

Update: Working Group to Examine NEYM's Support for Ministry & Spiritual Life

The working group has been appointed, and has begun its work. Friends serving are:

Sarah Gant (Beacon Hill, MA, clerk); *Nancy Middleton* (Putney, VT); *Hugh MacArthur* (Hanover, NH); *Phil Fitz* (Northampton, MA); *Nia Thomas* (Northampton, MA; NEYM Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator, ex officio); and *Noah Merrill* (Putney, VT; NEYM Secretary, ex officio).

Those serving on the working group include Friends with extensive experience serving on NEYM Ministry & Counsel, both in the past and currently, as well as serving on Ministry & Counsel in local meetings. These Friends bring a depth of experience within NEYM and in other yearly meetings, as well as experience traveling in ministry among Friends over several decades, and with wider Quaker institutions. Several members have served on or been under the care of ministry oversight committees in local meetings; some bring experience nurturing and supporting gifts through relationships outside of the context of a local meeting, both formally and informally. The working group is multigenerational; further diversities of identity and experience are reflected within the group.

- The working group has met twice since forming, and intends to meet every two weeks to carry forward their work
- The initial focus was to ground this process in worship, and to *know one another in that which is Eternal*, sharing our own spiritual journeys, experience in supporting ministry and spiritual life, and particular relevant gifts or skills
- The working group began with reading and prayerful consideration of the substantial body of previous work, including summaries and reflections on these issues
- Next steps will include further discernment, listening, and seasoning, including further consultation to seek greater insight where questions and gaps in understanding exist; this will likely include further interviews, research, and prayerful discussion with others carrying these concerns (including some Friends serving on NEYM Ministry & Counsel)
- The working group envisions sharing a substantive update on the progress of the work, allowing for input and comments prior to the May meeting of NEYM M&C
- Sarah Gant, clerk of the working group, invites your suggestions, ideas, hopes, and concerns at sarah.gant@post.harvard.edu

As a reminder, the charge of the working group from Permanent Board is as follows:

Permanent Board Working Group To Examine NEYM's Support for Ministry and Spiritual Life

(Sessions) Minute 2019-7.9:

We ask Ministry & Counsel to offer support to Permanent Board in creating a working group charged with exploring & naming how [The Yearly Meeting] currently supports ministry and spiritual life. The working group will identify where support for ministry and spiritual life currently happens and where gaps exist, and then offer recommendations for structures, practices and manageable leadership roles that would best serve the current needs of Friends.

Charge: We ask this working group to explore where and how support for ministry and spiritual life currently happens among New England Friends and offer recommendations for structures, practices and leadership roles that would best serve the current needs of Friends.

Report: To Permanent Board at their May 16 meeting

Processes to Consider:

- Review current job description of Clerk of Ministry & Counsel
- Review the current Purpose, Procedure, and Composition for NEYM's M&C and make recommendations to C&A about what might be added or taken out of the charge
- Review the document summarizing the work of M&C (based on recent M&C and Sessions minutes) and consult with current members of Ministry & Counsel including the Clerk of Ministry & Counsel as well as recent former Clerks of Ministry & Counsel to learn where and how this work is currently happening within that structure and what challenges exist
- Consult with members of M&C to explore how they perceive their work in relation to the YM; possibly by interviewing a random subset of M&C members and/or by engaging in dialogue with M&C during an M&C meeting
- Consult with other regional bodies to explore various structures, practices, and roles that are used to support ministry and spiritual life
- Consult with New England Friends currently and recently traveling in the ministry or otherwise publicly sharing their ministry to identify the supports they currently utilize and where gaps exist
- Consult with a variety of local meetings to learn more about how NEYM's support for ministry and spiritual life is impactful and where gaps exist
- Consult with a variety of local meetings to learn how they support ministry and spiritual life.
- Consult with the Yearly Meeting Secretary and other leaders and staff about how current and proposed structures impact or would impact other aspects of NEYM's functioning

Questions to Consider:

- What current structures, practices and roles are effective in supporting ministry and spiritual life?