

# Areas of Focus

Noah Merrill, NEYM Secretary  
October 2020-September 2021

## **Foundation in support of service:**

*Prayer practice, exercise, and recreation. Seek to work 5 days/week. Monday Sabbath, flexible additional day. Schedule multi-day retreat times. Continue preparation for sabbatical, to be scheduled as conditions allow. Nurture relationships. Celebrate progress. Cultivate courage, resilience, faith, and trust. Encourage experimentation and discovery. Engage accountability partners. Look for opportunities to be proactive.*

## **Work with Staff and Coordinating & Advisory (C&A) teams, and with Permanent Board to:**

1. *facilitate a more shared vision of our work, and Friends' condition in our region;*
2. *strengthen collaboration, integration, and coordination;*
3. *invite us to be clear in our intentions as we make decisions;*
4. *lift up trade-offs, and provide context to inform present actions;*
5. *increase space for vision, innovation, risk-taking, reflection, and growth.*

*In partnership with staff, C&A, and Permanent Board, and with their support, focus my attention on contributing to our shared work in the ways below.*

### **1. Encourage and Liberate Ministry**

- a. Set a table for, consult with, and encourage those who serve their meetings
  - i. including biweekly local meeting leadership calls
- b. Set a table for, consult with, and encourage Friends active in public ministry, for vocational reflection and mutual encouragement in the service
- c. Ensure mentoring and accompaniment for those with emerging gifts
- d. Help local meetings connect with Friends active in public ministry
- e. Complete and present the recommendations of the Ministry & Spiritual Life working group, and support next steps the Yearly Meeting may be led to undertake in growth and discovery in support of ministry and spiritual life
- f. Create space to write and speak for a wider audience

### **2. Nurture Servant Leadership**

- a. Prioritize opportunities to support those who serve their local meetings
  - i. including biweekly local meeting leadership calls
- b. Promote inclusion and remove barriers to participation, starting with barriers relating to age/life stage/family responsibilities, economic status, race
- c. Nurture capacity to connect Friends with relevant opportunities for mentoring, leadership development, and training
- d. Focus on aligning organizational structure and roles to facilitate effectiveness, integration, and a culture of collaboration

*In all my work, ask:*

*Does this decision or action support the thriving of local meetings? How?*

*What context would be helpful for us in this moment?*

*What culture is fostered by this decision or action?*

*Are we engaging with the roots of this challenge—rather than merely addressing symptoms?*

*What is the Spirit's invitation for how we can live our faith in this context?*

- e. Support integration and strengthening of capacity to name and nurture gifts, including in nominating for formal service
- f. Increase transparency of, access to, and awareness about Yearly Meeting policies, procedures, practices, and available resources

### 3. Foster Religious Education

- a. With a priority on serving those who serve in local meetings, ensure consistent availability of meaningful opportunities for spiritual formation, leadership development, and training in Quaker practice, supported by ongoing listening, evaluation, and reflection
- b. Support exploration and development of a next offering of the *Nurturing Faithfulness* spiritual formation program
- c. Identify and carry forward next steps in related crucial areas for growth, including lifelong spiritual formation, outreach & welcoming, and caring for the whole lifecycle of meetings (including accompanying Friends birthing new meetings and Friends offering “hospice” as meetings are laid down)

### 4. Lead Development Program

- a. Convene Friends to explore and develop an approach to endowments as a “carrier for vision” for the present and future of Friends ministry
- b. Develop and implement new practices to engage Friends serving as volunteers in our development ministry, in more meaningful and integrated ways
- c. Ensure programming and resources to cultivate a stewardship worldview among New England Friends
- d. Plan, manage, and integrate annual fundraising efforts for FY2021
- e. Interpret the ministries of New England Quakers, listen to Friends’ hopes and concerns, report on the progress Friends’ gifts—of all kinds—have made possible, invite increased engagement and support

### 5. Focus and Integrate Communications

- a. Plan and feature diverse and dynamic voices and stories of Friends through monthly email newsletter and other channels
- b. Further strengthen NEYM’s ability to respond swiftly and sensitively to emerging events, including the possibilities of political violence and civil disorder
- c. Continue development and management of communications calendar, strategy, and team for NEYM
- d. Develop capacity for integrated planning for strategic communications
- e. Ensure creation, and promote consistent use of, style guides, policy, and training to support effective, aligned communications, cultivating a more consistent and compelling *voice* for NEYM
- f. Improve data gathering and focused use of data to support engagement and publicity for events and training opportunities, and to help align gifts and experience with opportunities for service

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**In the context of these areas of focus, I anticipate investing significant energy in several major projects, including:**

1. Continuing accompaniment, support, and responsiveness to the needs of local meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic, including
  - a. Partnering with the Youth Ministries staff and Youth Ministries Committee to support flexible, relevant responses to the needs of families and meetings for youth ministry
  - b. Engaging in ongoing partnership and consultation with Friends serving in leadership roles in local meetings
  - c. Curating and creating resources relevant to emerging needs, and sharing meetings' responses and learning
  - d. Ongoing ecumenical partnership supporting community needs
2. Ensuring partnership from the wider YM in supporting the particular needs of Friends Camp, in this especially challenging context
3. Supporting continuing integration, support, and coherence among the various ways the Yearly Meeting and Friends in our region are working for justice and equity, seeking to act in ways—and promote policies and practices—that are antiracist, seeking wholeness and right relationship;
4. Supporting Friends living into the recommendations of the Ministry & Spiritual Life working group as an ongoing process of discovery;
5. Partnering with the Finance Committee, Treasurer, and Accounts Manager to forecast financial needs and impacts, and to develop contingency plans and propose adjustments to spending and income goals as needed;
6. Exercising overall responsibility and care for the planning process for Sessions 2021, including supporting the Yearly Meeting's assessment, discernment, and decision-making about options for in-person, hybrid, and virtual components of Sessions, and ensuring integration and coherence in planning and implementation;
7. Supporting the Presiding Clerk, FUM representatives, and local and quarterly meeting leadership in shepherding discernment regarding the NEYM policy on withholding from Friends United Meeting, and NEYM's advocacy to change the FUM personnel policy;
8. In partnership with Coordinating & Advisory Committee and Permanent Board, completing a review of Purposes, Procedures, and Composition, including discernment and implementation of recommendations.

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