

To: The Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends
From: Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary
Re: Report in preparation for PB meeting on November 16, 2019

*“The function of prayer is not to influence God,
but rather to change the nature of the one who prays.”*
—Soren Kierkegaard

Dear Friends,

This fall has been full of planning, preparation, and prayer. It’s a time of transitions, of endings, and of new beginnings—a “threshold” time. In this report, I’m going to err—perhaps for once—on the side of brevity. As always, I welcome questions, feedback, criticism, or encouragement about any aspect of our shared service.

Secretary’s Areas of Focus for the Coming Year

As part of the advance documents, I’m submitting a working draft of my areas of focus for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2020, the year we’ve just begun. I welcome your responses and prayers as I work with Coordinating & Advisory Committee to finalize them in the coming month.

Website Launched

On October 17, the new website for New England Quakers launched at neym.org. I hope you have had or will take an opportunity to explore it. Please send comments, questions, suggestions for content, or feedback to Sara Hubner at office@neym.org.

Financial News

As you will see in the end-of-fiscal-year financial report for FY2019, we have some significant financial news to share. I look forward to more in-depth consideration of this news, and providing more context, when we meet on November 16.

Board Development

As New England Quakers continue to grow in our efforts at leadership development, I hope we can strengthen supports for your service as members of the Permanent Board. I would love to hear your suggestions for what kinds of board development opportunities—trainings, orientation, conversations, resources—you might find useful in your service as a board member in the coming years.

I wish I might emphasize how a life becomes simplified when dominated by faithfulness to a few concerns. Too many of us have too many irons in the fire. We get distracted...and before we know it we are pulled and hauled breathlessly along by an over-burdened program of good committees and good undertakings. I am persuaded that this fevered life of church workers is not wholesome. Undertakings get plastered on from the outside because we can’t turn down a friend. Acceptance of service on a weighty committee should really depend upon an answering imperative within us, not merely upon a rational calculation of the factors involved. The concern-oriented life is ordered and organized from within. And we learn to say No as well as Yes by attending to the guidance of inner responsibility.

- Thomas Kelly