated from the Meeting's own uses, files, and website. The Meeting **must** be insulated from any potentially illegal, violent or obscene internet uses.

Our concerns are thus focused on the visibility and unsecured nature of our property, its placement on a highly public road, the infrequent and irregular use of the property by Friends and our visitors, and the lack of active monitoring of our site and building other than the building's fire alarm.

PRIDE PORTLAND PARADE AND FESTIVAL

You are all invited to join Portland Friends Meeting as we gather with the MultiFaith Community Group at the Pride Portland Parade on Saturday, June 20.

There will be a gathering at First Parish UU Church on Congress starting at 10:00 am, with an informal worship gathering from 10:30-11:00 am. Then the group will process out singing to line up for the parade, which begins at 11:30 am. Our gathering point will be on Brown Street (next to Maine Historical Society) between Congress Street and Cumberland Avenue (Zone E).



NEWS FROM FRIENDS SCHOOL OF PORTLAND

1. Friends by the Forest

Join us **outdoors** for books, snacks, and forest playtime on Wednesday mornings at 9:30 am. Mornings are appropriate for children ages 0-5. This is a free event.

Upcoming Playdates:

- ~ Wed., June 24 with friends from Prince Memorial Library
- ~ Wed., July 15 with storyteller Linda Ashe-Ford
- ~ Wed., Aug. 19
- ~ Wed., Sep. 16



2. A Big Thanks!!!



A big thank you to all who attended and shared at Friends School of Portland's 20th Anniversary kick-off event, celebrating Jonathan Ewell's 20th year. Many friends shared, and we packed Bayside Bowling with friends, Friends, families, and alumni! Looking forward to the ways that we will celebrate in the 2026-2027 school year.

FAMILY PROMISE UPDATE

At our recent Meeting for Worship with Concern for Business, Portland Friends approved renewing our partnership with Greater Portland Family Promise.

Portland Friends is currently supporting two families and staying in touch with a third family that we supported previously. One of the current families is housed. The family currently living at Clark House will be moving into their apartment within the next week or two. Members of PFM continue to be involved with the monthly distribution of culturally appropriate food and are on the moving team.

With summer coming, GPFPP is planning a number of family gatherings at various parks in both Portland and Lewiston. Volunteers will be needed to help plan events, assist on event days, and provide food and other supplies. This is a chance for us to get involved again with families, something many of us have missed doing since COVID put an end to the rotational model of hosting.

Lastly, if you have been on the [GPFPP website](#) recently and happened to click on Who We Are/Staff, you have noticed that the only picture is of Michelle, the executive director. I don't know when the other pictures disappeared, but the rest of the staff are asylum seekers, one of whom was detained by ICE. That is the world the families GPFPP supports are living in. They do not feel safe. You may not be able to volunteer with Family Promise. You may not be able to contribute to Family Promise or to the special account set up to provide legal fees for the fathers who have been detained. But you can pray for the safety of all those that GPFPP has supported and continues to support and for the staff.

JUNETEENTH INVITATION

Hello!

We're excited to share that our 4th annual [Juneteenth Celebration](#) on Saturday, June 20, from 4:30 PM – 7:00 PM at the Benjamin Mays Center at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine.

Last year, 137 community members gathered to celebrate through music, storytelling, food, and connection in a historic space. As we begin planning for 2026, we're carrying that same energy forward while continuing to grow this event into a meaningful space for our communities.

This year's theme, "**We Are the Wildest Dreams**," centers cross-generational storytelling from local community members through conversations about the past, present, and future. Together, we're creating a celebration that reflects where we've been, where we are, and where we're going.

We're reaching out early because we can't do this alone. As funding for community and cultural programming continues to be challenged, we're working intentionally to keep this celebration accessible, welcoming, and community-centered while growing its impact.

If you're interested in getting involved through sponsorship, tabling, programming support, or helping us connect with local storytellers, performers, artists, and Black-owned businesses, we'd love to hear from you.

We hope you'll join us again for this year's celebration as we continue building our Lewiston community together with both new and familiar faces.

Date: Saturday, June 20, 2026

Time: 4:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Where: Benjamin Mays Center, Bates College
95 Russell Street, Lewiston, ME 04240

As always, we will be catering from [Bab's Table](#), and your RSVP helps us make sure we have enough southern food for everyone. If you plan to attend, please take a moment to let us know you are coming.

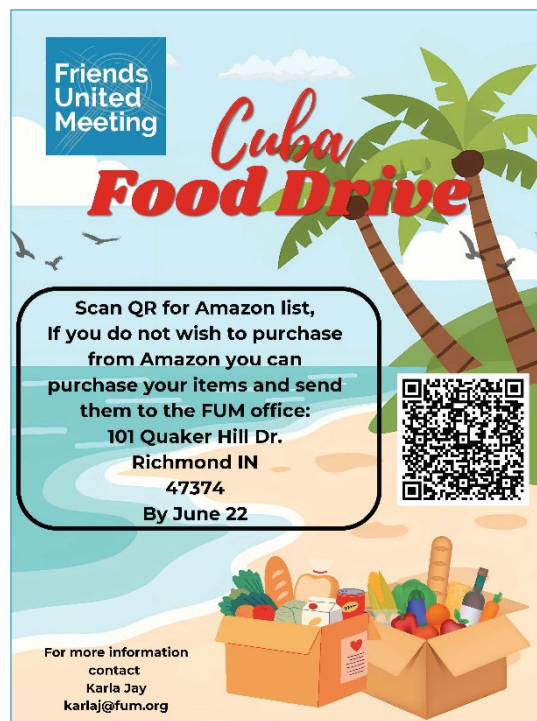
[Save My Seat & Plate!](#)

Sincerely,

Safiya Khalid

CUBA CORNER

Friends United Meeting is once again leading a food drive for our Cuban Friends. You may make a contribution through the poster's QR code or [here](#).



The Velasco Meeting was recently able to install the solar panel that was acquired with the help of the Portland and Durham Meetings. A brief video of the installation is available [here](#). This panel is essential because, as you may have heard, electrical service is highly inconsistent throughout Cuba.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PORTLAND FRIENDS MEETING

[This link](#) will take you to a slide show that was made several years ago. The images and narration records the history of Portland Friends Meeting from 1847 to about four years ago. Several minor updates (we didn't raise the roof but changed the shape of the second story; the Winslow property came to us through marriage into the Jones family) have been noted since the recording was made. Enjoy and ask questions of those mentioned in the recording!



Portland Friends ca. 1979

Dorothy Grannell

FRIENDS GENERAL CONFERENCE NEWS

New Governance Structure: This spring marks a historic transition in FGC governance! Two weeks ago, Friends General Conference Governing Board recently met for its inaugural meeting. After decades of service under the Central Committee and Executive Committee structure, the Governing Board is now part of a new three-body governance model. Detailed information is available [here](#).

FGC Gathering 2026: This year's [Gathering](#), "A Window and a Door: A Prayer" will be held July 7-12, 2026, at the University of Vermont in Burlington, VT. [Register here](#).

Schedule & Program

The 2026 Gathering will be held in-person for Friends of all ages! Expect worship, exciting workshops, vibrant youth programs, engaging speakers and more! Information about the schedule and program will be available starting in fall 2025. Learn more about what happens at the Gathering [here](#).

INTERFAITH PRIDE SERVICE



Address Service Requested

Portland Friends Meeting
1837 Forest Ave
Portland, ME 04103



Next newsletter deadline:

Wednesday, July 29, 2026, 11:58 pm

submissions: dhingston@comcast.net

Please note "PFM Newsletter" in the subject line.