

THE GAZETTE

"a news-sheet, a periodical publication giving an account of current events"

West Falmouth Religious Society of Friends

APRIL 2021



When I Am Among the Trees

Mary Oliver

*When I am among the trees,
especially the willows and the honey locust,
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
they give off such hints of gladness.
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.*

*I am so distant from the hope of myself,
in which I have goodness, and discernment,
and never hurry through the world
but walk slowly, and bow often.*

*Around me the trees stir in their leaves
and call out, "Stay awhile."
The light flows from their branches.*

*And they call again, "It's simple," they say,
"and you too have come
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled
with light, and to shine."*

[Oliver, Mary. "When I Am Among the Trees." Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality, vol. 6 no. 1, 2006, p. 93-93. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/scs.2006.0042.](#)

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Officers

Fran Lightsom, clerk

(508-548-9186;

fran.lightsom@gmail.com)

Molly Cornell, recording clerk

Clyde Tyndale, treasurer

Regular Events

Adult Discussion Group

Sundays at 9:00 a.m.

Peace and Social Order

2nd Sunday at 12:00 p.m.

Erica Adams, convener

Growth and Learning

3rd Sunday at 12:00 p.m.

Sunny Davidson, convener

Empathy Practice (NVC)

Usually 1st Saturday 9:30–11:45

Brenda Nolan, convener

Restorative Circle Practice

Usually 1st Saturday 1:00-3:00

Brenda Nolan, convener

Ministry & Counsel

Cynthia Rankin, clerk

(508-360-7536)

Sunny Davidson, co-clerk

West Falmouth Meeting for

Worship with Attention to

Business

Usually 4th Sunday

(April 25, May 23)

Note: Due to COVID, many of these events are on hold. Check with committee conveners to be sure.

Upcoming Events

New England Yearly Meeting

Beacon Hill Friends House – Simple Morning Meditation Practice

– Held via Zoom **Monday through Friday** from 8:00 – 8:30 a.m.

The meditation is 15 minutes long, and begins and ends with a brief introduction to the practice. Orientation for newcomers begins at 8:00 a.m. and practice begins at 8:10. Join once or join regularly! The meditation is free and open to the public. See <https://bhfh.org/virtualprograms/simple-morning-meditation-practice-5/>.

Quaker Earthcare Witness in partnership with Friends General Conference

is hosting monthly online worship sharing. The next will be on **April 28** and **May 26** at 8:00 p.m. Learn more and register for either of the remaining sessions at <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZArduyhrzwjHd3WkD1z2zBoyqzj5SZEetUG>. For additional worship sharing opportunities see <https://www.fgcquaker.org/resources/online-worship-opportunities>.

JHYM Retreat (Junior High Yearly Meeting): Theme TBA,

April 30-May 2. A virtual weekend retreat for Quaker youth in grades 6 - 8. Watch <https://neym.org/events-calendar/2021/04/jhym-retreat> for more details.

Roots of Injustice, Seeds of Change: Toward Right Relationship

with Native Peoples –Saturday, **May 15**, 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. In this two-hour participatory workshop, sponsored by Friends Peace Teams, we will hear the story of the colonization of this land in the words of Indigenous leaders, Euro-American leaders, and Western historians. We will take part in the story through experiential exercises and share our responses and reflections in small groups. Together, we will explore steps we can take to build relationships with Native peoples based on truth, respect, and justice. Next available workshop is May 15. April workshop is full. Register at <https://friendspeaceteams.org/trr-2021-05-15-workshop/>.

Sandwich Quarterly Meeting – Meeting for Business, Saturday, **April 24**.

West Falmouth

Weekly Sunday Worship continues to be held via Zoom. We invite Friends from Yarmouth and East Sandwich to join us. An

e-mail with the specifics on connecting to this virtual format will be sent a day or so before. The Zoom meeting opens at 9:30 a.m. Starting at 9:50, we settle into worship.

Quaker Women – We continue to meet weekly via Zoom on **Thursdays** at 7 p.m.

Also of Interest

Weekly Taizé service. Thursday evenings in **April** (1, 8, 15, 22, 29) at 7:00 p.m. This is a style of worship that comes out of an ecumenical monastic order in central France with a strong devotion to peace and justice through prayer and meditation. The service will include recorded chants, spoken prayers and readings, and about twenty minutes of traditional Quaker silent waiting worship. See <https://neym.org/events-calendar/weekly-taize-service-online>.



FCNL Virtual Events –

Witness Wednesdays, Silent reflection, together, in community. 5:15 – 6:15 p.m. Registration required. Normally every Wednesday. Check <https://www.fcnl.org/>.

Thursdays with Friends, A discussion of current events and their impact.

April 8, 4:00 – 4:30 p.m. – *Episode 25*. Register at <https://act.fcnl.org/event/thursdays-with-friends/2106/>.

April 22, 4:00 – 4:30 p.m. *Episode 26*. Register at <https://act.fcnl.org/event/thursdays-with-friends/2107/>.

Learn to Lobby in 30 Minutes! April 20, 4:00 p.m. Are you excited to take action, but not sure where to start? Do you want to organize a virtual meeting with your Member of Congress, but still have more questions? FCNL is providing the training you need to have an effective lobby visit. Join a 30-minute interactive call where we will share inspiring stories from our grassroots network, conduct a short skills training and answer questions about how to schedule and plan your visit. Register at https://act.fcnl.org/event/learn_to_lobby/1968/signup/. Will also be offered May 18 and June 22, both at 6:00 p.m.

FCNL News and Updates –

Read *Cancel the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent*. Author Diana Ohlbaum explains why these new nuclear missiles, part of a \$1.6 trillion nuclear weapons modernization project, are costly, unnecessary, and dangerous. See <https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2021-03/cancel-ground-based-strategic-deterrent>.

Read *Quaker Lobby Urges Senate to Pass Violence Against Women Act*. Author Timothy McHugh notes the significance of this legislation in expanding protections for Native American women and girls. See <https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2021-03/quaker-lobby-urges-senate-pass-violence-against-women-act>.

Pendle Hill Events --

Daily worship via Zoom from 8:30 – 9:10 a.m. See <https://pendlehill.org/explore/worship/join-us-online-for-worship-in-the-barn/>.

A First Monday Lecture with Stanford Searl: *The Gathered Meeting and Embodied Quaker Voices*, Monday, **April 5**, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. via Zoom. Free and open to the public, but registration required. See <https://pendlehill.org/events/the-gathered-meeting-and-embodied-quaker-voices/>.

Mutual Accompaniment and the Creation of the Commons Online, a workshop with Lucy Duncan, Mary Watkins and Anyango Gregory via Zoom, Friday **April 9** (7:00 p.m.) -- Sunday **April 11** (12 noon). \$100 fee. See <https://pendlehill.org/events/mutual-accompaniment-and-the-creation-of-the-commons-online/>.

Online Reading Group – On **April 14**, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. via Zoom, the group will read *On Hallowing One's Diminishments*, John Yungblut's Pendle Hill Pamphlet #292. Register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/pendle-hills-reading-group-april/>.

Living Authentically: Finding Your Space in the World by Exploring Your Values, Friday **April 16** (7:30 p.m.) – Sunday **April 18** (12 noon). An experiential online program by young friends, for young friends (high school-aged Quakers and fellow seekers) via Zoom. <https://pendlehill.org/events/living-authentically-finding-your-space-in-the-world-by-exploring-your-values/>.

Jesus: History, Theology, and Evolution. A four-week virtual lecture series with John Dominic Crossan, **April 22, 29** and **May 6, 13** from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. These lectures will only be available live via Zoom. They will not be livestreamed or recorded for later viewing. Basic fee of \$125; single lecture \$35. For more information and to register see <https://pendlehill.org/events/jesus-history-theology-and-evolution/>.



Cape Cod Worship Sharing on the Climate Crisis

Please join us for an afternoon of discernment about the climate crisis and what we can do about it.

We will begin with a viewing of the video, *Call to Urgent, Loving Action for the Earth and Her Inhabitants* (from last year's NEYM Sessions), followed by worship sharing around Earthcare justice on Saturday, April 3 from 1 – 3 p.m. This event is offered by the co-clerks of NEYM Earthcare Ministry and East Sandwich Preparative Meeting as a pilot of a program we hope to offer to other Friends.

Queries will include:

- What is stirring in your heart when you consider our earth and the plight of all life therein?
- What is rising to the surface for you as an action you might take to address your concerns?
- What is Spirit asking you to do?

Please contact Gail Melix or Steve Gates for further details. Zoom details were sent to all SMM members and attenders on March 19. If you did not receive that e-mail and wish to attend, please send a request to scgates1@sbcglobal.net.



Good News on the Social Justice Front: The state of **Virginia** has become **the first southern state to abolish capital punishment** (technically, the first state of the former Confederacy; Maryland, classified as a southern state by the Bureau of the Census, abolished the death penalty in 2013). Virginia joins 22 other states banning the death penalty, most recently Colorado in 2020. The legislation was signed into law by Governor Ralph Northam one week ago on March 24 at the Greensville Correctional Center in Jarratt, VA, site of the state's execution chamber. The two remaining prisoners on death row, Anthony Juniper and Thomas A. Porter, both black males, will now serve life sentences.

Following what could have been a career-ending scandal involving a racist college yearbook photo, Northam ran for Governor promising to repeal the death penalty citing its disproportionate application to African Americans. The Christian Science Monitor points to Northam's election as evidence of his constituents' capacity to forgive and of his own willingness to learn. The Monitor notes further that as other politicians from Alabama Governor Kay Ivey to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau grapple with their own racist photo scandals, Mr. Northam's experience presents a possible model for moving forward.

Read more at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-56512691>;
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/04/death-penalty-in-2019-facts-and-figures/>;
<https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/news/virginia-becomes-23rd-state-and-the-first-in-the-south-to-abolish-the-death-penalty>; <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2019/1003/After-blackface-scandal-Va.-governor-has-hung-on-and-is-making-amends>.

Good Friday, **April 2, Global Pandemics Memorial Vigil**
beginning at 3 p.m. on the steps of the Massachusetts Statehouse.
See <https://form.jotform.com/210683700888159>.



YOU WILL BE WHOLE AGAIN
"The reality is that you will grieve forever.
You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one;
you will learn to live with it. You will heal
and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you
have suffered. You will be whole again, but
you will never be the same.
Nor should you be the same, nor would you want to."
Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler

Remembering Friends

Death of Jim Gould

Friends are deeply saddened by the loss of Jim Gould. Jim died peacefully the morning of March 13 with family near. Prior to his move to Seattle in November, Jim was an active member of Sandwich Monthly Meeting for many years. Plans for a memorial meeting will be announced at a future date.



Jim Gould with Courage of Conscience Award, October 2017. Photo credit: Paul Shoemaker



News of Friends

Friends Carolyn Lamar Jordan and Lawrence Marcellus Jordan were recently honored by being interviewed as part of the BlackQuaker Project. These very interesting interviews conducted by Harold Weaver in January 2021 are now accessible as part of the *Quakers of Color International Archive* in the University of Massachusetts Amherst Du Bois library. Learn a bit about the rich lives and extensive service of these Friends at <https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums1095-i011> and <https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums1095-i014> for Carolyn and Larry's interviews, respectively. In addition, this month Carolyn will be appointed to a second 3-year term on the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) governing board. Larry was recently asked to join the board for the Quaker Institute for the Future (QIF).



Screen shots of Carolyn and Larry from their interviews at the Quakers of Color International Archive, January 2021



Readers Write

This Is A Sacrament

Bre-anne Brown

"This is a sacrament. This is a sacrament. This is a sacrament." I breath in and out slowly through my mask, goggles fogging and palms sweating under my gloves as I gently squeeze a shaking hand. *"This is a sacrament"* I tell myself over and over again. The frail woman in the bed trembles so hard she shakes the bed frame, the sound harsh in this dark and quiet room. *"This is a sacrament. This is a sacrament."*

It's been over a year now since COVID-19 took over my life. Over a year since we first heard about a new virus overseas, back when its spread to the U.S. seemed unthinkable. Over a year since we looked to Italy and thought "that couldn't happen here." Over a year since the first news of U.S. cases emerged, and the conflagration began to lick at the edges of American life, before blazing into an inferno that has engulfed the world, and every facet of our lives. Over a year since I felt at ease.

I am a nurse at a teaching hospital in Boston. I work on a surgical floor, taking care of patients who need or are recovering from surgery. I'm comfortable caring for people with tubes coming from just about every place you can imagine, and a few you can't. And I love my work. It challenges me, wearies me, refreshes me, hurts me, humbles me and makes me laugh. I've seen a lot over the years. But nothing in nearly a decade of practice as a nurse prepared me for the first wave of COVID in Boston. Every bed was filled, and we expanded capacity by turning other areas of the hospital into patient rooms. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) became a valuable commodity. N95 masks which once would have been single-use only were now worn for an entire shift. Dressed in blue hospital scrubs and caps, and yellow precautions gowns, wearing double gloves, and N95s covered by another surgical mask and topped with a clear plastic face shield, we took to writing our names in Sharpie on strips of tape we attached to the shields above our eyes, so that patients would know who we were. Even when not in patient rooms with our N95s on, we wear paper surgical masks. I haven't seen my coworkers' unobstructed faces in over a year. I've started to forget what some of them look like.

No more post-operative patients. Only COVID. No milestones of recovery. Only COVID. No first steps after waking up without the appendix you had all your life until today. Only COVID. No happy news of cancer cut out, no eager visitors, no therapy pups, no patients walking the halls, pushing their bodies to heal. No excitement. No joy. Only COVID. For months during the first wave, we drove to work on empty streets with a handful of other "essential workers" while the rest of the world stayed home. I will admit my commute was nicer, but that's about the only thing that was. Those times were dark. While I somehow managed to stay free of COVID, huge numbers of my coworkers were infected. We were falling like dominos. Treatments for COVID remain limited, and at that time were basically non-existent. Placing patients on their bellies, called "proning," and giving more and more oxygen--more than I'd ever administered before--were about all we could do. People either slowly got better, or they slowly got worse until they went to the Intensive Care Unit, where they too often died anyway, but at least I didn't have to watch. Many patients and their families decided on "comfort care," basically hospice, and those folks stayed with us until they passed away. We held up iPads so that the sick and dying could say goodbye to their loved ones over FaceTime. And in all of this chaos and sorrow I lost track of God.

While our meeting houses were closed Friends quickly adapted to digital worship, but I didn't attend. Much of the time I was too tired. I was picking up extra shifts because of the severe staffing shortages, and the work itself was more exhausting than usual. But even when I wasn't working or sleeping off three twelve-

hour overnight shifts in a row, I didn't want to worship. I didn't want to open myself in expectant waiting to meet with the Divine. I didn't want to find God. Instead, I wanted to curl up tight and coat my soft and broken heart in hard layers until I was safe, like a turtle in its shell. To worship in the manner of Friends is to make yourself exquisitely vulnerable. To be part of a worshipping community is to share that vulnerability with others who are equally open. And I could not take the risk of being vulnerable; I didn't want to share my bruised and broken self with others. In worship the Spirit has often appeared to me as a well of cool water, and I felt like toxic waste that would befoul the water supply for everyone else. So I packed the pain deep down and stayed away.

This all came to a head during a virtual Planning Committee meeting for Quaker Spring, an annual gathering I've attended for many years. During the meeting we each shared how we were doing. I had no intention of saying much beyond "I'm hanging in there." But God had other plans for me, and without warning my turtle shell--that hard, safe haven I'd constructed to protect myself--cracked open and spilled my messy, bleeding, sobbing, smushy broken heart all over that Zoom meeting. The part of me that could think straight was mortified. This was exactly what I had feared. This was why I had stayed away from worship. I was tainted. I was ashamed.

But there was no need for shame. In the face of my sorrow those present opened their hearts even wider to receive my pain. The grace of God expanded to accommodate my frailty, as it always will. And that well of cool water I'd imagined myself spoiling? That water is unspoilable. It washed away the grime of this world and left me feeling cleaner and freer and lighter than I'd felt in months.

Since that day I've tried harder to find God in COVID. I make a deliberate effort to be open to grace. Over and over again I remind myself of something Sally Fritz said at a Quaker Spring gathering several years ago, when describing a moment of holiness found in a quotidian task: "*this is a sacrament.*" Sally's words have stayed with me ever since. Augustine of Hippo said that a sacrament is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace." While Friends do not practice outward rituals, I find Augustine's definition congruent with Friends' efforts to bring the sacred into every day, and live out that holy truth that comes to us in worship in our daily lives. In this way small tasks are consecrated through our attention. We erase the line between the sacred and the profane by believing that the profane *is* sacred. And we transform the exhausting, the depressing, the tedious, the heartbreaking, into avenues for greater communion with that beating heart, that rushing wind, that wild, living fire at the heart of our Quaker faith. And in this way the simple act of holding a frightened woman's hand while she lies in a hospital bed, scared and missing her family who cannot visit, becomes a sacrament. Christ's love for us is made manifest in the love we show for others. An inward and invisible grace made visible in the world.

This is a sacrament.



On World Water Day, March 22, Beacon Hill Friends House hosted a gathering on the topic "Quakers and World Water Day: What does water mean to us?" Three statements from Wampanoag Elders were read to the group by Manomet Wampanoag Quaker Gail Melix.

The Meaning of Water for Traditional Native Americans

Gail Melix

Water is sacred. It supports all life and is necessary for survival. Traditionally, the Water Keepers of Indigenous communities are women. Water is medicine, meaning that it has powerful healing properties. When salt is added to water it heals and soothes wounds and other conditions of the skin, and when water falls from our eyes as tears, it heals and soothes our mental and emotional conditions. Water provides a habitat for some of the foods we eat, provides sustenance to the plants we eat and the medicine we forage for. When we drink clean water every function of life in our bodies is supported. When we give thanks and gratitude to the water that we drink we grow in our Spirit and our gratitude practice.

Water is alive in the same way that we humans are alive. Our human bodies are made up of 60-75% water so the connection and relationship we have with water is a close one, some believe a familial one. Water is alive and the Wampanoag language has different names for water depending on its state of being. Water that is calm, without motion, is a different water than one that is cascading down a mountain or gently meandering down a stream. They have different names.

Like people have different names. So not only do water and humans share a relationship but many of us Natives believe that water is a relative. Water is a family member and/or a beloved friend. If a majority of humans could come to see this and believe it, we might protect and honor water more successfully. I believe with intention and commitment to right relationship with water, humans will come to see, believe and honor water as if their life depended on it. Because it really does. All life is interrelated and interdependent for survival.



Herring run,
Santuit River,
Mashpee. Photos:
Gail Melix.

Wisdom from Elders of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe

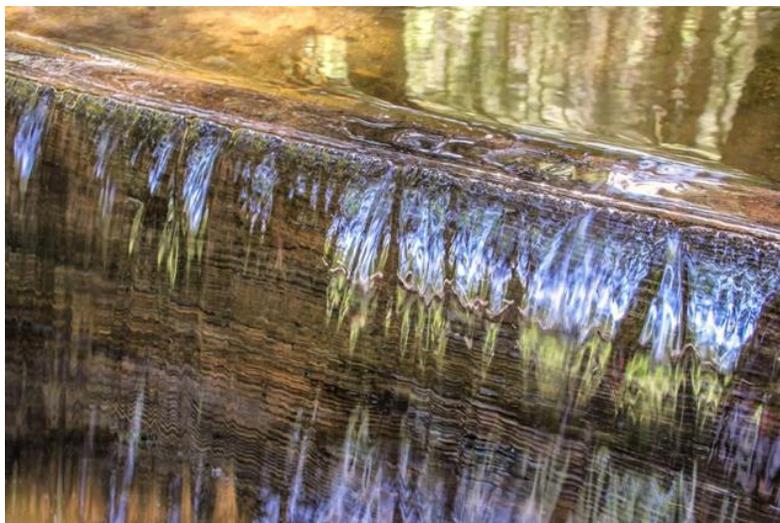
From Elder, Ramona Peters, Bear Clan member of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe and Chairwoman of the Native Land Conservancy:

“We name ourselves after the land we live with. Because, not only are we breathing in, we are also drinking from the water that is flavored by that very land. Whatever is deposited in the soil is in that water is in us. So we are all one thing, and we name ourselves after the place that is our nurturing. That sustains our life.”

From Elder, Marlene, Rabbit Clan Mother of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe:

“I am honored that you reached out to me regarding this very important life element that we refer to as water. It has been three years since I experienced my first water walk with five other Mashpee Wampanoag women at Rice Lake Ontario Canada as invited native women along with Ojibwa and Onondaga peoples. We started each morning with a prayer and sang the water song for our day. We took a brief break at lunch on the walk. It was a 4-day walk. We walked about 7 hours a day. The lake was about 100 miles. We relayed with cars along the way. There was a man carrying an eagle head staff who went before us and two women at a time carried a full bucket of water between them until they tired and then two more women stepped in their place while walking, no one stopped as water is constantly in motion so were we. This was how we walked throughout the day. We always carried tobacco in case we came across any puddles or water or animals we made an offering to the water spirits. Water is life, without it we do not exist. You can live without food for a while but not without water. Our rivers are the veins of mother earth. If your veins in your body are clogged or the blood cannot flow freely you become sick and erupt or die. Same with our rivers and streams. Mother earth is a living organism. Like our bodies. Mother earth and our waters must be healthy. They provide us with all that we need. If we continue to abuse, destroy, pollute and treat our waters and mother earth with the disrespect that we have been, then we do not deserve to be here. Mother nature will have her say.”

“Wherever I go and I am around water, I offer tobacco and sing the water song in honor of the water spirits asking for guidance to help keep the waters clean and be in gratitude for having clean water. We all have the responsibility to take care of our waterways. The water song is sung like a lullaby: water we love you, we thank you, we respect you.”



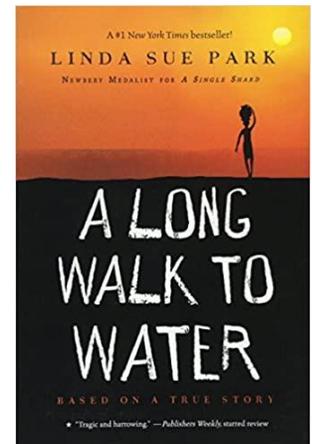
West Falmouth Young Friends met on March 22, World Water Day, to discuss water.

A Long Walk to Water

Allison

When I was in seventh grade, I read a book called *A Long Walk to Water*. It takes place in what is now South Sudan and has two subplots that took place 20 years apart. The first centered around a boy named Salva who was essentially orphaned during a civil war. The second was about a girl named Nya, who spends several hours a day getting water for her family. She has to carry the water in a jug in very hot weather. Salva moves to a refugee camp and eventually to America. Over a decade later, he finds out that his father is alive, but sick with a waterborne illness. After his father recovers, Salva starts a charity that drills wells for villages in South Sudan. One of those is Nya's village.

Here's the twist: Salva is a real person. The story, the charity, and the mission are all real. We talked about the vast difference between our lives and the lives of people like Salva and Nya. Here, you turn on a faucet and water comes out. In South Sudan, you have to walk somewhere to get water, and the water is often dirty. We did various things to raise awareness of the issues in the book. I painted a picture of a beautifully painted jug pouring dirty water into a glass. I even glued sand onto the painting to show how dirty it was.



Park, L. S. *A Long Walk to Water*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2011.

West Falmouth Young Friends had these responses to queries about water:

* *What does water mean to you?*

Life
Peace
Tranquility

* *What action could you take to honor and protect water?*

Don't pollute
Use water-friendly cleaning products
Use less plastic
Have water-friendly landscaping/native plants

• *What other things could be done to insure clean water for everyone?*

Work to decrease CO2 in the atmosphere/reduce carbon footprint/reverse climate change



**Next Gazette Deadline
Thursday, April 22**

Cover Photos: crocuses, Gail Melix;
birdbath and flowers, Steve Gates.

On the next page, we acknowledge April
Fool's Day: Photos by Steve Gates, 2020.

The Gazette is a publication of West Falmouth Preparative Meeting
Rita O'Donnell, Editor; Alta Mae Stevens, Founding Editor;
Stephen Gates, Photographer; Brenda Nolan, Transmitter



Early Quaker Meeting



“There is that of gourd in every one.” Attributed to George Faux.