

Events Coordinator Report
New England Yearly Meeting Sessions
August 9, 2020

Hello Friends, my name is Elizabeth Hacala and I am the Yearly Meeting Events Coordinator. One of my duties and Sessions is to provide you a report on attendance and other key statistics about Sessions. But first, a very brief diversion—I promise it will tie in.

One of my favorite movies in recent years is *Black Panther*. I love it not only because of its beautiful art, costume, and its amazing cast, but also because it is a movie about a hero who also places community front and center. The hero and compatriots are not simply a leader and followers, but rather a strong and vibrant team who are greater than the sum of its parts *and* yet they all still maintain their own uniqueness. It is not a singer and backup vocals, it is a symphony.

While addressing the United Nations, T'Challa says, in part:

We will work to be an example of how we as brothers and sisters on this earth should treat each other. Now, more than ever, the illusions of division threaten our very existence. We all know the truth: more connects us than divides us. But in times of crisis, the wise build bridges, while the foolish build barriers,

Today I would like to share some of the bridges we have built this Sessions in spite of the barriers of our current day.

- Around 700 Friends registered for Sessions.
- We had an average of around 230 connections per general program event.
- The largest gathering on one connection was an appropriately socially distanced group of 15 at Providence Monthly Meeting for the Plenary.
- There were about 200 Friends who joined the Black Quaker Project conversation with Hal Weaver and Amanda Kemp.
- This year Cuban Friends were able to participate, along with other Friends around the globe.
- Our youngest attender was born in May, and our eldest attenders were born in the 1920s.
- Twenty percent of us attended NEYM Sessions for the first time this year.
- A dozen Friends joined primarily by phone.
- Nearly 300 Friends participated in the Home Groups.
- Ten people made up the core of our amazing tech team.
- We had 19 in Young Friends, 25 in our Junior High Yearly Meeting, 26 in the Junior Yearly Meeting, and 11 younger children.

- Gretchen shipped out 75 boxes to children and staff for JYM and JHYM, resulting in 11 feet, 3 inches feet of post office receipts.

This year, even as we brought Sessions online, we continued our experiment with faithful financing of our gatherings—called Pay-as-Led. So we can add to our celebration: Again this year, Friends participating in Pay-as-Led continued to ensure that the cost of entry is not a barrier for any Friend’s attendance at Sessions. However you participated in Pay-As-Led, we’re so grateful you were here, and we’re so grateful to our wider community for all the ways we set the table of welcome for one another.

I opened my written report with a quote from *Babylon 5*, so I would like to close with one as well. *Babylon 5* is a science fiction series about a space station built to bring peoples together, to build understanding and hopefully prevent future wars. One of the ambassadors is talking to the captain. She says:

Then I will tell you a great secret, Captain. Perhaps the greatest of all time. The molecules of your body are the same molecules that make up this station and the nebula outside, that burn inside the stars themselves. We are star-stuff, we are the universe made manifest, trying to figure itself out. As we have both learned, sometimes the universe requires a change of perspective.

I hope the work that has been made manifest, that we are trying to figure out sustains you until we are together again.

Thank you, Friends.