



2020 Minutes

of the Annual Sessions
of the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends

Three Hundred Sixtieth Year
August 1–9, 2020

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2020 Annual Sessions Schedule*

Saturday, August 1–Sunday, August 9 • via Zoom teleconference

	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7:00–8:00			Home Groups 7–8 a.m.				Home Groups 7–8 a.m.		
8:30–10:00			JYM/Family Circle 8:30–9 a.m.				JYM/Family Circle 8:30–9 a.m.		
10:00–noon	10–11:30 Opening Celebration 10:45–noon Young Friends	10–noon Adult Worship 10–10:45 JYM/JHYM Worship JHYM/Young Friends Worship 10:45–11:30 JHYM 11–noon Young Friends Pgm	10–11:30 Memorial Meeting	10–11:30 Meeting for Business 11–1 p.m Young Friends 11:30–1 JHYM		10–11:30 Meeting for Business 11–1 p.m Young Friends 11:30–1 JHYM YF/YAF	10–11:30 Meeting for Business	10–11:30 Meeting for Business	10–11:30 Worship & Closing Celebrations
12 noon			Bible Half-Hour			Bible Half-Hour			
1:30–2:30	1:30–2:30 Home Groups	1:30–2:30 Home Groups	1:30–2:30 Home Groups JYM Pgm	1:30–2:30 Home Groups		1:30–2:30 Home Groups JYM Pgm	1:30–2:30 Home Groups	1:30–2:30 Home Groups	
2:45–4:30	Meeting for Business 2:45–4:15	Plenary 2:45–4:15	3–4:30 YAF Pgm 3–5 Young Friends JHYM	3–4:30 YAF Pgm		3–4:30 YAF Pgm			
4:30–7:30		4:30–5:30 Home Groups 5:30–6:30 Home Groups	6:30 JYM	4:30–5:30 Home Groups 5:30–6:30 Home Groups		4:30–5:30 Home Groups 5:30–6:30 Home Groups			
7:30–9	7:30–8:30 YAF Affinity 7:45–9 JHYM 8:00–9 Home Groups 8–9:30 Young Friends	7:30–8:30 YAF Affinity Parent Fellowship 7:45–9 JHYM 8:00–9 Home Groups 8–9:30 Young Friends	7:30–8:30 YAF Affinity Parent Fellowship 7:45–9 JHYM 8:00–9 Home Groups 8–9:30 Young Friends	YAF 7:30–8:30 YAF Affinity 7:45–9 JHYM 8:00–9 Home Groups 8–9:30 Young Friends		7:15 JYM Vespers 7:30–8:30 YAF Affinity Parent Fellowship 7:45–9 JHYM 8:00–9 Home Groups 8–9:30 Young Friends	6:30–9 Coffeehouse 7:30–8:30 YAF Affinity 8:00–9 Home Groups	7:15 JYM Vespers 7:30–8:30 YAF Affinity 7:45–9 JHYM 8:00–9 Home Groups 8–9:30 Young Friends	
9:00		YAF Gathering 9–10	YAF Gathering 9–10			YAF Gathering 9–10			
10:00		YAF Affinity 10–11	YAF Affinity 10–11			YAF Affinity 10–11			

*Adapted from the brochure mailed to New England Friends, designed by Pixels and Pulp

Elders Serving to Support Ministry at Sessions This Year

In Friends tradition, an Elder supports, encourages and challenges the minister and helps them to be faithful. During preparation and during our week together, these individuals are holding and grounding specific Friends in their work and ministry.

Elders for Cherice Bock: Dove John (Sierra Cascades YM), Mary Hopkins (Fresh Pond), and Jean Rosenberg (Middlebury)

Elders for Amanda Kemp: Ruth Hazzard (Mt. Toby), LVM Shelton (Plainfield), and Polly Attwood (FMC)

Elders for Bruce Neumann: Jacqueline Stillwell (Monadnock), Callid Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond), and Jessica Hipp (Fresh Pond)

2020 Sessions Coordinators, Officers, Speakers and YM Staff

Accounts Manager	Frederick Martin*
Bible Half Hour Speaker	Cherice Bock
Clerks	Bruce Neumann (presiding), Peter Bishop, and Marian Dalton (recording), John Humphries and Gina Nortonsmith (reading)
Events Coordinator	Elizabeth Hacala*
Home Group Planning Team	Lisa Graustein, Holly Baldwin, Honor Woodrow, Newell Isbell-Shinn, Rebecca Leuchak, Nia Thomas, Kristin Wilson
Office Manager	Sara Hubner*
Pastoral Care Team Leader	Abigail Matchette
Plenary Speaker	Dr. Amanda Kemp
Sessions Committee Clerk	Rebecca Leuchak
Technology Team	David Coletta, Elizabeth Hacala, Jennifer Swann, Sara Hubner
Treasurer	Shearman Taber
Yearly Meeting Secretary	Noah Merrill*

2020 Youth Program Coordinators and Staff

Junior Yearly Meeting

Coord: Gretchen Baker-Smith*

Kenzie Burpee
Nora Catlin
Janet Dawson
Pamela Drouin
Charlotte Gorham
Anna Lindo
Cynthia Rankin
Laura Street
Lynn Taber
Lianna Tennal
Stefan Walker

Junior High Yearly Meeting

Coord: Gretchen Baker-Smith*

Buddy Baker-Smith
Steve Ball
Dave Baxter
Lilly Campbell
Emily Edwards
Sara Hubner
Adam Kohrman
Doug Lippincott

Y

Young Friends

Coord: Maggie Nelson*

Melissa Brown
Allon Dubler
Christopher Fitze
Abby Kelly
Felice Lopez
Noel Potter
Nora Spicer

Young Adult Friends

Coords: Emi Link and Brynn Keevil

*Staff

Minutes of the Annual Sessions

Clerk's note: Because of the global COVID-19 pandemic, New England Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions in 2020 were held online. Zoom video-conferencing software was used to enable connections from Friends' households. While many Friends had used Zoom for committee meetings and for monthly meeting worship and business during the months before Sessions, this Annual Session was our first experience with large-scale meetings by video conference.

Minutes approved during Sessions: 2020-1 through-6, 2020-18, -30, 34, -35, and -40. The remaining minutes were approved by Permanent Board at their September and October 2020 meetings.

Opening Celebration, Saturday Morning, August 1, 2020

2020-1 Opening and Welcome

A slideshow of photos from meetings around New England was displayed as people entered our virtual space. Presiding clerk Bruce Neumann (Fresh Pond) welcomed everyone by singing *Row On*. He then acknowledged the indigenous lands where Yearly Meeting member meetings are situated. Having displayed a map of traditional tribal lands, he asked us to enter into chat those lands on which each of us is currently located.

2020-2 Introductions

The presiding clerk introduced members of the clerks' table, the tech team, and the pastoral care team.

- Recording clerks: Peter Bishop (Northampton), Marian Dalton (Brunswick)
- Reading clerks: Gina Nortonsmith (Northampton), John Humphries (Hartford)
- Tech team: David Coletta (Beacon Hill), Jennifer Swann (South Berkshire), Kathy Malin (Smithfield), Elizabeth Hacala, Kathleen Wooten (Fresh Pond), Bob O'Connor (Vassalboro), Will Taber (Fresh Pond), Sara Hubner (Gonic), Brenda Nolan (West Falmouth), Jonah Sutton-Morse (Concord)
- Pastoral Care team: Abby Matchette (Burlington), Laura Hoskins (Putney), Caroline Stone (Wellesley), Elizabeth Szatkowski (Portland).

The clerk also noted that, as is our past practice, there are and will be a number of prayerful presences holding the body of the Yearly Meeting during times of worship and business. The following Friends acted as elders during the week: Allison Randall (Keene), Janet Hough (Cobscook), Kathy Olsen (East Sandwich), Carl Williams (Plainfield), Minga Claggett-Borne (Cambridge), Fran Brokaw (Hanover), Joyce Gibson (Durham), Martha Sheldon (Durham), Marian Baker (Weare), Eleanor Godway (Hartford), Hugh MacArthur (Hanover)

The clerk reviewed basic Zoom practices for us to follow during the meeting and let us know how to contact someone for technical assistance.

2020-3 Roll Call

Reading clerks called the roll of meetings by quarter, asking those from each meeting to unmute themselves and say hello as their meeting was called. (268 Zoom connections were logged in.) Despite this being an electronic process, attendees relished the opportunity to greet the gathered body.

2020-4 Acknowledgements

The clerk acknowledged the work of the many people in a wide variety of capacities whose efforts contributed to making these Sessions possible.

2020-5 New Babies, First-Time Attendees, and Visitors

We celebrated any new babies among us and welcomed first-time attendees. Throughout the week the following visitors were introduced and welcomed:

Cherice Bock, North Valley Friends Church, Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting
 Kirsten Bohl, North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative
 S.Y. Bowland, Morningside Monthly Meeting, New York Yearly Meeting
 Olivia Brangan, Wrightstown Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
 Hilary Burgin, Quaker Voluntary Service
 Dove John, North Valley Friends Church, Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting
 Elaine Emily, Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting, Pacific Yearly Meeting
 Lilia Fick, Ottawa Monthly Meeting, Canada Yearly Meeting
 Melanie Gifford, Adelphi Friends Meeting, Baltimore Yearly Meeting
 Mary Kay Glazer, Greenville Friends Meeting, North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative
 Karen Gonzalez, Iglesia Evangelica Amigos de El Salvador
 Jesse Grace, West Richmond (IN) Friends Meeting, New Association of Friends
 Katie Green, Clearwater Monthly Meeting, Southeastern Yearly Meeting
 Nancy Haines, Durham Friends Meeting, North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative
 David Haines, Durham Friends Meeting, North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative
 Mey Hasbrook, Kalamazoo Monthly Meeting, Lake Erie Yearly Meeting
 McKenna Hayden, camper at Farm & Wilderness (Virginia)
 Jennifer Higgins-Newman, Beacon Hill Monthly Meeting, Beacon Hill Friends House
 Faith Josephs, Charlotte Friends Meeting, Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting, FGC Associate Secretary for Development
 Sarah Kennedy, Friends Committee on National Legislation
 Allison Kirkegaard, Pacific Yearly Meeting
 Nils Klinckenberg, Beacon Hill Friends House
 Eric Kristensen, Vancouver Monthly Meeting, Canadian Yearly Meeting
 Ramón Gonzalez Longoria, Gibara Monthly Meeting, Cuba Yearly Meeting
 Laura MacNorlin, Atlanta Friends Meeting, (SAYMA)
 Amanda Mayer, Friends Meeting of Washington, Baltimore Yearly Meeting
 Robin Mohr, Secretary of the FWCC Section of Americas
 Judith M'maitisi Nandikove, Danholm Monthly Meeting, Nairobi Yearly Meeting
 Lisa Parker, Medford, MA
 Yadira Cruz Pena, Pastor, Velasco Monthly Meeting, Cuba Yearly Meeting
 Julie Peyton, West Hills Friends, Sierra Cascades Yearly Meeting
 Anne Pomeroy, New Paltz Monthly Meeting, New York Yearly Meeting
 Noel Potter, York Springs, PA, Agnostic/Episcopalian community
 Cai Quirk, Ithaca Monthly Meeting, New York Yearly Meeting
 Diane Randall, Friends Committee on National Legislation
 Karen Reixach, New York Yearly Meeting
 Tom Roberts, Noblesville Monthly Meeting, Western Yearly Meeting
 Gale Schultz, East African Women's Ministry, USA Support Group
 Jacqueline Stillwell, Monadnock, Right Sharing of World Resources
 Gloria Thompson, FWCC Northeast Coordinator
 Steven Willett, Manchester & Warrington Area Meeting, Britain Yearly Meeting
 Pamela Williams, Germantown Monthly Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
 Liz Yeats, Friends Meeting of Austin, South Central Yearly Meeting

2020-6 Clerks' Introduction to the Week

The presiding clerk noted that in keeping with our ongoing connection with Cuba Yearly Meeting, we will have three visitors from Cuba with us during the course of the week: Ramon Gonzalez Longoria from Gibara MM; Yadira Cruz Pena, pastor of Velasco MM; and Elsa de los Reyes Alvarez, secretary of Vista Alegre MM.

The clerk acknowledged the effect of the pandemic on us, and the grief for lost opportunities and old norms. This week, through the voices we hear and the work that we do, he suggests we move from grief to engagement with establishing new norms, where each of God's children is loved and respected and treated with dignity. He invited us to bring our full selves to this work. We have turned over our usual business meetings to an exploration of how we are led to join a rising tide of intolerance for racial injustice. We are all challenged to create the kingdom of heaven on earth.

Sessions Committee clerk and clerk of the online Sessions planning team Rebecca Leuchak (Providence) welcomed us to the 2020 Yearly Meeting Sessions, with an especially warm welcome to newcomers, to those who are juggling everyday responsibilities and joining us as able, and to long-time attenders. We feel joy and sorrow and we will mourn the loss of some wonderful traditions here at Sessions, but together we will strengthen our bonds.

Youth and youth staff were sent off to their own adventures to a rendition of *Row On* sung by Rebecca Leuchak and Bill Monroe (Providence).

2020-7 Reflections from the Yearly Meeting Secretary

After two songs by Eden and Jim Grace (Beacon Hill), we settled into worship. Out of the silence Yearly Meeting Secretary Noah Merrill invited us to transformation.

"There is only one meeting for worship," he said, "and we gather there in eternity. It is available to all who open their hearts; we emerge from it at birth and return to it in death, and across the miles we are participating in it now."

The early Quakers discovered something hidden in plain sight—a world-transforming power waiting within every heart. As they yielded to it, they were transformed, becoming clearer channels of love and Truth. They spoke of three movements within this transformation, which in the language of their time they called conviction, convincement, and conversion. Today we may call them revealing, surrender, and turning.

Some Friends may experience the moment of revealing as being shown the impact of our own choices, or of how we participate in oppression. Others may find themselves brought to a renewed assurance of how we and each of our fellow beings are infinitely beloved.

Surrender, for Quakers, means giving over, not giving up. We let go of trying to save the world through our own action, and instead learn to participate in the healing of Creation which is already underway.

Turning means putting into practice the invitation to love again and again in our lives. Only we can choose to be faithful, but in these moments we may encourage and strengthen one another.

Supporting one another in revealing, surrender, and turning is the essential purpose of the Quaker movement. It is the purpose for which New England Yearly Meeting was gathered 360 years ago and it is the purpose for which we gather now. "We come here with many different conditions, hopes, and burdens. I cannot speak to all conditions but there is a Spirit who can, and this is the Spirit who welcomes you here today."

2020-8 Closing

Rebecca Leuchak completed our morning with a quote from our own epistle of 2019 which read "There is a tide in the affairs of men / which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." She noted how this quote leads us directly into this year's theme in relation to the work ahead of us. She outlined the schedule for the week, which includes a tightly focused meeting for business, and she encouraged us to take the Wednesday Sabbath as a time to step away from the affairs of the world.

Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond) read a poem to lead us into a brief closing worship.

Saturday Afternoon

2020-9 Opening Worship

From out of the silence, we heard the June 2019 epistle from Great Plains Yearly Meeting in Wichita, Kansas. They reported that after 30 years of discernment they adopted a "statement of inclusion" recognizing that "God calls us to love one another as God loves us" and affirming that "all people are invited to fully partici-

pate in the life of the yearly meeting.” The keynote speaker at their gathering, John Calvi (Putney, NEYM), spoke of Friends’ call to service in the world and counseled “we want to be doing our best, not our most.”

2020-10 Welcome to Business Sessions

The presiding clerk welcomed us and thanked everyone for coming. As we are meeting virtually for the first time, he asked the reading clerks to guide us through good Zoom disciplines designed to facilitate our virtual conversations. He noted that business is likely to move more slowly than usual, as we are unfamiliar with this setting. Please be forgiving of each other, and remember that even though we are at home, we are in holy space for the duration of Sessions.

2020-11 Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness

Polly Atwood (Cambridge) introduced the work of this group. She began by introducing the other members of the group: LJ Boswell (Cambridge), Melody Brazo (Fresh Pond), Melissa Foster (Framingham), Lisa Graustein (Beacon Hill), Becky Jones (Northampton), Anna Lindo (Framingham), Richard Lindo (Framingham), Heidi Nortonsmith (Northampton), LVM Shelton (Plainfield), Pamela Terrien (Westport), Maile Wooten (Fresh Pond), and Zenaida Peterson (Cambridge). The group lifts up the deep faithfulness of those who are here today. They seek to do their work from Spirit, in love, with honesty and compassion.

The group invited Friends to stay connected to feelings and thoughts that arise, to resist reacting out of that place and to embrace this learning. Even when it is uncomfortable at times, this work will strengthen Yearly Meeting as a beloved community. The group offered sentence stems—*I hear, I see, I feel, I know* (in deep heart sense, not just head), and *I wonder*—as a beginning for this work. All Friends were invited to share what they are hearing, seeing, feeling, knowing, and wondering, as well as questions, via a dedicated email address. The working group will distill themes and report these back to the body as a whole.

2020-12 Epistle from the FGC Pre-Gathering of Friends of Color

The clerk asked LVM Shelton (Plainfield) to read the Epistle from the June 2020 FGC Pre-Gathering of Friends of Color.

This was the eighth year that Friends of Color and their families met for a pre-Gathering retreat before the Friends General Conference Gathering. This year’s retreat was held virtually. The importance of this Gathering for Friends of Color cannot be overstated. Friends of Color can’t breathe in the wider Quaker world, and the weekend presented a rare opportunity for not being “othered” in Quaker space.

In isolation due to COVID-19, Friends of Color have been kept apart from trusted loved ones and the pre-Gathering retreat brought back the source of community and family that has been missing. The Pre-Gathering Friends of Color Retreat provided a much-needed reprieve from the systemic racism too often found in our American Quaker community that often goes unseen by many white Friends.

Friends of Color ask all Quakers to heed a Call to Action and to sit with a list of queries. To the list of queries from the epistle, LVM herself added the following queries:

Where and how do you find yourself in those you have othered, marginalized, or erased?
Where and how do you find those you have othered, marginalized, or erased in yourself?

“For People of Color,” she said, “the human-made pandemic of racism is deadlier than COVID-19, and we need you to do work so that we can breathe.”

Friends then went into Zoom breakout rooms for worship-sharing around the queries. (The letter and queries can be found on page 28).

2020-13 Voices of Those Answering God’s Call

Throughout the week we heard from Friends involved in justice work in response to spiritual leadings. Their presentations invited us to listen more to our own sense of God’s leading. Many of these Friends shared resources.

The clerk introduced Zenaida Peterson (Cambridge). Zenaida spoke about their justice work as recruitment coordinator for Quaker Voluntary Service (QVS), with Boston Community Wellness, and with the Feminine Empowerment Movement (FEM). Their mutual-aid work involves helping people find resources such as food, diapers, and masks, as well as disseminating information to help people prepare for participation in uprisings. Slam poetry has also been part of their artistic and emotional support to the community.

2020-14 Noticing Patterns

The following were patterns lifted up today by attenders at Sessions:

- When the message regarding native lands was delivered, it assumed all of us were white/European.
- When people share their pronouns, it may be helpful to enter all of the forms including the possessive, since there are some designations unfamiliar to many of us.
- It is easy to use the word “should,” but that word brings a sense of judging, whereas saying “I encourage” invites exploration.
- The time we were given for digging into the queries was appreciated, but dealing with these queries is lifelong work, and we are encouraged not to feel limited to the time we had.
- The clerk was noticed for the gracefulness with which he owned “mistakes” that were noticed in Sessions.
- All those serving on the Pastoral Care team are white women; there may be people who don’t feel that group reflects their needs.
- We keep using the term “mistake”; what is needed is to relearn patterns.
- But we also need to not only change our use of words, but change our actions.

Tuesday Morning, August 4, 2020

2020-15 Opening Worship

Out of the opening silence the November 2019 epistle from Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting, in Ghent, Belgium, was read. The chosen themes of their yearly meeting were “Living adventurously” and “Trusting the Light in our daily lives.”

We need to learn to be brave, to take our Quakerism out to the wider world trusting we can come back to the Quaker community for replenishment.

We should remember that being led by the Light may not feel comfortable. What is important is the path, and to always remember that we ourselves might be mistaken, for example in the failure of Friends to adequately address issues such as gender, racial and sexual orientation equality. Things start to change with that discomfort; we grow to no longer be the person we were before the change began.

2020-16 Noticings

LJ Boswell and Melissa Foster of the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness working group shared patterns of oppression and of faithfulness that have been seen in our work this week. Friends’ language has continued to center whiteness; we find that we speak with a sense of urgency to be heard and understood that is characteristic of the dominant culture; we often use “we” and “us” as if all of us shared the same experiences. Also noticed were ways we have been faithful in our efforts to break this pattern. Our clerk modeled a willingness to experiment with different language and to ask for help with that, and members of the dominant culture were seen to step back so that others could be heard.

Perfectionism is part of the culture of oppression, and we have shown our perfectionism in some of the ways we call out patterns we notice, shaming one another for our mistakes. Melissa reminded us of something LVM Shelton said: “I hope I can be glad of each mistake I make: it is a lesson to be learned. It keeps me green and growing. When I stop making mistakes, I have stopped practicing. I am in ashes and the winds will blow me away into nothingness.”

2020-17 State of Society Report

LVM Shelton (Plainfield), Susan Vargo (Northampton), and Richard Lindo (Framingham), members of Ministry & Counsel, presented a State of Society report for the Yearly Meeting.

The Yearly Meeting received State of Society reports from monthly meetings early this year. Most of them were written in the pre-COVID days and all were written before the release of a widely seen and distressing video showing the May 25th murder by police in Minneapolis, MN, of George Floyd, a Black man. The Friends preparing Yearly Meeting’s State of Society report felt called to focus on what is in our hearts now more than on synthesizing reports from monthly meetings. Because of the pandemic, the report presented to Sessions has not yet been approved by Ministry & Counsel.

The committee told us

The reports received from monthly meetings only hint at the wounding many Quakers, of various abilities, genders, ethnicities, affectional preferences, and social classes feel, enthralled as we are by our culture of control and domination, which we have learned to call Empire.

The Empire we are immersed in is a culture where the few have power over the many. In spite of Quaker values and the most righteous of intentions, Empire is manifest within almost all of us...

To change the world, we of NEYM must also transform ourselves. Those of us who are Euro-Americans, must let die that white privilege and power that adds to the armor around our hearts. Those of us who are people of color must let go the armor of victimhood that surrounds many of our hearts.

If we are to transform ourselves and the world, we must be ready to say ‘Here I am’ when leadings of Spirit come to us. If we accept the challenge and enter the chrysalis state, if we cast off the clothing of Empire, we become willing to let go of whatever does not serve the butterflies we are to become.

Friends received this report and discussed queries presented for individual transformation in breakout rooms. (The report and the queries appear on page 27)

2020-18 Reparations Working Group: NEYM Letter of Apology to Native Americans

Leslie Manning (Durham), clerk of Permanent Board introduced the documents coming before us from the Reparations Working Group: a letter of apology to the indigenous peoples of our geographic area, and a call to action which is intended to serve as a starting point for monthly meetings’ consideration. Friends were asked to approve forwarding the “NEYM Letter of Apology to Native Americans” to monthly meetings for seasoning over the coming year, so that it can come back to Sessions next year for further consideration.

To help center us before our work, we heard a video by Hawk Henries, a flute player from the Nipmuck tribe. Leslie reviewed the history of the Reparations Working Group, which was formed in 2019 after we repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery during our 2013 annual sessions [2013-52]. The working group is composed of Leslie Manning, Erica Adams (West Falmouth), Maggie Edmondson (Winthrop), Charles Simpson (Burlington), and Suzanna Schell (Beacon Hill).

Leslie then read a text from Sheri Mitchell of the Penobscot tribe: “Walking a spiritual path does not equate to perfectionism. It requires a willingness to deeply accept the imperfections within yourself and others and find the beauty in them. It also means being accountable for your words and actions and developing a healthy and balanced response-ability when you are wrong or when you cause harm.”

In listening to Native Americans, what the working group has heard is, “Tell your people we are still here. Tell your people we need to heal. We must concentrate on our people, reclaiming our culture and language, saving our youth, healing the planet. We have no reason to trust, but some of us are willing. How can we

re-concile when there has never been conciliation?” We have been asked for an apology. This work is not finished and may never be finished.

Suzanna Schell (Beacon Hill) read the draft apology and asked us to sit with it in silence. (See the Letter of Apology on page 28)

After thoughtful reflection and appreciation, Friends approved forwarding the letter of apology to monthly meetings, along with materials to support the discernment process. Contact information will be provided where Friends may share information and suggestions. The clerk postponed consideration of “A Call For Us to Act” until the next business session.

Thursday Morning, August 6, 2020

2020-19 Opening Worship

From out of the silence, the reading clerk read a reflection from Ian Harrington (Cambridge) reminding us that 75 years ago today the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, and three days later another bomb on Nagasaki, Japan. “On this 75th anniversary of such disaster and destruction, let us hold in the Light those who bore the impact of that long-ago explosion and those who, over the past 75 years and in the future, are dedicating their lives to preventing any more cataclysmic explosions.”

2020-20 Change to Process for Approving Minutes for this Sessions

Recognizing our limited time for conducting business during these virtual Sessions, the clerk asked for permission to forward to Permanent Board for approval those minutes that do not reflect decisions by the body, but rather are summaries of reports received. Friends approved.

2020-21 Finance Committee: Budget

Bob Murray (Beacon Hill), clerk of the Finance Committee, reported on changes to this year’s budget process. Consideration of the budget for fiscal year 2020-21 is being postponed this year until the Permanent Board meeting on September 19. The budget, along with explanatory text, is in the advance documents. The listening session around the budget that is usually held at Sessions will be held on Zoom on Saturday, August 29, at 10 a.m. Any interested Friends are invited to participate. As Bob has been approved as the new Yearly Meeting treasurer, Scot Drysdale, the incoming clerk of Finance, will host that session.

2020-22 Voices of Those Answering God’s Call

Continuing to hear from some Yearly Meeting members active in justice work we heard from the following people:

Diane Randall (Hartford), General Secretary of FCNL

After encouraging robust participation in the election process, Diane outlined three areas of federal advocacy FCNL is focusing on right now.

1. The Justice in Policing Act: FCNLs focus has been on the section addressing the militarization of the police. This legislation won’t solve all policing issues by itself. We need coordinating efforts at the local level.
2. The most recent COVID relief bill: The impact of the pandemic in terms of economic fallout will last long past the development of a vaccine. This bill proposes increases to SNAP and the extension of unemployment benefits.

3. Native American work: FCNL has a full-time Native American congressional advocate working on issues relating to missing and murdered native women and tribal justice with the Violence Against Women Act.

Diane emphasized the effectiveness of forming contacts and relationships with our congresspeople.

At the end of Diane's presentation, the clerk shared that he hears a longing among some Friends for a focused piece of work for the Yearly Meeting as a whole to take up. He noted that while such an effort has not emerged, FCNL provides many opportunities for individual justice work.

Lori Martin (New Haven), Coordinator of Haven's Harvest

Lori shared that this ministry began when she encouraged her son, home from college, to get involved in something meaningful. As her son engaged in this work, Lori felt Spirit drawing her into it as well.

Haven's Harvest is a local nonprofit that recovers surplus food from area businesses and transfers it to nonprofits that can store and distribute it to those in need. Communities experiencing food insecurity are often Black and brown due to systemic racism and policies around immigration.

Part of Haven's Harvest work is advocacy for policies that reduce the need for this type of service. The work is friendly and neighborly—not charity work, but rather solidarity. “We all work together. We recover food, but we also create relationships. We are able to connect people with each other.”

2020-23 Reparations Working Group—A Call for Us to Act

Maggie Edmondson (Winthrop) spoke about the work of decolonizing faith, and decolonizing Quakers in particular. Working toward right relationship with Native Americans is one aspect of work around the racism, domination, exploitation, superiority, and individualism that fosters disconnection from one another and the earth. Knowledge of this continent's history through lenses other than that of the settlers is important. Churches must look at how they have benefited from colonialism. We must examine structures of communities of faith to see how they continue oppression.

After a conference at Pendle Hill, Maggie had a leading to create a new Quaker organization, Decolonizing Quakers, that would connect Friends in whom this concern is alive (decolonizingquakers.org) Its website has resources for non-Indigenous Friends as we work for change.

The clerk then introduced A Call for Us to Act, produced by the Reparations Working Group as a companion document to the NEYM Apology to Native Americans, noting that it is meant to suggest approaches which the monthly meetings could take over the coming year to engage with the reparations concern. The list of actions is neither a list of things meetings should do, nor a requirement, but simply a beginning resource to help us educate ourselves. Charles Simpson (Burlington) read A Call for Us to Act for the Reparations Working Group. (See the “Call for Us to Act” on page 29.)

Friends expressed overall support for A Call for Us to Act, but several concerns were expressed:

- The recommendations in the document do not mention looking at the history of the land owned by the Yearly Meeting itself. Is it appropriate to use Legacy Gift funds to investigate reparations when these funds may derive in part from stolen land?
- There is a Quaker testimony against gambling, and this complicates our leading to support the sovereignty of Native Americans over their lands which are sometimes used to build gambling casinos. Resources to understand this concern would be helpful for some meetings.
- European Americans can be too quick in rushing to make things happen, and there should be an added note of humility. We cannot expect that Native peoples will accept our overtures. Perhaps instead of “A Call for Us to Act,” this document should be called “A Call to Faithful Response.”
- One Friend, identifying herself as mixed blood Cherokee/Irish, applauded the effort to “move forward in our imperfections,” as Indigenous Rights activist Sherri Mitchell said.

Sensing general approval, the clerk suggested that we allow the reparations working group to edit the “Call to Action” based on the comments heard in this meeting, and forward that document, together with the letter of apology, to monthly meetings for engagement with the concern. A number of Friends expressed dis-

comfort with that path. Seeing many hands still raised, and recognizing that we had already gone well over our allotted time, the clerk named that we did not have unity, and closed the meeting.

Friday Morning, August 7, 2020

2020-24 Opening Worship

Meeting was opened by a reading of the October 2019 epistle from France Yearly Meeting. Their theme was “the Quaker method in support of action.”

We continued further to question not only our witness but our methods: the means we use to discern “what love demands of us” and how that translates into action. We heard many stories of Quaker activity, and remembered how an action in the name of our society starts as a “concern” from a member or small group, and not from an institutional decision.

We were reminded in various ways that in fact our greatest witness is always our own lives. We shared how the Quaker “method” leads to a style and a discipline in our behaviour, both in daily life and in our Meeting. Despite sometimes questioning the number of working groups and committees, and being sometimes frustrated by the slowness of the method, we know how this leads to unity and dedication.

2020-25 Opening Prayer

The clerk opened today’s session with a prayer: “Dear God, you have brought us together. Please help us to hear what it is you would have us do.”

2020-26 Video Greetings from Our Cuban Friends

Yadira Cruz Peña, pastor of Velasco Monthly Meeting, Cuba Yearly Meeting, greeted us with a song sung in Spanish by the women’s group of Velasco.

*There are moments that words cannot reach to tell you how I feel,
for you my good Lord;
I thank you for everything you’ve done,
for everything you do and for all that you will do.*

2020-27 Clerk’s Reflection on Thursday’s Business Meeting

The Presiding Clerk shared some reflections on our difficulty in finding unity to approve the “Call to Action” associated with the Letter of Apology to Native Americans. He sensed that there were multiple factors contributing to the dis-ease the body experienced. These included a fear of the unknown as we enter into this work: discomfort, for those of us who identify as white, with the deeds of our spiritual forebears; and an underlying emotional charge from the pandemic.

Adding to the complexity of the situation is our longing to do something, balanced by voices naming the need to be respectful and humble in our relationships with Native peoples.

The clerk further shared his thoughts about how much we Quakers are influenced by the wider society. One way that plays out is an attachment to outcome, “and that played out in myself yesterday. Part of my frustration at the end of yesterday’s meeting was that I had an attachment to an outcome that wasn’t happening. I acknowledge and apologize for that.”

2020-28 Noticing Patterns

Polly Atwood and Anna Lindo of the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group brought to us reflections that have come from the whole body. The Noticing Patterns email box received many notic-

ings both of faithfulness and oppression. We sense a growing trust and willingness to engage with this work. Friends are taking risks.

Concerning Thursday's business meeting: We followed patterns of faithfulness. We laid aside old things to make space for Spirit; agreeing, for instance, to let Permanent Board approve minutes that do not involve decisions of the body. We listened deeply to Friends who spoke of their ministries in various contexts. With joy and ease, we approved forwarding the "NEYM Letter of Apology to Native Americans" to monthly meetings.

There were also times when, having been stretched into this faithfulness, we felt the temptation to contract back into what felt safe—to slide back into patterns of oppression. We found ourselves overly engaged with words and details, not listening to Spirit moving among us. At times these patterns hindered the process of discernment.

Empire within us takes the form of us not listening, seeking control, forgetting our trust in each other and in our committees, prioritizing our own individual voices over the voices of others, speaking without fully attending to what has already been said, assuming an apology is a single act or letter, weaponizing a need to reach consensus, and feeling the tyranny of time rather than surrendering to God's time.

Queries From the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group:

What are you noticing in yourself during Business, or maybe in other parts of Sessions? We invite you to use the sentence stems to practice noticing what's coming up for you: I feel ..., I see ..., I hear ... , I know (in heart/body, not just head) ..., I wonder

- When do you notice—in your body, feelings, thoughts—a temptation to react, to resist, or to stop listening to others and Spirit?
- What do you fear will happen if some business item, or aspect of an item, is not done just so?
- When do you feel yourself listening deeply? What do you notice when you are in that place? What supports you to stay with that deeper listening?
- Can those gathered in Meeting for Business trust that discernment will come in the time it takes, and that whatever gets done, gets done?

2020-29 Voices of Those Answering God's Call

We have been referring to these presentations as the voices of people doing Justice work, but really they are an invitation to see myriad ways that people hear God's call.

Emma Turcotte (Beacon Hill), 2018–19 QVS Fellow

Since Covid started, I began thinking about how to continue antiracism work. After George Floyd's murder I started a Facebook group for Earlham alumni POC, since my introduction to activism began at Earlham and I wanted to recreate virtually the community I had at Earlham where students of color could have a space to advocate and stand in solidarity with one another. I also started Abolition Journal's free six-week study guide titled "If You're New To Abolition" and began a free online course offered by Yale: "African American History from Emancipation to the Present." Both of these are excellent resources and both are things that I am doing with friends in order to hold myself accountable to doing this work.

In addition, I read and downloaded from the web many articles to share with friends and family. I watch documentaries, which several sites have been showing for free lately. I started buying directly from Black-owned businesses, and found the only Black-owned bookstore in Boston (Frugal Bookstore, frugalbookstore.net). I am more intentional now about where my money goes and believe that the most radical thing you can do today is buy a book by a Black author about the Black experience from a Black-owned bookstore.

Emma included in the chat a link to an extensive list of racial justice resources she thought others might find helpful.

2020-30 Earthcare Ministry and the Racial, Social and Economic Justice Committee: Call to Urgent, Loving Action for Earth and Her Inhabitants

Stephen Gates (West Falmouth) and Gail Melix (East Sandwich), who identified herself as a Wampanoag Quaker, co-clerks of Earthcare Ministry, along with Beth Morrill (Hartford), clerk of Racial, Social, and Economic Justice, and other members of the committees read their “Call to Urgent, Loving Action for The Earth and Her Inhabitants” in a video presentation.

The call asks, “At this critical time, the Earthcare Ministry and the Racial, Social and Economic Justice Committees invite Friends to a year of spiritual and intellectual discernment regarding social injustice, including racism and the plight of Mother Earth.” The Call asks monthly meetings to discern actions that can be taken at the monthly meeting and yearly meeting levels. (See the “Call to Urgent, Loving Action for Earth and Her Inhabitants” on page 29.)

Friends approved sending the Call to monthly meetings, affirming that there is power in this message.

Saturday Morning, August 8, 2020

2020-31 Opening Worship

From out of the silence we heard a portion of the 2019 epistle from Alaska Friends Conference in Wasilla, Alaska. “Love, Joy, and Empowerment” was their theme, formulated in response to concerns of young Friends for more meaningful and effective integration of youth and young adult Friends into the life of the meeting.

Alaska Friends are keenly aware of and concerned about visible and destructive consequences of climate disruption: We noted ongoing constructive work of Alaska Friends to raise awareness of and counter climate disruption. We urge Friends everywhere to join this vital Spirit-led work to defend creation.

Alaska Friends ask all people of good will to join with us in countering racist and divisive words and actions. We have asked ourselves how our own Quaker history has contributed to divisions, intolerance, and white supremacy. We discern a need for healing work that confronts past actions including those of Friends that devalued and damaged indigenous cultures.

2020-32 Welcome to New Members of Our Families

The Clerk invited Friends to introduce to us new babies and other young people newly welcomed home.

2020-33 Video Greetings from Our Cuban Friends (presented in Spanish)

Jorge Luis Peña Reyes, clerk of Cuba Yearly Meeting, passed on greetings from all the members of Cuba Yearly Meeting and noted that

We’re making a documentary video on the 120-year presence of Quakers in Cuba, scheduled to be shown on state television this fall. It will feature some of the Quaker leadership and the Quaker churches here in Cuba. It will include a section about our long connection with New England Friends by way of the Puente de Amigos—the Bridge of Love.

Elsa De Los Reyes, secretary of Vista Alegre Monthly Meeting, greeted us with Psalm 133, which epitomizes the bonds that unite us: “It is truly wonderful when relatives live together in peace.”

How wonderful to be in touch with Friends in New England! Thanks be to God! For even though we can’t be together physically, we can still be united in Spirit with all of you. I want to send you loving and cordial greetings on behalf of my monthly meeting.

The clerk thanked the interpreters who brought these words to us and shared our words with our Cuban and El Salvadoran Friends: Mary Hopkins (Fresh Pond), Judy Goldberger (Beacon Hill), David Currie (Ames-

bury), Iliana Matamouros (Framingham), Susannah McCandless (Burlington), James Rider (Mattapoisett), Russell Weiss-Irwin (Cambridge).

2020-34 Minute to Authorize Edits and Corrections

Friends approved authorizing the presiding, recording, and reading clerks to make and approve edits, clarifications, and corrections to the minutes of New England Yearly Meeting Sessions 2020.

2020-35 Clerks' Table Nominations

Leslie Manning from Permanent Board brought to us for approval new nominations for Clerks' Table for the coming year:

Bruce Neumann (Fresh Pond), Presiding Clerk
Gina Nortonsmith (Northampton), Reading Clerk
Gordon Peters (Wellesley), Reading Clerk
Peter Bishop (Northampton), Recording Clerk
Kathleen Malin (Smithfield), Recording Clerk

Friends approved.

2020-36 Report from the Working Group on Ministry and Spiritual Life

On behalf of Permanent Board, Leslie Manning reported that in December 2019 a Ministry and Spiritual Life Working Group was formed in response to observations in the Clerking Structures and Practices Working Group report presented at 2019 Sessions. This new working group, consisting of Sarah Gant (Beacon Hill), Hugh McArthur (Hanover), Nancy Middleton (Putney), and Phil Fitz (Northampton), was asked to explore where and how support is currently happening amongst us and to recommend roles and structures to best serve the current needs of our beloved community. They expected to prepare a document to circulate to meetings before coming back to us at this year's Sessions with recommendations. As a result of the pandemic, in March they were clear as a working group to lay aside their work for a time because the people they hoped to consult with were busy caring for our monthly meetings in this time of uncertainty. The group is now clear to resume that work and we look forward to receiving their report some time this fall at a Permanent Board meeting. Friends expressed gratitude for their work.

2020-37 Appreciation for Honor Woodrow's Work as Clerk of Ministry and Counsel

Leslie Manning offered appreciation to the outgoing clerk of M&C, Honor Woodrow, a member of Framingham sojourning with Friends at Putney. Even at the best of times, serving in a leadership position in the Yearly Meeting is challenging and stretching, but at a time of uncertainty this has been an increasingly challenging task. And yet our dear F/friend has risen to that to the best of her abilities and sometimes, through grace, beyond. Honor brings us compassion, deep love for our community, and a capacity for deep listening that can cause her at times to sit in places of discomfort and dis-ease, and name hard truths, with love and compassion.

Her gifts have let her prioritize the needs of monthly meetings in discord and distress and to help them find their way through. She has made a commitment to enable our meetings to flourish and has spent much time helping us become the including and welcoming community we imagine ourselves to be. She has served us well and faithfully and we are so grateful for that service.

The clerk spoke to his appreciation of Honor's participation in Coordinating and Advisory.

2020-38 Appreciation for Shearman Taber's Work as Treasurer

Frederick Martin (Beacon Hill), accounts manager for the Yearly Meeting, noted that the treasurer's job is a complicated combination of delving into the numbers, giving the overview of everything, and relating that overview to everyone. Shearman has done a wonderful job with the combination. It goes without saying that

he served with integrity and commitment, but he also found areas where his unique abilities could simplify and improve our financial analysis. He has evidenced a passionate concern for equity as well, especially on the Board of Managers.

Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting secretary, reflected on Shearman's long history of service. He was a member, then clerk, of Finance Committee, then treasurer of our Yearly Meeting. At the time he became treasurer we were facing a structural budget deficit and there was real pressure to focus on our financial viability at the expense of our ministry. Shearman helped guide us in our financial stewardship while also reminding us that that stewardship is only ever in service of our spiritual calling.

Noah noted "I hope that Shearman is the last treasurer of whom we ask so much, as we focus on removing barriers to participation by changing the responsibilities of the job. It is no accident that the work of the clerk of Ministry and Counsel and the treasurer were the two roles that were focused on last year as needing attention to make them more accessible."

2020-39 Voices of Those Answering God's Call

Anna Lindo (Framingham): Reflection on a deeper understanding of nonviolence

Nonviolence is an important part of Quaker values and always has been. Anna quoted Coretta Scott King, who said: "I must remind you that starving a child is violence. Neglecting school children is violence. Punishing a mother and her family is violence. Discrimination against a working man is violence. Ghetto housing is violence. Ignoring medical need is violence. Contempt for poverty is violence." Anna spoke to her experience concerning that definition of violence in schools.

In 2016 I participated in City Year Boston, where I was placed in an underfunded school. I was assigned to work with a classroom teacher who needed to retire. She would take attendance, pass out a resource or worksheet, and then ignore the class for hours on her phone. It got loud and she would yell at the loud Black girls and ADHD boys. The teacher said the real problem was that the parents were crackheads.

Trump was elected that fall, and it was a terrifying time for the students, especially from immigrant families. A lot of the fear was related to families being split up by deportation. I am very lucky that none of my students or their immediate families got deported, but the fear kept everybody on edge. Separating families is violence.

My liberal white friends say they only support nonviolent protests. Barrington Dunbar, 20th century Black Quaker anti-racist activist, said "Black people living in the ghettos of American cities ... cannot hear Friends who profess the way of love and nonviolence, but yet maintain a destructive silence in obvious situations of social injustice." So, what do we mean by "I only support nonviolence?" Is it that we are uncomfortable watching buildings burn? Or does it mean that we are unwilling to oppose systemic violence? So I ask, what are you willing to do? I encourage us to sit with this question and let Spirit help guide us to find the answer.

Heather Denkmire (Portland): Racial Justice Accountability Groups

I grew up believing I was one of the good white people. My dad was a minister in a Black neighborhood. I always considered myself as an activist. It was important to me at the time to see myself as not part of the problem. Then I began having a friendship with a woman who was Black. Class and race made the friendship bumpy, but I was writing a newspaper column at that time and one column that I wrote ended our friendship. Being a racist doesn't make me a bad person; my job is to undo it. I must call on God to relieve some of the fear, and be able to act before I feel ready.

I took a racism class on "What does it mean to be white in America?" Lisa Graustein shared a document about white supremacy culture, and that is my touchstone now. Things I needed to do for the class started falling off the calendar because I was busy, so I started asking other white people if they wanted to have a monthly check-in group. It's not a book club, but once a month we get together and each of us checks in and says "This is what I've been doing in my antiracism work and this is what I plan to do this next month."

Things slide. I'm not going to bite off more than I can chew, but I'll leave my comfort zone. Sometimes I want to fix everything and there is this tension between urgency and inaction. My whiteness tells me "You don't have to do so much" and it tells me "you have to do it now!" We can't just say we mean well; we need to start doing well.

2020-40 Noticing Patterns

Becky Jones, a member of the Noticing Patterns group, has noticed a pattern that around midweek, business sessions often get bogged down, but later in the week there is more of a feeling of openness. We have seen that this week.

She sees ways that we have been cracked open many times this week, and wonders if we might now be willing to trust the Reparations Working Group to hear what Friends have said about "A Call For Us to Act" and, having heard it, to create a document that we agree with in spirit that can go out to monthly meetings along with the "NEYM Letter of Apology to Native Americans" so that these two documents can go hand in hand.

The clerk noted that we do not have time to enter into discussion of this, but asked if Friends are ready to approve it.

Friends approved.

2020-41 First Reading of Our Epistle

We heard a first reading of the epistle for this year's Sessions from Jay O'Hara (West Falmouth), Briana Halliwell (Vassalboro), and Debbie Humphries (Hartford) and were asked for feedback. Friends were invited to send comments via e-mail.

2020-42 Closing Worship

We concluded our business with a moment of worship and celebration.

"Thank you for gathering us and shepherding us to a new place."

Closing Celebration, Sunday Morning, August 9, 2020

2020-43 Opening Worship

As we entered the virtual space, the slideshow of photos from meetings around New England was once again in progress. After a song from Annie and Peter Blood-Patterson (*Paz y Libertad en Este Mundo* ["We want peace and liberty in this world"]) we settled in for opening worship.

2020-44 Report from the Events Coordinator

Elizabeth Hacala, events coordinator, began by observing that a strong and vibrant team is stronger than the sum of its parts. It's not a singer with backup, it's a symphony.

She presented some statistics from this week's gathering: 700 Friends registered for Sessions. There was an average of 240 connections per event, with over 400 online for the plenary. The largest group participating together remotely was fifteen. Twenty percent of registrants were first-time attenders. Twelve people joined us by phone. Nearly 300 attenders participated in Home Groups. Our participants included 19 Young Friends, 25 in Junior High Yearly Meeting, 26 in Junior Yearly Meeting, and 11 very young children. Faithfully financing the Yearly Meeting through our "pay as led" option continued to ensure that cost is not a barrier to Sessions attendance. We are grateful that you are here.

Elizabeth closed with a quote from the TV show *Babylon Five*: "The molecules of your body are the same molecules that make up ... the stars themselves. We are starstuff. We are the universe made manifest, trying to figure itself out. And as we have learned, sometimes the universe requires a change of perspective."

2020-45 Home Group Reflection

Holly Baldwin (Fresh Pond), who coordinated support for Home Group Facilitators, began with a quote from Ross Gay's *The Book of Delights*:

What if we joined our wildernesses together? ...
 Is sorrow the true wild?
 What if we joined our sorrows, I'm saying.
 I'm saying: what if that is joy?

For many this year, Home Groups were a space where sorrows were joined together in a nurturing environment, and out of the wilderness, joy was created. Friends shared griefs, listened for leadings, and processed what they had heard in the plenary, Bible Half Hours, and Business Meeting agenda items. Friends grieved not gathering in person and found comfort and inspiration in these small-group spaces, along with opportunities for intimacy, although the closeness of the groups was challenging for some and Home Groups were not safe spaces for everyone.

Fifty-five Friends acted as facilitators for twenty different Home Groups in which Friends were able to listen, dwell, and grow in the Spirit. In training these facilitators, as a yearly meeting we deepened our skills and practice in creating spaces where braveness and vulnerability thrive, and where we notice and interrupt patterns of oppression. Through the week Home Groups worked through themes of

- connection and community building
- sharing spiritual conditions
- listening for how Spirit is calling/God's invitation
- witness

We are learning and growing and that is good. Part of learning and growing is practicing, and part of practicing is making mistakes—mistakes that come at the expense of some Friends.

Some Friends reported experiences of othering and microaggressions in their Home Groups that were either inadequately addressed or caused by facilitators. In some cases a participant hurt by the pattern chose not to return to the Home Group and, in the cases we know about, Friends had the option to join new groups. "To Friends wounded in Home Groups this week, we apologize for the pains we caused you in spaces that were supposed to hold you."

2020-46 Reading of the Epistle

Jay O'Hara, Briana Halliwell, and Debbie Humphries read the Yearly Meeting epistle for our 2020 Sessions.

With appreciation for those who worked on it, Friends approved this reflection on our condition and our work together. (See the epistle on page 76)

2020-47 Message from the Presiding Clerk

The presiding clerk expressed his gratitude for the planning that went into our "big experiment" of holding Sessions online, along with appreciation for all of us who have participated.

He noted that while there were some who were able to attend because we were on Zoom, others stayed away due either to an inadequate internet connection or discomfort with the technology.

He shared that the various parts of Sessions this year felt all of a piece, from the opening celebration through Dr. Kemp's plenary, through Bible Half Hours, Business Meeting, and Home Groups.

In business meeting three different documents that came to us used the phrase "Call to Action." One was from the People of Color Pre-Gathering at Friends General Conference, asking Friends who identify as white to engage in reflection and action about the racial pandemic; one was from the Reparations working group, encouraging Friends to learn more about Native Americans and to work on their behalf; and the last was a wider appeal for justice for people, for the Earth and for the people who suffer most from climate degradation.

Indeed, the decay of the environment, the spread of a pandemic which has laid bare the inequalities many of us have turned a blind eye to for years, and the constancy of police violence have created in many of us an awareness that our complacency has festered for too long. The clerk asked the question that was on many of our hearts: Is it time for us, as a people who preach a foundational belief in peace, to fight not just against militarization and nuclear weapons, but against the systemic racism which inflicts violence on the poor and on people of color?

Our clerk affirmed that as a yearly meeting we have everything we need: we have healers, teachers, mystics, artists, philosophers, nurturers, and hard workers. Can we honor all our many gifts and give each other support? Cherice Bock, quoting Romans 12, shared that not all the members of the body have the same function: “We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.” Romans 12 also offers the concept of “the body of Christ,” where each of us has a role, and none can exist without the other. We need activists and we need ministers, but we need people to support the ministry, we need elders to ground all that we do, and we need pray-ers to pray for us all.

Words of encouragement completed the clerk’s remarks: “There is an essential pattern to our learning: Learn, DO, Reflect. Repeat. Let’s go home and start doing, but not at the expense of reflecting, and learning more. Let’s go home and spread the message: ‘the divine Spirit is at work among us, and the world needs our attention.’”

2020-48 Celebration of Our Youth Programs

We enjoyed pictures of this week’s youth program in action, during which Kristina and Nahar Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond) sang Dear Friends and Maggie Nelson (Portland) sang “My heart is ready and what am I gonna DO?”

2020-49 Sessions Committee Clerk

Rebecca Leuchak, clerk of the Sessions Committee, expressed Friends’ gratitude for all who have made this week possible. “I invite you to feel our interconnectedness and I ask, along the lines of how many are needed to screw in a lightbulb, how many Quakers does it take to crew our Sessions 2020 on its journey?”

Rebecca held up all the work of everyone on the way: the Clerks’ Table, our elders, epistle writers, Home Group planning team and facilitators, pastoral care team, Noticing Patterns group, Sessions Committee, interpreters, youth program coordinators, members of various committees that brought us rich content for discernment, the Yearly Meeting staff, and last, but not least, the tech team. They built the boat.

She finished by reminding us that our voyage would not have been possible without everyone’s presence, participation, love, and compassion. “We’ve all been rowing together this week. Gratitude and blessings for each one of you from all of us.”

2020-50 Epistles from the Youth Program

We received with joy an epistle from Junior Yearly Meeting read by Willard Peabody (Middlebury), a State of Society Report from Junior High Yearly Meeting read by Cora Redmond (Beacon Hill) and Conifer Gilbert (Cambridge), and an epistle from Young Friends read by Brennon Schifman (Providence), Olivia Mikkelsen (Worcester), and Emma Martin Mooney (New Haven).

2020-51 Closing Worship

Friends closed in worship. Noah Merrill shared a message recalling Ursula LeGuin’s *Earthsea Trilogy*:

They sing the eternal song that was in the beginning, that is written in our hearts, and in their singing their song comes more fully into the world. When the time to gather is done, they part with grief and gratitude and joy, returning in their smaller vessels. They depart knowing that the gathering is powerful and precious but their vessels were not made for the harbor they offer each other, they were made for the voyage. And whenever they feel alone or afraid they can turn to the song and find guidance and power in that moment. May it be so for us, Friends. May the dance and the story bless you and keep you until we meet again.

Rebecca Leuchek and Bill Monroe led us in a rendition of our theme song, *Row On*, and our presiding clerk Bruce Neumann offered a closing prayer. We purpose and pray to meet again at Castleton University in Vermont, August 7–12, 2021.

FY21 Approved Budget

NOTE: The Budget was approved by the Permanent Board on September 19, 2020; it is presented here for information only.

Category	FY2019		FY2020 Budget	△ FY20 to FY21	FY2021 Draft Budget	Note
	Actuals	Budget				
Income						
4010 Individual Contributions	210,194	212,000	215,500	14,725	230,225	
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions				0		
General Fund Contributions	317,286	350,000	350,000	0	350,000	
Equalization Contributions	15,971	23,000	27,000	-4,000	23,000	
Total 4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions	333,257	373,000	377,000	-4,000	373,000	¹
4030 Organizations Contributions	1	0	0	0	0	
4050 Interest and Dividend Income	9,303	4,000	9,000	0	9,000	
4070 Books and other Items	20,077	16,000	17,000	0	17,000	
4080 Retreat Program Fees	44,618	50,000	50,000	-3,000	47,000	
4085 Sessions Program Fees	202,936	185,000	201,000	10,050	211,050	²
4090 Change in Fair Market Value	960	0	0	0	0	
4099 Net Assets Released To/From	660	8,500	0	0	0	
Total Income	822,005	848,500	869,500	17,775	887,275	
Expenses						
5000 Staff						
5010 Salaries & Wages	284,515	267,426	305,920	22,276	328,196	
5020 Payroll Taxes	21,100	20,511	23,403	1,704	25,107	
5030 Benefits	73,584	75,978	76,908	1,308	78,216	
Total 5000 Staff	379,198	363,915	406,231	25,288	431,519	³
5100 General & Administration						
5110 Administration						
5120 Bank Expense	7,280	6,000	6,000	1,000	7,000	
5130 Contracted Services	18,702	60,396	31,896	-996	30,900	
5135 Accounting Services	4,000	4,000	4,000	-2,500	1,500	⁴
5140 Legal Services	7,771	7,750	5,250	-3,750	1,500	⁴
(TBD) Infrastructure				1,000	1,000	⁵
5150 Liability Insurance	4,071	4,000	4,000	1,100	5,100	⁶
5160 Payroll Service	5,229	4,500	4,500	700	5,200	
5170 Recruiting Expense		500	0	0	0	
5180 Rent	9,350	9,350	9,350	0	9,350	
5190 Misc. Expense	488	0	0	0	0	
Total 5110 Administration	56,890	96,496	64,996	2,554	67,550	
5200 Office Expenses	32,252	37,015	36,515	500	37,015	
Total 5100 General & Administration	89,142	133,511	101,511	3,054	104,565	
5300 Travel & Conferences				0		
5310 Travel - Committee	7,217	3,000	2,500	500	3,000	
5320 Travel - Clerk	3,552	5,000	4,000	500	4,500	
5330 Travel - Programs	1,460	4,600	4,600	-900	3,700	
5335 Travel - Rep. Travel	4,746	5,000	10,000	-3,300	6,700	⁷
5350 Travel - Staff	15,032	18,000	17,500	-500	17,000	⁸
5360 Travel - Ministries		400	400	0	400	
Total 5300 Travel & Conferences	32,007	36,000	39,000	-3,700	35,300	

continued on following page

Category	FY2019		FY2020 Budget	△ FY20 to FY21	FY2021 Draft Budget	Note
	Actuals	Budget				
6000 Programs				0		
6110 Sessions Room & Board	173,649	170,000	175,950	5,190	181,140	
6112 Room & Board	32,754	38,000	38,000	0	38,000	
6125 Program Expenses	27,710	32,800	35,800	2,500	38,300	
6130 Committee Expenses	6,626	14,200	14,450	-6,100	8,350	
6160 Program Support	2,609	4,020	2,220	2,000	4,220	
Total 6000 Programs	243,348	259,020	266,420	3,590	270,010	
6140 Books and Other	17,447	14,500	15,000	-500	14,500	
6200 Support of Other Orgs				0		
6310 FGC	13,075	13,075	13,075	0	13,075	
6320 FUM	11,357	13,075	13,075	0	13,075	
6325 FWCC	13,075	13,075	13,075	0	13,075	
6310-6325 FGC, FUM & FWCC	37,507	39,225	39,225	0	39,225	
Other Friends Organizations						
6328 Ramallah Friends School	100	100	100	0	100	
6335 AFSC	300	300	300	0	300	
6340 FCNL	750	750	750	0	750	
6345 QEW	300	300	300	0	300	
6350 Friends Peace Teams	100	100	100	0	100	
6355 FWCC 3rd World Travel	500	500	500	0	500	
6360 QUNO	200	200	200	0	200	
6362 Quaker Voluntary Service	100	100	100	0	100	
6328-6362 Other Friends' Organizations	2,350	2,350	2,350	0	2,350	
6590 Ecumenical Organizations	3,614	4,400	4,400	0	4,400	
Total 6200-6500 Support of Other Orgs.	43,471	45,975	45,975	0	45,975	
6600 Publications				0		
+ Directory)		1,000	1,000	-1,000	0	
6620 New England Friend (Sessions Issue)	3,522	3,000	3,000	1,000	4,000	
Total 6600 Publications	3,522.15	4,000	4,000	0	4,000	
Total Expenses	808,136.85	856,921	878,137	27,732	905,869	
Net Operating Income	13,868.24	-8,421	-8,637	-9,957	-18,594	
Other Income & Other Expense						
9940 Other Income—transfers other funds	32,072.22					
Total Other Income	32,072.22					
Net Other Income	32,072.22					
Net Income	45,940.46	(8,421.09)	(8,637.00)	(9,956.76)	(18,593.76)	

Notes:

1. To be conservative, monthly meeting contributions were kept at the 2019 level.
2. Assumes a room and board fee increase by Castleton Univ in summer 2021.
3. Increases in salaries are due to a COLA increase, merit raises and raises to keep staff in equitable pay ranges.
4. The amount of the Accounting Services and Legal Services lines has decreased due to adequate amounts already in the funds set aside for those purposes.
5. The final account number for the "Infrastructure" item has not been determined yet. This item was approved by Permanent Board in February 2020.
6. Includes new "cyber liability" protection.
7. The budget sets aside \$1700 (~\$5000/3) for FWCC travel, to be transferred to the 3630 World Conference Travel Board Designated Fund.
8. This reduced amount is consistent with actual Staff Travel in prior years.

FY2021 Proposed Committee Budgets

Committee	FY20 Budget	FY21 Proposed
Archives	-	
Coordinating & Advisory	500	500
Development	1,000	-
Earthcare Ministries	350	100
Faith and Practice	1,050	1,050
FGC	100	100
Finance	100	100
Friends Camp	-	-
FUM	350	100
FWCC	750	100
Ministry and Counsel	1,650	100
Nominating	1,650	500
Personnel	-	-
Permanent Board	250	100
Challenging White Supremacy WG	600	100
Puente de Amigos	1,500	1,500
Racial Social Econ Justice	1,500	1,500
Youth Ministries	600	500
Total	11,950	6,350

Epistle of 2020 Annual Pre-Gathering Retreat

The Outgoing Epistle of the 2020 Virtual Pre-Gathering of Friends of Color and their Families Friends General Conference

“We are a harvest of survivors. But then, that’s what we’ve always been.” (Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower*)

To Friends Everywhere:

We begin by remembering our ancestors who were strong enough to make a way for us. Friends of Color and their families met for Pre-Gathering Retreat on 26 Day through 28 Day Sixth Month 2020. This is the eighth year Friends of Color have met for our Pre-Gathering Retreat. First-timers felt welcomed and validated. This year, we met virtually with our largest attendance yet. There were 47 attendees, ranging in age from 11 months through 77 years from Canada, Mexico, Switzerland, and the United States of America.

The importance of this Gathering for Friends of Color worshipping in community together cannot be overstated. To our Friends in the wider Quaker world, we the Friends of Color, can’t breathe. During this weekend, we enjoyed the rare opportunity of not being othered In Quaker space. We experienced the joy of being seen as we are and the affirmation of a supportive spirit among ourselves in the “Amen corner.” The term “Amen corner” comes from the Black church and is a communal space that validates, affirms, and uplifts the spirit. In isolation due to COVID-19, we are being kept apart and away from those we love, trust, and need. The pre-gathering retreat brought back the source of community and family that has been missing. We were able to exhale, relax, and breathe together. Many of us did not realize how exhausted we were until we were able to relax with one another. The gifts of the spirit were abundant. We shared in worship, gentle yoga and meditation, meaningful discussions, journaling, and self-discovery. We also listened and shared in each other’s joys, triumphs, pains and sorrows. We experienced spiritual renewal that was awakened by moving through pain to hope for the future for ourselves and our children. Attention and space was given for people to play games, dance, talk, grieve, play music, watch videos, and write.

We have much gratitude to the Program Coordinator for the Ministry on Racism, the pioneer who laid the groundwork to make the Pre-Gathering Retreat available to us within FGC Gathering and who faithfully makes it happen each year. We are grateful for being able to acknowledge all that makes us human, for finding home and connection. Our inner Light is magnified and our capacity to breathe deeply is nurtured when that of God is acknowledged in each of us. It is our hope that other Friends of Color will know that such a space exists and know that they are desired, needed, and will be warmly embraced.

The Pre-Gathering Friends of Color Retreat provides a reprieve. Friends of Color need respite from the systemic racism too often found in our American Quaker community that often goes unseen by many white Friends. Friends of Color need respite from the insidious lie of white supremacy manifested in daily oppressive traumatic stressors (microaggressions) which have the effect of blaming the oppressed for our own oppression. Friends of Color need respite and support which our home meetings have not provided. Friends of Color are fatigued from being asked to teach white folks.

We ask all Quakers to heed a Call to Action. Please sit with these queries:

1. What is the Spirit leading me to do about the historic and ongoing racial pandemic across my meeting, my community, my work environment and my country?
2. How can we honor the memory of people who have lost their lives to the struggle for a better world?
3. How can we construct ways for people to engage and remain engaged beyond good intentions in the struggle for true equality in health, education, wealth and against state sanctioned violence?
4. How can we encourage the support of Friends of Color in Quaker worship and meetings around the world?
5. How can Friends de-center themselves in order to listen to and hear Friends of Color?

6. How can I support respite for Friends of Color?

In this time of COVID-19, People of Color discovered that a deadly pandemic is secondary to the long-time pandemic of racism in our lives. People of Color are more likely to die from COVID-19 due to the effects of racism and oppression. Think about how this pandemic has turned your world upside down, economically, emotionally, psychologically. Now imagine there is no one working on a vaccine, and that if you get sick or die, no one notices or cares. For People of Color, the human-made pandemic of racism is deadlier than COVID-19, and we need you to do work so that we can BREATHE.

In Peace, Love and

2020 FGC VIRTUAL PRE-GATHERING RETREAT FOR FRIENDS OF COLOR AND THEIR FAMILIES

New England Yearly Meeting State of Society 2019-20

Quakers, Wake Up and Let Go! We Have Everything that We Need.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12: 1, New International Version)

The State of Society reports submitted for monthly meetings represent a carefully considered description of each meeting's struggles to build community, to nurture, support, and hold accountable each person's use of their gifts of the Spirit; to make connections to the larger world; and to heal. Some smaller meetings struggle with aging and concerns for their very survival. Some meetings share a concern for ever smaller numbers in first day schools. Some meetings are thriving with renewed energy and commitment; others share a sense of being a bit adrift. Some meetings find strength in supporting corporate and individual witnesses against injustice, environmental degradation, and the violence of our society.

Most reports were written in the pre-Covid days and so do not reflect the concerns about maintaining loving community in an ever more virtual world.

All reports were written before the video of George Floyd's murder by police went viral. This event has become an epicenter for renewed action that demands the privilege of justice that some Euro-Americans enjoy, for all of us.

From the perspective available to us now in August, the reports are significant as much for what they don't say as for what they do say. They describe struggles: new ideas replacing old, newcomers poised against the lack of transparency in those who have been in the meeting a long time, financial shortcomings, and not having enough people to do the work of the meeting as it has been understood. They describe people learning from and loving each other, whether engaged in laughter or lamentation.

The reports describe a variety of ways of being good Quakers and of being both enhanced and stressed by difference. Yet, the reports only hint at the wounding many Quakers, of various abilities, genders, ethnicities, affectional preferences, and social classes feel, enthralled as we are by our culture of control and domination, which we have learned to call Empire.

The Empire we are immersed in is a culture, where the few have power over the many. In spite of Quaker values and the most righteous of intentions, Empire is manifest within almost all of us. Again, in spite of our Quaker values, we grieve at the prospect of losing Empire: if whiteness is decentered within us and in our lives, both Euro American Quakers and Quakers of color may feel loss: Many of us are grieving and feel the anger or depression and the pull to denial and bargaining that grieving consists of. Each of us has a part to play in letting go of Empire: within ourselves, within the institutions and groups to which we belong, and ultimately, globally.

To change the world, we of NEYM must also transform ourselves. Those of us who are Euro-Americans, must let die that white privilege and power that adds to the armor around our hearts. Those of us who are people of color must let go the a armor of victimhood that surrounds many of our hearts. Can we strive to transcend the erasure of the sea of whiteness in which we are immersed, contributing our experience to the whole from a framework of co-creation?

All of us can pray that our hearts be softened so that we can be healed.

One practice of this life-long endeavor is to sink deeply into the pain, anger, fear, and shame of losing our armor. If we listen with the intention of love, we can have compassion for and support one another. We can be freed and can act in unity when God's grace bestows a direction upon us.

In his NEYM plenary talk of 2017, Xinef Afriam brought us the metaphor of the chrysalis, which contains unstructured cellular matter, called imaginal cells. The chrysalis is deep in the chaos of transformation from caterpillar to butterfly. As people within an organization in the midst of a radical paradigm shift, we experience imaginal chaos. Yet, our meetings, with possibly one or two exceptions, are still like growing caterpillars, giving and receiving in various degrees of health or wholeness. The "imaginal cells" that rise up in most of our meetings are gently allowed to die away through lack of nurture. Can we, rather, immerse ourselves in chaos?

If we are to transform ourselves and the world, we must be ready to say "Here I am" when leadings of Spirit, which some call "opportunities," come to us. If we accept the challenge and enter the chrysalis state, if we cast off the clothing of Empire, we become willing to let go of whatever does not serve the butterflies we are to become.

The process is messy, chaotic, sometimes scary. Yet, if faith in the process is maintained, imaginal cells—our imaginative selves—abide in love that moves us to growth, action, and ultimately, peace.

Our world has changed.

It is time now to surrender, move into the acceptance stage of grieving for whatever we found comfortable about being imprisoned by Empire—even if it was only that it gave our lives coherent order. Can we allow ourselves to be transformed? Can we imagine the butterflies we can become? Can we work through the long process of bringing that imagination to life?

We have everything we need to do this: healers, teachers, mystics, artists, philosophers, nurturers, and hard workers. Can we honor all our many gifts and give each other support? As Amanda Kemp said in her healing plenary presentation on Sunday, we need to ask, as members of one another, What feeds us, gives us life?

Jesus asked a third time, "Simon son of John, do you love Me?"

Peter was deeply hurt that Jesus had asked him a third time, "Do you love Me?"

"Lord, You know all things," he replied. "You know I love You."

Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep." (John 21:17)

We have long known this in our heads; now we must know it in our hearts and our bodies and be moved to action in ways we have not thus far been emboldened to do. We are called to transform and be transformed.

NEYM Apology to Native Americans

(Draft, pending approval at Sessions 2021)

To the Algonquian peoples of the Northeast who continue among us: the Abenaki, Mahican, Maliseet, Massachusetts, Mi'kmaq, Mohegan, Narragansett, Nipmuck, Passamaquoddy, Pennacook, Penobscot, Pequot, Pocumtuc, Quinnipiac, Tunzic, and Wampanoag,

Apology

As participants in European colonization and as continuing beneficiaries of that colonization, Quakers have participated in a great and continuing injustice. For too long and in too many ways, we as a faith community have failed to honor that of God in you, the original peoples of these lands, and in doing so betrayed that of God in ourselves. We are deeply sorry for the suffering we caused in the past and continue to cause in the present. Today we acknowledge that injustice and apologize.

We acknowledge that Quakers participated in and benefited greatly from the colonization effort which stole your land and displaced your ancestors and caused genocide and sought cultural erasure. We know that the injustice of displacement and disrespect continues. We also see the ways that we continue to benefit from broken treaties and genocidal policies. We have much work to do to attain right relationship.

We are sorry for our advocacy of the “Indian Industrial Boarding Schools” which we now recognize was done with spiritual and cultural arrogance. Quakers were among the strongest promoters of this policy and managed over 30 schools for Indian children, mostly boarding schools, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We are deeply sorry for our part in the vast suffering caused by this system and its effects.

On behalf of New England Quakers, in particular those of us with European ancestry, we offer this apology. We commit to continuing our efforts to learn, to see more clearly the implications of settler colonialism in our own lives, and to work toward right relationship. We hold ourselves open to suggestions and to dialogue, holding no expectations of you. We will continue to pray for guidance and to seek divine assistance in the transformation we know is needed within each of us, and in the world.

[Signature on approval]

Call for Us to Act

New England Yearly Meeting of Friends acknowledges that we have much work to do to enter into right relationship with Native Peoples and with all of Creation. To that end, we urge each of our monthly meetings to undertake the following:

- Determine the identity of the Native occupants of the region in which their Meeting House rests and acknowledge that with a plaque.
- Work within the meeting to raise awareness of the history of settler colonialism and our debt to Native Americans.
- Follow the lead of Native Americans and support their efforts toward social and environmental justice, including preserving the integrity of their lands in the face of on-going resource extraction, recognizing that theft of Native American land is not just a matter of history; it is happening today.
- Support state and federal recognition of the status of tribes as acknowledged sovereign nations entitled to self-government and reparations.
- Explore the implications for the meeting of restitution of lands unlawfully taken from Native Americans in violation of treaties. Once clear on what it would actually require of the meeting itself, support efforts by Native Americans to reclaim control of their sacred and culturally significant lands, including the restitution of lands unlawfully taken from them in violation of treaties.

Friends are encouraged to apply to the Legacy Gift Committee for funds to support their spiritual leadings in response to the above objectives.

Call to Urgent, Loving Action for The Earth and Her Inhabitants

We urgently call New England Friends to enter into discernment of loving actions that we, our meetings, and our society can take to help remedy systemic problems of racism, social injustice, violence, greed, and failure to act on the climate crisis. These problems are inextricably bound together and our very existence here on Earth depends on our addressing them as such. This “Call to Action” is a collective, outward rallying cry for Friends to engage in God’s work to restore right relationship to the earth, to each other, and especially to those who have everywhere been traumatized, grief-stricken, and brutalized by the very nature of the culture we all inhabit.

The roots of systemic injustice run deep in our minds, hearts, and culture. At the core of these injustices is the belief that certain groups of people, by virtue of their race, nationality, religion or income, are entitled to amass wealth and to consume resources at the expense of the health, safety, and even the survival of all the others. This belief, dating at least to the Doctrine of Discovery¹, is so firmly entrenched in our thinking that we must begin by explicitly acknowledging it.

Many of us from New England who identify as white were brought up to believe in the superiority of our white, Western, Christian culture. We have looked with pride on our perceived advantages and have striven to “raise up” others but now we can more clearly see the consequences of putting ourselves over and above other human beings and other life forms: genocide of much of our Indigenous communities and the confin-

1 A full explanation of the impact of the Doctrine of Discovery can be found in Lisa Graustein’s Virtual Plenaries at <https://neym.org/recordings/news/invitation-2019-annual-sessions-plenary>.

ing to reservations, usually in abject poverty, of those who survived. The labor-intensive nature of our early economy and white Americans' belief in their own worth led to the enslavement, first, of millions of Native Americans, and then of Africans. These peoples and their descendants were subjected to forced labor, separation of families, rape, murder, and other cruelties. To this day people of color face widespread health disparities, their work is undervalued and underpaid, and their schools are underfunded. Many have no chance of a better life.

Quakers must acknowledge that we are also complicit. As described in an Epistle from this year's Pre-Gathering Retreat of Friends of Color and Their Families with FGC², Quakers were reminded of the systemic racism experienced by Friends of color in our Quaker communities. So as we examine the systemic problems in America, we can start with ourselves and our own communities.

As a country the U.S. has believed in the importance of having an enormous, militarized police force to protect us from the perceived criminal intents of others. Many of us often hold simplistic views of people of color, including offensive stereotypes regarding their criminality. This has led to the over-policing of communities of color and the abuse and murder of Black Americans.

Americans believe we have benefitted from having a strong military. As a result, our government has continued to wage wars and to develop and refine weapons of mass destruction. We are the only nation to have used nuclear weapons against another people. We also continue to lead the world in making these weapons ever more "efficient." Other nations have responded by developing their own weapons, to the point where we are now just 100 seconds to midnight on the doomsday clock maintained by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists.³

Our country has built a mighty industrial empire which creates and sells goods and services across the entire planet. But we now realize that among the effects of this industry are enormous amounts of waste: of our land, our air, our water, and almost every resource on the planet. Mother Earth gives us life, food, medicine, and wonder for our souls. And yet we receive these gifts not with gratitude but with disrespect and destruction.

The human cost of our mighty industrial empire has been extraordinarily high, particularly in poor communities and communities of color, where disease, malnourishment and lead poisoning are much higher than elsewhere. Climate change disproportionately affects communities of color and the poor. The consequences—including drought, famine, catastrophic weather events, and wars arising from competition over scarce resources—have led to an ever-growing refugee crisis. America has provided neither safety nor refuge to those fleeing the effects of climate change.

Americans need to acknowledge that the relatively comfortable lives of some of us have come, in large part, from our control of material resources, including fossil fuels. Coal, oil, and gas have literally fueled our economic growth for over one hundred years. We have done enormous damage in order to keep that fuel supply going. The Earth continues to warm at an alarming rate, and we are now just ten years away from the point at which we can no longer avoid some of the most serious consequences of the global crisis unless we take immediate action. Species on our planet are disappearing at an alarming rate, in what some call the "Sixth Mass Extinction."⁴

But there is hope. This seemingly inexhaustible list of problems on our Earth can make us fearful, angry, hopeless, depressed, or incapacitated. But we need not follow that path. We are being called instead to take the path that comes from love for others, and love of truth and justice.

We strongly state that the Quaker testimony of Equality is universal and speaks to our need to love one another. We can no longer privilege one person, one group, one set of gender identities or sexual orientations, or one species above another and hope to survive. We can no longer ignore that the earth is dying. We can no longer tolerate any form of injustice toward one another or towards the earth.

We humbly ask Friends to join together in a year of faithful discernment and action, and to share with one another what we have been led to be and to do in a world that desperately needs faithful leadership guided by God's transforming, powerful love. Let us trust together in the God who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the flowers in the field.

We especially ask you to follow the lead of people of color. It may help to begin with the Call to Action within the Outgoing Epistle of the 2020 Virtual Pre-Gathering of Friends of Color and Their Families. In the

2 <https://www.fgcquaker.org/news/outgoing-epistle-2020-virtual-pre-gathering-friends-color-and-their-families>

3 <https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/current-time/>

4 Elizabeth Holbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2014.

Epistle, Friends are given six specific queries. Sit with these queries. Listen deeply. We ask White Friends to undertake the work needed to recognize their own assumptions so that they may truly “see” the Friends of color among us, respect their journeys and their struggles, stand with them, and let them breathe.

Lord, we wait on your guidance. Open us to your will. Thank you for our many spiritual teachers throughout history. Let us be faithful to Your Teaching, Lord, as they were. Lead us to love one another, act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with You, and learn to live sustainably in peace. Let us discern together, whom you would have us be and what you would have us do.

Hence, our Call

At this critical time, the Earthcare Ministry and the Racial, Social and Economic Justice Committees invite Friends to a year of spiritual and intellectual discernment regarding social injustice, including racism and the plight of Mother Earth. We ask you to answer this Call, to discern actions that can address the challenges of injustice. We further call upon meetings, after suitable discernment, to share with others in our Yearly Meeting the actions they have taken and to bring to 2021 Sessions minutes describing recommended actions for our Yearly Meeting to take.

Let us take action together.

We understand that this is a large undertaking, but we call upon you to be part of NEYM’s Body of Action. There is joy and strength in taking action together.

They also will answer, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?” He will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.” (Matthew 25:44-45)

God, Creator, Inner Guide, Universal Source of Love, Spirit of Christ, please guide us in our spiritual discernment and in our actions. We join together as a community in that never-ending circle of seeking, and strive to be faithful to your guidance. We long to be ever open to your love.

Let us take action together.

Approved Nominating Slate

NOTE: The Nominating Slate was approved by the Permanent Board on July 11, 2020; it is presented here for information only.

Permanent Board (50)

2021

Allen, Kimberly (Durh)
Leuchak, Rebecca (Prov)
McCandless, Christopher (Burl)
Zwirner, Mary (Bhill)
Walkauskas, Bill (Nhav)

2022

Belcher, Travis (Mon)
Drayton, Darcy (Wear)
Forsythe, Hannah (Bhill)
Nortonsmith, Gina (Nham)
Smith, Sara (Con)
Szatkowski, Elizabeth (Port)

2023

Bishop, Peter (Nham)
Forsythe, Martin (Bhill)
Mair, Edward (Ames)
McCandless, Jean (Burl)
Taber, Will (Fpon)
Vargo, Thomas (Nham)

2024

Chase, Deana (West)
Gant, Christopher (Bhill)
Harrington, Ian (Cam)
Manning, Leslie (Durh)*
Reuthe, John (Vass)
Schwope, Martha (Well)

2025

Hanson, Beth (Wrly)
Wilson, Morgan (Fram)
Weinholtz, Donn (Hart)
Weinholtz, Diane (Hart)
Rein, Carole (Ndhor)

Archives & Historical Records (6)

2021

Schmidt, Macci (Nham)

2022

Cazden, Elizabeth (Prov)
Doyle, Thomas (Mtob)

2023

Quirk, Brian (Law)
Forsythe, Carol (Put)*
Crosby, Eileen (Mt Toby)

Board of Managers of Investments & Permanent Funds (10)

2021

Chicos, Roberta (Cam)
Spivey, Robb (Bruns)

2024
Philbrook, Erik (Well)

2022

Hackman, Matthew (Prov)
Malin, Kathy (Smith)*
Tierney, Joseph (Cam)

2025

McKnight, Jeanne (Well)
Taber, Shearman (Nham)

2023

Harrington, Ian (Cam)
Mair, Edward (Ames)

Development (currently under review)

2021	2022	2023
Chase, Deana (West)	_____	_____
Moyer, Patricia (Fpon)	_____	_____
Quoos, Thayer (Nhav)	_____	_____
Reuthe, John (Vass)	_____	_____

Earthcare Ministry (15)

2021	2022	2023
Gates, Stephen (Wfal)*	Marshall, Margaret (Nar)	Wallis, Timmon (Nham)
Stoner, Kimberly (NHav)	Melix, Gail (ESan)*	MacKenzie, Reb (QCUUn)
Lightsom, Frances (WFalP)	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Finance (15)

2021	2022	2023
Savery-Frederick, Carol (Hart)	_____	Forsythe, Hannah (Bhill)
_____	_____	Stern, Roland (Well)
_____	_____	_____

2024	2025
Maurer, Philip (Nham)	Drysdale, Robert Scott (Han)*
Sprogell, Sarah (Durh)	Olsen, Kathryn (ESan)
_____	_____

Treasurer: Robert Murray (Bhill)**Friends General Conference (15)**

2021	2022	2023
Yes, Eppchez (Nham)	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Friends United Meeting (12 Tri Reps, 9 appointed)

2022 (Triennial Reps)		
Blood, Peter (Mtob)	Olsen, Kathryn (Sand)*	_____
Collea, Beth (Dov)	Sheldon, Martha (Durh)	_____
Fogarty, Maggie (Dov)	Weiss, Fritz (Han)	_____

FUM General Board Representatives (3)

_____	Martin, Frederick (Bhill)	Tripp, Dawn (Alnk)
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Friends World Committee (12)

2021

Hopkins, Mary (Fpon), co-opt

Jorgenson, Chris (Cam)

Rodriguez, Yanire (Cam)

Woods, Greg (Cam)

2022

Hal Weaver (Well)

2023

Representatives: Judith Goldberger (Bhill)**Legacy Gift Committee (9)**

2021

Link, Mary (Mtob)*

Mair, Edward (Ames)

2022

Craig Jensen (Mon)

Kristna Evans (Durh)

2023

Gant, Sarah (Bhill)**Rockwood, Susan (Mid)*****Ministry and Counsel At-Large (currently under review)**

2021

Brokaw, Fran (Han)

Hough, Janet (Cobs)

MacArthur, Hugh (Han)

2022

Keefe-Perry, Callid (Fpon)

Olsen, Kathryn (Sand)

Anna Dulin (Vass)

2023

Clerk: Jeremiah Dickinson**Puente de Amigos (9)**

2021

Fogarty, Maggie (Dov)

Provencal-Fogarty, Mary (Dov)*

Smith, Jennifer (Con)

McManamy, Em (Prov)*

2022

Kay, Bruce (Stor)

Lindo, Richard (Fram)

Smith, Theresa (Mon)

Spicer, Honora (Bhill)

2023

Lopez, Felice (Fram)**Racial, Social, and Economic Justice (12)**

2021

Carey-Harper, Rachel (Matt)

Varner, James (Oron)

2022

Blanchard, Neil (Fram)

Dicranian, Diane (Midc)

Shoop, Nur (Dov)

2023

Morrill, Beth (Hart)***Sessions Committee (currently under review)**

2021

Haines, Christopher (Fpon)h

2022

Leuchak, Rebecca (Prov)*

2023

Youth Ministries (9)

2021

Heath, Harriet (Acad)

Woodrow, Honor (Fram)

2022

Dawson, Janet (Fram)*

Weiss, Fritz (Han)

2023

West, Kim (Camb)**Matchette, Abigail (Bur)****Sanchez-Eppler, Karen (Nham)**

Representatives to Other Friends Organizations**American Friends Service Committee Corp. (4)**

2021	2022	2023
Bennett, Dulany (Han)		<i>Rhodewalt, Scott (Nkin)</i>
Woodrow, Peter (Port)*	_____	

Friends Committee on National Legislation (6)

2021	2022	2023
Gorham, Charlotte (Nhav)	Weinholtz, Donn (Hart)	
Harrington, Ian (Cam)	_____	_____

Friends Peace Teams Project (3)

Shippen, Nancy (Fpon)	_____	_____
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Quaker Earthcare Witness (1)

Haines, Christopher (Fpon)		
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Note: Annual reports were accepted by Permanent Board on October 31, 2020.

Staff Reports

Accounts Manager

In these times of public upheaval and grief, the discernment of truth seems to have become more difficult, and more important, than ever. Anxious uncertainties around the behavior of the novel coronavirus, deep divisions in our national politics, and the valid anger and awe-inspiring demonstrations insisting that Black lives matter, all demand a threshing and a reassessment of whose truths we hear, when to wait and when to act despite uncertainty, and how those of us with privilege need to reexamine narratives that conceal systemic racism.

The foundation of my job involves verifying numbers, and there's a soothing, reassuring quality to that kind of work. Yet double-entry bookkeeping provides nothing but tautologies if the numbers are not anchored to outside realities, guided by clear goals, and illuminated by justice and compassion. In times of trouble our faith calls us to listen to the Light, even when its messages are difficult or its perspectives new.

Since I faced the financial uncertainties of a job transition and a new child in my own family last year, I have been feeling empathy for those facing financial hardship due to the pandemic—and those who have long faced it due to inequalities in our society. I have felt grateful to be part of a faith community that can help us examine, even if gradually and painfully, our role in the structural inequities of our society. And I have been excited to be part of an organization that was nimble enough as it faced the pandemic, to transform most of its operations in the space of a few short weeks, to begin meeting, worshipping and working “virtually,” and provide the networking and resources to support Friends throughout New England making the same shift.

The role of my job in moments of quick change is to provide steady clarity about finances that can enable Friends to face risks and shift plans. Such work continues, as it always does, and several projects are close to fruition that will provide more such clarity and steadiness. As we continue to face uncertainty in the coming year, I pray that as a community we will respond with grace and integrity, support each other and those in need around us, stand still in the Light as we discern truth, and then act with courage when the Spirit moves among us.

—FREDERICK MARTIN

Events Coordinator

It was the year of fire, the year of destruction, ...
It was the year of rebirth, the year of great sadness,
the year of pain and a year of joy.

...

It was the year everything changed.
—J. Michael Straczynski, *Babylon 5*

This is my third year with New England Yearly Meeting staff, and what a year it has been.

If what's past were prologue, this year I would be talking about how the third year of a big project or event is the year of mastery, the year I fully embrace the nuance and subtleties

of Sessions work, relying on the processes and foundations of the prior two years.

Yeah, about that.

This was the year everything changed. We made the decision to cancel the fall Living Faith gathering and redirect our energy for the spring. Things were going well and the team was clicking along. In January I had seen some news of a novel corona virus in China and started to think about planning for production disruptions in China. Okay, order supplies a little earlier. In February, there was more news of a virus. Something to keep an eye on.

As we sat on staff retreat the first few days of March, we could see the news of Italy's outbreak and wondered how that might affect our work. Okay, get more sanitizing wipes, eliminate the buffet at Living Faith in favor of food that has less risk of cross contamination. A week later the world stopped. Now, all these weeks and months later, we wonder how it will come back, if it will come back, and what a new normal looks like.

Although this might sound like the end of the story, it is, in fact the beginning of a different story, one without an ending as of now. I and the other staff have shaped our work to fit this new reality, we have joined together in tears, and prayer, and laughter. We have carved new work out of the uncertainty, and followed our ministries the best we have been able. As challenging as it has been at times, it was worth it. This was brought home to me in the words of Solomon Hsiang, director of Berkeley's Global Policy Laboratory:

“The last several months have been extraordinarily difficult, but through our individual sacrifices, people everywhere have each contributed to one of humanity's greatest collective achievements, I don't think any human endeavor has ever saved so many lives in such a short period of time. There have been huge personal costs to staying home and canceling events, but the data show that each day made a profound difference. By using science and cooperating, we changed the course of history.”

Although it is unknowable when we will be gathered together again in person, rest assured I too am ready and eager to work for that day and look forward to greeting you. Until then, I will be supporting Sessions and together-while-apart gatherings of the Yearly Meeting with the dual goals of keeping Friends safe and helping Friends stay connected. I will remember that my disappointment of not being with you all in Vermont is saving lives and making a difference.

In Love and Light,

—ELIZABETH HACALA

Friends Camp Director

For the camp committee to decide to cancel our 2020 sessions involved much waiting, listening, and discernment, but in the end it felt almost simple. After the public health situation developed this spring, we were not allowed another way forward by Maine state guidelines for summer camps. However, the mechanics of undoing the work of the last 9 months was both detail-oriented and heartbreaking for me. For two weeks in May, I communicated our decision with staff and families,

processed refunds and wrote donation thank-you letters, and updated our vendors. It felt as though I spent the entire year carefully weaving a tapestry for a beautiful summer, and in two weeks I ripped it all apart.

We also cancelled our volunteer work weekend, adult art camp, rental groups, and an epic reunion we had planned for August. I will spend much of this summer at camp, and the empty cabins are a painful reminder of exactly how much we have lost without a summer of campers: so many moments of joy, growth, and service will not be realized.

Shepherding our camp through this enormous challenge has involved creative thinking, new collaborations, hard conversations, learning new skills, and some difficult days. It has also made me more grateful than ever for the opportunity to work for a camp that means so much to so many people. I believe that our community's deep and meaningful connections to camp have been a supportive factor during these challenging months, even though those connections have been virtual.

I am proud of the relationships that Friends Camp has fostered with campers, their families, and staff members over the last several years. In total, our families chose to contribute almost 40% of their already paid deposits in a donation to camp. They are excited to participate in our two-week virtual program in July, and they are committed to returning to Friends Camp in the future. Our staff gathered together to support campers over our Instagram platform this spring, doing "daily takeovers" to connect with campers and alums during the tightest days of quarantine.

We cannot allow a summer without campers on our property become an excuse for disengaging from anti-racist work. A major focus for my summer and fall months is working with other camp directors to make sure that our camp programs are not just accepting of all, but that we are actively engaged in undoing the internal and external systems of white supremacy that exist for our organizations.

I am grateful to work closely with the other members of the NEYM staff, our maintenance director Jack Belyeu, our part-time assistant director Lauren Dennis, and members of the Friends Camp Committee. This COVID-19 pandemic will jeopardize the future of many camps, all over the country. Meanwhile, we are more aware than ever how much our children need community and the outdoors, and to listen to their inner teachers. Because Friends Camp exists within the supportive net of New England Yearly Meeting, it will be here for many years to come, serving more generations of campers. We don't know yet what the future will look like for camp, but we have the resources to weather the storm.

Respectfully submitted,

—ANNA HOPKINS

Friends Camp Committee

Friends, this is a supplemental report to Anna Hopkin's annual report. It goes without saying that this has been an extraordinary year. The Camp had been operating at near capacity the past couple of years. Reservations for this year were strong. Our financial health was also good up to the pandemic. We were building healthy reserves to buffer any unexpected expenses.

In early February, the Camp Committee and our sub-committees began meeting with concerns about the COVID-19 virus and its implications for summer camps. All the decisions

we made as a group were well seasoned, especially under the leadership of Anna Hopkins with support of Robb Spivey, Friends Camp Treasurer. Most meetings were attended with near 100% attendance over Zoom. We also formed a special Executive Council consisting of Anna Hopkins, Noah Merrill, Leslie Manning, Robb Spivey, and myself with support from Frederick Martin, Yearly Meeting Accounts Manager. That team tackled the financial distress that we knew was coming.

When the final decision was made to cancel this summer's camp, we were prepared. Our reserves were going to disappear, but we accepted that and worked on alternatives to stay afloat. I have never worked with such a dedicated, focused team as I have experienced over the past 6 months. That includes the Permanent Board, whose enormous support has helped us get through these tough times. Sometimes, we had to make decisions on short notice, trusting that the Permanent Board would support those decisions. Finally, I want to recognize the understanding and support of our campers' parents, many of whom have donated the deposits made for their children's camp session.

The next 18 months will be particularly challenging, as we do not know what the Maine CDC or the U.S. CDC will be mandating that will require additional funding, behavioral changes, or physical changes to the camp infrastructure. Camp will never be the same, but with your help we can make it better.

Faithfully submitted,

—JOHN REUTHE, CLERK

Junior Yearly Meeting & Junior High Yearly Meeting Coordinator

I am writing this mid-June, holding much love and care for the children, teens, and families of our Yearly Meeting whose experiences of 2020 have ranged from challenging to unimaginably hard and heartbreaking. I stare out of my home-office window every day, trying to "see" how to show them they are loved and cherished for who they are and who they are becoming, and to help sustain and grow their grounding in the Light. I am particularly concerned for our Black youth and families, and for our children and teens of color: for their wellbeing, their safety, and their sense of belonging. How can I, and we, be taking better care of them in this moment?

Anna Hopkins, Nia Thomas, Maggie Nelson, and I meet monthly for shared resources, accountability, and collaboration on ways to interrupt patterns of oppression in our youth programs. One aspect of nurturing and supporting young people's spiritual lives and faithfulness to the Inner Light's guidance is collectively growing our anti-racism and skills for discerning right action in the everyday. Are there ways that we can support parents, First-Day school teachers, and monthly meetings in this work? Can we listen for and learn from others, including many of our young people, who have more awareness and skills than those of us who are adults, teachers, and elders?

Five months ago I purchased a new NEYM retreat trailer and knew nothing of Slack, Zoom, Basecamp, Airtable, Mailchimp, or Google Forms. Then Covid-19 arrived. The outward tools of this ministry have changed dramatically since then. The blessings of the people and the Light in this community have not.

The seven in-person retreats for Junior Yearly Meeting (2nd- through 6th-graders) and Junior High Yearly Meeting (6th- through 8th-graders) before the pandemic were rich and well attended. Nia Thomas inspired me to try building retreats from goals and major program pieces for a more realistic and balanced schedule. We started having Choose Your Conversation topics in JHYM, to meet each attendee where they are rather than having “one size fits all” small-group plans. We welcomed first-timers, supported anxiety issues, helped families in crisis, and noticed ever-increasing stresses.

Since March 1st, we have had four virtual retreats (via Zoom, USPS, and cell phones) that participants said, “went better than expected and much better than nothing.” Attendance at these virtual retreats was as high, or higher, than our in-person gatherings, due to the elimination of travel issues, shorter time requirements, and the possibilities for meeting individual needs and social tolerances. It has been a gift to collaborate, brainstorm, and innovate with Maggie Nelson through this abrupt new chapter. I am also grateful to the rest of the NEYM staff who have been extraordinarily patient, supportive, and helpful.

In addition to the virtual retreats, we have been hosting activities, games, workshops, and “hangout times” multiple times a week for JYM and for JHYM. I write a bi-weekly emailed newsletter and host weekly parent conversations on Zoom with Harriet Heath. All of these are attempts to increase feelings of connection and care, and to remind us all of the joy, comfort, courage, and openings to Spirit we receive from our fellowship. We have received much support and appreciation for these efforts.

But they have not felt like enough. There are many whom we’re out of touch with—those with poor internet connections, little access to devices, personalities that don’t easily worship or make interpersonal connections on screens, and those “zoomed out” by the end of their virtual school days. How can we all find new ways to provide fellowship, support, pastoral care, and First-Day school teachings to our youth?

Many Friends, children especially, do not feel or experience virtual worship the same as when they are physically present. Worship is something that gets easier for all of us with practice (and grace). As this time stretches on, we need to find ways to help our children practice waiting, centering, being in worship—acknowledging that what works for adults may not work for them.

I am striving to listen for, and step into—with joy, prayer, and loving trust—new ways of being joined together by the Spirit that nurtures the Light within, encouraging it to shine more fully and justly into the world around us. I am grateful for your guidance, prayers, teaching, support, and collaboration.

—GRETCHEN BAKER-SMITH

Office Manager

Annual Sessions is a stressful time for the Office Manager (as well as for others) but also has its rewards. When it became clear that we couldn’t meet in person this year, I realized all that I will be missing: the loyal Friends who help load and unload the U-Haul of office equipment and supplies; latte from the Bookstore, books from the Bookstore, gifts, chocolate, and crafts from the Bookstore; the camaraderie among staff and volunteers; visiting with Friends in the dining hall and relaxing with Friends in the dormitory; greeting familiar faces

among the college staff; joining the Junior High program for arts and crafts. Sessions is difficult and exhausting for me, but is also a time to reconnect with Friends I rarely see at other times of the year, to hear new voices, and to simply enjoy being surrounded by my faith community. (Then there’s also escaping to the Birdseye Café, the General Store, and the Blue Cat Bistro.)

I am still learning how to live in the midst of a pandemic, a reality that shifts all the time. For the first few weeks, when I thought we’d get back to “real life” relatively quickly, I was simply waiting, passing the time. Now I know that this is real life and I need to establish new routines and find ways to adapt to the changes in my job tasks and how I perform them.

At this time last year, I was helping to build a new website while continuing to maintain the old one, reviewing Sessions registrations, working on the advance documents for Sessions and, of course, writing my annual report. (By the way, recordings from the prior five Annual Sessions are now podcasts! Look for *Then I Heard a Voice* on Spotify.)

Now, in mid-June, we are preparing for Sessions in an entirely new form. As the planning team does its work, I don’t yet know exactly what I will be doing in the coming days and weeks. Living in this time of uncertainty is not comfortable. At loose ends, I wait to discover what shape the advance documents will take. What will registration look like? Amid all the tasks that don’t need to be done, what are the new tasks we haven’t thought of yet?

It’s difficult to remember what the months before the pandemic were like. The staff met weekly in Worcester for worship, check-ins, and planning. The last time I touched another human being was the last day of our staff retreat, March 5. We purchased some shelving for retreat supplies to make them easier to keep organized. I recycled some old computer equipment, resurrected an old printer, made some improvements and updates to the database.

The most important development was our new website going live—a website which now offers many pandemic-related resources, from pastoral care and supporting youth and families, to technology (like many of you, I’ve developed more familiarity with Zoom fairly quickly), to help for meetings beginning to plan for reopening meetinghouses.

I’ve been delighted to see the ways that meetings have continued in community despite social distancing, using Zoom for coffee houses, potlucks, and art shows as well as meeting for worship. I am in awe of the creativity shown by Gretchen Baker-Smith and Maggie Nelson as they found new ways of bringing Junior and Junior High Yearly Meetings and Young Friends together.

I’m looking forward to a new “normal”: one in which people care for one another, for strangers as well as a friends, families, and coworkers, and also for our planet; one in which healthcare is provided as a right, not a privilege; one in which the barriers that keep too many people from fully participating in and contributing to society are finally stripped away, bringing the Blessed Community closer to lived reality.

—SARA HUBNER

Quaker Practice & Leadership Facilitator

Last year at our Annual Sessions, the staff stood on stage together for a collective report, each lifting up an object that represented our role and contribution. At that time, I had recently begun serving in my new position as Quaker Practice

and Leadership Facilitator and I spoke of being like the zoom in/zoom out feature on a digital map, allowing the navigator to move between the big picture and a detailed, up-close view. Another year into this role now, that image still resonates; my work has involved carefully integrating many specific events and efforts into the whole.

Following Sessions, I sprinted into my newly assigned work, making sure the various commitments that the Yearly Meeting made around inclusive leadership development had a clear path forward. For more details on those efforts, see my separate report with the Permanent Board annual report.

In the early fall, it was a joy to contribute to our website redesign, specifically the “Strengthen Your Local Meeting” section. Our goal was to post the most relevant and readily applicable resources to support Friends in their service to their meeting community. Many of the resources posted are sample materials from local meetings. Each time I hear from a Friend who was able to use neym.org to strengthen their meeting or make their own service more manageable, I am deeply grateful for this living, evolving resource where our shared wisdom can be so well used.

This winter was a rich time with a number of highlights. At the beginning of the new year, the Young Adult Friends program returned again to the beautiful and cozy Woolman Hill for our annual midwinter retreat. Co-coordinating with the grounded and grounding Philip Maurer, the theme we explored with 40 participants was “Knowing and Not Knowing: Making-Space for Trust and Uncertainty.” Were we subconsciously preparing for the conditions ahead?

In January and February, I facilitated a five-part webinar series on multiage inclusion in local meetings, drawing on the rich content of New York Friend Emily Provance’s blog. Even though I had not yet heard of the coronavirus, this online course was “hybrid,” inviting teams from local meetings to participate gathered in person, connecting with other teams from across the region using Zoom. Nine local meetings participated in the series and there was such genuine glee in the participants’ faces as they saw clusters of Friends from across the New England states gathered in each other’s living rooms for lively conversation and co-creation.

On leap day, as hand sanitizer was beginning to become scarce but in-person gatherings were still permitted, over 50 Friends gathered at Mt Toby (MA) Meeting for a “Meeting Care Day,” which featured two workshops focused on service within our meetings, one on pastoral care and the other on nurturing gifts/best practices in nominating. The large circle we made as participants gathered for grace before lunch that day was a vivid reminder that none of us is alone in our service.

In March, I had been preparing to support a training for clerks and recording clerks, as well as some wonderful workshops for our next Living Faith gathering, when the pandemic arrived. Pivoting swiftly, the primary focus of our shared work became responding to the immediate needs of local meetings in the wake of covid-19. Over the last three months, gathering over Zoom with local meeting leaders on Tuesday evenings for prayer, updates, and mutual support has been a steadying reminder of our collective resilience.

It always seems fitting to close these annual reports with gratitude. The truest joy in this work for me is finding the collaborative spaces where others’ gifts and my own can fit together and make a meaningful contribution. Stepping into a shared vision, there are hundreds of Friends I have been able

to connect, converse, co-create and serve with this year in big and small ways. You each shine so brightly. You continually re-affirm the sweet truth that we have the gifts we need to do the work God leads us to.

—NIADWYNWEN THOMAS

Young Friends Events Organizer

Dear Friends,

In my work caring for Young Friends, questioning how we gather was not new to me or our group as a whole when the pandemic hit about halfway through our retreat year, and this has given us some ground to stand on when we seemed to lose every way of being together we had previously known. Each year in my time spent volunteering for and then leading this program, we had made an effort as a community to get closer to the center of our purpose as it’s become clear that old ways of gathering and caring for youth were no longer working. That work had been a gradual process, and the pandemic turned it into an immediate one.

Much of the newness of the first half of this year came from efforts to better respond to the needs of teens today and what is currently alive for our group of youth. We began this year with one fewer retreat than the previous year, responding to teens’ increasingly busy schedules and demanding school workload. We were blessed with the arrival of quite a few new Young Friends from Friends Camp and Junior High Yearly Meeting, many of whom have become permanent fixtures of our group—a happy triumph after two years of intentional relationship-building between me and JHYM and between rising 8th graders and Young Friends. We had our smallest group in recent memory for our annual Midwinter retreat at Woolman Hill, with many regular members of the community missing, reinforcing the need to question whether our beloved weekend retreats were working for everyone as I began to look towards our 2020–2021 retreat year.

COVID-19 quickly shifted this questioning to the most basic elements of the Young Friends program as we lost the ability to gather in person for retreats. What is most important that we do when we’re together? What do Young Friends need from togetherness, right now? What role can this program play in the lives of teenagers during a pandemic that is marked by grief and loneliness? And is it possible to do this remotely, on Zoom and off-screen? The most important question my coworkers and I asked repeatedly is why do we gather?

This question is allowing me and the youth workers in our community to constantly shift how we’re led to nurture the youth of our Yearly Meeting, because it puts our core purpose as a program first, so that we can then ask how we gather. Asking why allows us to discover, over and over, what guides us: Young Friends’ need to belong, their need to grow and experience transformation, their need to both give and receive love and care, and their need to explore their role in building the beloved community. And then, from there, we have discovered so many ways of helping to make this happen as a program, even remotely, even over Zoom or on the phone or in an email or a letter. I am still discovering these ways, and they will continue to change as we move into our next year together.

In service and with love,

—MAGGIE NELSON

Committee and Board Reports

Permanent Board

The Permanent Board serves as the governance body for New England Quakers and has met at least seven times to do the business of Friends given to us at Sessions or to carry on the work of all of us between our annual gatherings. We serve from all of our Quarters and bring a variety of skills and gifts to our process of discernment, decision and deliverables. We approach our work as integral to supporting the life of the Spirit among us; both in support of our local faith communities and meetings, and in our witness to the wider world. We are held in this work by the love and support of all of you, to whom we are accountable.

As with any institution, there are regular elements of administrative process, there are special projects requiring our attention and there are opportunities to live more fully into our purpose. This year, as we have lived it, offered all three.

As I write this, we have celebrated closing out last fiscal year with a surplus, heard recommendations from the Reparations (for Native Americans) Working Group, approved the re-formatting of our Annual Sessions to an on-line gathering, approved Articles of Association and are seeking more, and more faithful ways to build up the realm of G!d in our own lives and neighborhoods. We are reminded that we live in Kairos, G!d's time, and yet we feel the "fierce urgency of now" where we are called to "find new ways to peace and justice" (from Beyond Vietnam Speech, M.L. King, 1967).

In addition to our administrative responsibilities, we attend to the spiritual needs of our beloved community, and as requested by Sessions 2019, have formed a "Ministry and Spiritual Life Working Group" to look at all the aspects of our worshipping body and to make recommendations for uplifting, nurturing and supporting ministry and the gifts of the Spirit in our midst. We ask you to hold them in the Light as their discernment moves forward.

This work, and so much else of what we do is inspired by and results from the Report of the Clerking Structures and Practices Working Group, Minute 2019-46, approved at last year's Sessions. I urge you to re-read it as we gather together this year, so that we may hold ourselves accountable for the commitments we made. In the spirit of practicing what we preach, we invited our Challenging White Supremacy Working Group to present to our February meeting an abbreviated version of their workshop. I urge you to take up their invitation to offer it to your meeting, as well.

We are a body of Friends seeking to hear and follow G!d's will for ourselves and this community. We ask for your prayers, your guidance and your engagement. Especially during these novel times, we feel a renewed commitment to the work of transformation, the promise of G!d's power in our lives and the possibilities of living fully into a world of peace, justice and healing.

—LESLIE MANNING, CLERK

Ad Hoc Working Group on Challenging White Supremacy

In lieu of a standard annual report to Sessions, some of us on the Challenging White Supremacy workgroup of Permanent Board have elected to share personal reflections. In terms of

our work within the Yearly Meeting, back in January we were joyously heartened by a meeting called by Coordinating and Advisory convening the clerks of Racial Social and Economic Justice (RSEJ), Challenging White Supremacy (CWS), and Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness (NPOFF). This was an intimate as well as practical sharing of hearts and works that helped to knit us together in our shared effort. This was shortly followed in February by a very well-attended anti-racism training for Yearly Meeting Friends, initiated by NPOFF and planned and co-lead by NPOFF, RSEJ and CWS. And then the Coronavirus pandemic struck, and then, and then, and then... Our hearts are broken and we are dismayed. Here are our words.

—FRAN BROKAW AND SUSAN DAVIES, CO-CLERKS

From Fran Brokaw, Hanover Friends Meeting

"We never know for what we are being prepared." A friend said this to me recently, and it echoes what my spiritual director told me a few months ago: "You are being prepared. It will become clear." The year 2020 has been a time of learning, loneliness, and yearning, all in the context of uncertainty of my leading. Not that my ministry would change focus—I am clear that antiracism is my work both personally and in the world—but how that should be manifest and carried into the life among and beyond my front door has not been clear at all.

Ongoing work with Dr. Amanda Kemp (Lancaster, PA, Friends Meeting), focusing on skills of facilitating conversations about race, helps keep me grounded. Work with Dr. Melchor Hall (Fielding University) opened my eyes to how my financial comfort is rooted in stolen land and stolen labor, and challenges me to make reparations in new ways. My role on the board of Pendle Hill provides me with openings to work with a beloved Quaker institution which is newly committed to antiracism and grappling with the white supremacy culture that is woven throughout the Religious Society of Friends. In our Yearly Meeting, I am committed to the Challenging White Supremacy Working Group, though I am stepping away from my role as co-clerk.

Hanover Friends Meeting and New England Yearly Meeting are my spiritual home. We all have work to do, which will look different for each of us. It is not easy and in fact it is often painful. Going solo is not an option! I look forward to walking with you as we lift each other up on this journey.

In love and solidarity, Fran

From Susan Davies, Vassalboro Friends Meeting

To everyone who is or ever has been oppressed, marginalized, or discarded: The sorrow I feel is a thimbleful to your ocean of sorrow and pain. I am sorry.

- "Racism is a spiritual malformation."—Ruby Sales
- "Human nature is such that it cannot remain unharmed by praise."—John Climacus

From the vantage point of my morass within the domination culture I see how very far out of kinship I am with brutalized, oppressed, and marginalized people of every stripe. I look on with dismay, distress, and righteous yearning as tens of thousands take it to the streets. I join them, yet know the penance I owe must cost me much more. Someone offers in worship, "It feels like an apocalypse."

Apocalypse (originally): to reveal; an unveiling of things not previously known, and which could not be known, apart from the unveiling.

My eyes widen at the prophetic clarity of this apocalyptic unveiling and the widespread collective epiphany, yet my mind and my actions are muddled and inadequate. I realize with dread I have a secret requirement that my involvement must not disrupt my own, and others good opinion of me. It would surely be disrupted by admitting the truth of my complicity and complacency, privilege hoarding, and lukewarm-ness wouldn't it? I know I have been harmed by praise—my own and that of others—that always reassures me I'm "good." On the surface I preen and relax in the praise, yet underneath I am uneasy and anxious in the knowledge of the impenetrable shield that praise erects against the experience of true remorse. Isn't remorse illogical and unnecessary when one has firmly established one's identity as a "good" Quaker?

There is a type of shame that shrinks and oppresses the human spirit and makes us small and weak. That shame is imposed as an act of control and manipulation by domination culture. But the secret places in the heart know the true and necessary spiritual purpose of shame and contrition: the only path to Right Relationship, the great levelers, the tender shoots that can grow into true humility. In the place of Holy Shame I find my true spiritual condition as a fallen, humble learner hauling myself out of my "spiritual malformation ditch." And with that, God willing, a doorway into vulnerability, self-forgiveness, and true kinship with the oppressed might open.

From Jeremiah Dickinson

In this time of COVID-19 and physical distancing, I have remembered the words of Xinef Afriam from Sunday morning two Sessions ago. He spoke of the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly and the imaginal cells that initiate that transformation. The caterpillar, with no knowledge what will be, clings to what it knows, apparently resisting at a cellular level as long as possible before the inevitable takes place.

I have all too much in common with that caterpillar. I am called to transformation and I resist. Can I take advantage of this virus-initiated chrysalis to listen more fully to Spirit? Can I allow the imaginal cells of my faith the space in my heart to more fully change into who God would have me be?

Much is different in our world as a result of COVID-19 and its health-mandated adaptations. And yet, very much is the same. Heartened as I am by the public outcry at recent events, I feel I am called to so much more. I am called to truly let in the reality of life for persons of color in America. I am called to admit the seeds of that reality in my own heart. I am called to acknowledge the support for that reality in my own lifestyle and privilege. I am called to transformation, for myself and for our world.

And as I seek to let in and admit and acknowledge within myself, I seek to join with others for support and encouragement and challenge. I think imaginal cells work best in groups.

From Carole Rein, North Shore Friends Meeting

More protests are happening today and Wednesday on the North Shore and I will be present. For yesterday, when I arrived in Gloucester, seeing so many people and so many signs made me weep with joy, that so many were engaged so strongly. People were spread out over an extended length,

some in family clusters, almost all wearing masks. They were also gathered on other sides of the intersection, recognizing the need to distance. My friend and I opted to join towards the far end, in a bit of space just behind the main line. I didn't feel crowded.

My good husband, though not a protester himself, consented to make signs for us (I did the printing), which were clear and easy to hold.

The cars passing matched our enthusiasm with their horns blowing and signs waving. On my way in, I stopped a police officer and thanked him for his protection. I also spoke with a man of color and said, crying, "This is for you! All of this is for you!" He thanked us and asked if he could take a picture with us. We gladly consented.

I ended with a mix of elation that so many were involved, but deep sadness that our country is in this condition that has gone on for far too many years. I appreciate this from the ACLU: "The police's main job in a protest is to protect your right to protest and to de-escalate any threat of violence." Sometimes we may need to remind them.

From Diana White, Portland Friends Meeting

I cannot participate in the protests and actions that are going on. I feel constrained at a time that I would like to add my voice. I plan to distribute this document to my networks and family in the hopes that I can make a small contribution to the dismantling of the structures of white privilege.

African Americans have a long tradition of sororities and fraternities. The organizations served as networks when travel, finding jobs, and finding housing were difficult. They are a major resource for college educated black men and women. I was inducted into Chi Eta Phi, the national nursing sorority, when I taught at Tuskegee. My sorority sisters have been a major support for me during my illness even though I am here and they are in Alabama. They take seriously their vows to support each other.

I am sending the document I have written to the sorority chapter president in Tuskegee and telling her to distribute it as she sees fit. I am a rare white voice in the sorority and this may be of interest to them. I will include an explanatory note about the intended audience, and about Quakers—who we are, and that we are white people in this country who are rarely indigent. I will explain that Quakers are "good people" who have trouble seeing our privilege because our intentions are good. Many Blessings, Diana

From Mary Zwirner, Beacon Hill Friends Meeting

I struggle to stay centered on my belief that the individual conversions of our hearts is the first step to fundamental change in our society, in which systemic racism is so deeply embedded. It is not a tiny or insignificant step and yet it feels like a weak response next to the overwhelming damage, pain, and hurt accumulated over the past 400 years in our country. I am grateful for all the experiences I have had with people of color, including indigenous peoples, over the years in my everyday work as a health care provider. It has helped me to confront my own bias and to look squarely at the injustices in our system which others have not had the advantage of seeing. I pray that I can build on that experience to help me and others in the process of converting our hearts. I have faith that way will open to know the bigger steps we can take over time to knock down that huge wall of pain and hurt in which we all

have been complicit in building. For now I must be responsible for changing what I can.

Progress Report on New England Quakers' Commitment to Inclusive Leadership Development

As Friends, we seek to heed the leadings of the Spirit, to support one another in living faithfully, and to co-create a world that better reflects God's peaceful and just vision for all of creation. A central way we live this faith is by tending to the gifts we have been given, individually and collectively. When our gifts are nurtured, faithfulness is encouraged and our ministry and movement thrives.

Last August at Sessions we identified some of the specific barriers to our current flourishing, ways that stagnation and unexamined bias have restricted us. Friends approved a large number of recommendations related to our long-term commitment to inclusive leadership development, to eliminate barriers to service and to nurture everyone's gifts (see last year's report on page 49 of the 2019 Minute Book [<https://neym.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/2019%20Minute%20Book.pdf>]). In order to ensure that we would not stall in moving forward with these commitments, I was charged by Sessions with sharing the recommendations and relevant context with the responsible parties and for providing a progress report this year. Towards that end, I share the following:

Progress made

Overall, many of the specific tasks outlined in the recommendations have been accomplished or significantly moved forward. Here are some highlights:

- This fall, as part of the funding priorities process, the Permanent Board approved allocating funding and staff support for nominating consultation (see below about Meeting Care Day) as well as expanding childcare and childcare reimbursement for all committee meetings.
- With input from Ministry and Counsel, Coordinating and Advisory (C&A) has established a working group to explore how the Yearly Meeting supports ministry and spiritual life, including a re-examination of the leadership roles in these areas. This working group, under the care of Permanent Board and clerked by Sarah Gant, has been meeting since January. This working group was consulted in the revision of the position description for the role of Ministry and Counsel clerk and expects to bring recommendations to Permanent Board this fall for how the Yearly Meeting can best support ministry and spiritual life (their report follows this). Coming out of extended conversation with C&A, the Presiding Clerk has revised the written materials for shepherds of the process of reviewing committee purposes and procedures, to clarify C&A's role in that process and the role of Yearly Meeting committees in supporting the priorities of the Yearly Meeting.
- The Nominating Committee, Internal Nominating Committee, and Clerk's Table Nominating committee have all had conversations clarifying best practices for their work such as affirmative approaches to invite individuals into service with greater awareness of potential barriers and the supports and flexibility available for various roles, requiring or encouraging a formal clearness process and support committees where appropriate, grounding each nomination in a Friends' gifts, and being clear about expectations for service.
- Bringing together clerks of the Nominating Committee, Internal Nominating, and Clerks Table Nominating (as well as myself, the Presiding Clerk, clerk of Permanent Board, and Yearly Meeting Secretary), there have been initial meetings about the "big picture" of Yearly Meeting's nominating work and how that work can be better aligned with our vision of inclusive leadership development and better coordinated within a single nominating stream in order to best foster leadership development. C&A has affirmed its commitment to continuing this work of alignment and integration.
- The Permanent Board has begun the work of conducting exit interviews for out-going leaders on a limited basis.
- More than 20 Friends participated in a Yearly-Meeting-sponsored clerks training in the fall. A spring training for clerks and recording clerks was planned, but canceled because of the pandemic. We are currently planning for a fall 2020 and spring 2021 virtual training for clerks and recording clerks.
- The job description for the role of Treasurer has been revised to limit travel expectations and make the role more manageable, in particular by focusing on oversight and reporting as opposed to implementation of policy.
- More than 30 Friends from 18 meetings participated in the "Best Practices in Nominating" workshop held as part of Meeting Care Day on February 29 at Mount Toby (MA) Meeting. This workshop, facilitated by Jackie Stillwell, was a key opportunity to encourage a culture of noticing, naming, and nurturing gifts at local meetings.
- The Office Manager, Events Coordinator, Presiding Clerk, Yearly Meeting Secretary, and I revised the tone and content of the committee clerk's orientation to increase the focus on cross-Yearly-Meeting teamwork and leadership development.
- In the redesign of the new website, care has been taken to improve the content and visibility of materials aimed at supporting those serving in leadership roles, including financial stewards/treasurers, clerks, and recording clerks.
- The Office Manager, Yearly Meeting Secretary, Emily Provance ([15th Street Friends Meeting, NYYM] who is working via contract), and I have created resources to support more Friends in contributing effectively to Yearly Meeting communication channels (for example, a guide on writing for the email newsletter). This is one way we can explicitly teach a much-needed skill rather than relying on Friends who already have the writing skills we seek.
- This fall, the staff and Living Faith planning committee engaged in ongoing conversations about maintaining realistic timelines and systems for staff-volunteer partnership for those events.
- Care was taken in the design of Home Groups for Sessions to increase training of facilitators as well as opportunities for mentorship.
- This spring, weekly calls with local meeting leaders have created an active peer circle where mutual support, informal mentorship, and skill-building can happen.
- As of writing this, a new working group is forming under the care of Permanent Board to explore and recommend how the Yearly Meeting might more robustly

reduce financial barriers to service for our key leadership roles, including considering the use of stipends.

Areas that require continued commitment in the coming year

There are some specific commitments we have made where work clearly still needs to be done. I am hopeful that the new working group will be able to help chart a path forward towards further reducing financial barriers to service. I believe the process of consolidating our nominating committees into a coordinated stream will continue this year. I am encouraged by the progress of the Ministry and Spiritual Life Working Group. I look forward to continuing to work with our staff and nominators to explore how we can further reduce the administrative load on our volunteer leaders and continue to create meaningful and flexible opportunities for service. I will continue to support and lead efforts to offer feedback, accountability, training, and appreciation for all who serve.

So much has moved forward this year, yet we must remember that the work of creating a healthy Society where all of our gifts are nurtured and shared freely is never-ending. This work happens not just within our committees and formal structures but within all of our relationships. We each have a role to play in strengthening a culture of inclusive leadership development among Friends.

In the report that I shared on behalf of the Clerking Structures and Practices Working Group last year, we assigned a lot of work to those serving in formal nominating roles because these are the Friends whose function most directly relates to the surface level of leadership development. It is clear to me that the Friends now serving on our nominating committees have our vision of inclusive leadership as their guide, and yet I know that there can only be vitality within the nominating function when there is health in the body overall. Gifts can only be nurtured and released within the context of relationships where individuals are seen, trust is built, and change is possible. None of us should see the work of growing leaders as someone else's work. Over the coming year, I invite you each to reflect and regularly respond (in spirit and in action) to the following queries:

- *Whose gifts are you nurturing? Whose gifts might you be overlooking?*
- *How are you relating to conflict in a way that makes space for transformation?*
- *What commitments are you called to prioritize at this time? What must you say "no" to or prune away to make space for your "yes"?*
- *How might you empower others? What is a skill or practice that you can make more explicit and accessible for others?*
- *What anti-racist practices are you committed to? Where do you see opportunities to intentionally move away from white supremacy culture and move towards transformational culture?*
- *What leadership practices are you modeling and teaching? What leadership practices are you adapting and experimenting with?*
- *Are you regularly offering constructive, clear, and kind feedback to Friends serving in leadership roles? Are you regularly inviting feedback on your service?*
- *How are you expressing your gratitude for others' gifts and service?*

—NIADWYNWEN THOMAS

Ministry and Spiritual Life Working Group

The clerk of Permanent Board, in consultation with the presiding clerk and Coordinating and Advisory committee, named the four members of Permanent Board's Ministry and Spiritual Life Working Group on 21 December 2019. Together with Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting secretary, and Nia Thomas, quaker practice and leadership facilitator, we began to meet every two weeks, starting on 9 January 2020.

Our charge, arising from Permanent Board Minute 2019-7.9, is "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." The working group was asked to submit its final report to Permanent Board's 16 May meeting, prior to Sessions 2020.

Through our meetings in January, February and early March we read and considered decades of NEYM Ministry and Counsel (M&C) minutes and reports, and weighed conversations with past clerks and members of M&C, seeking the advice of the current clerk of M&C and its membership. In early March we completed a draft analysis of the state of ministry among us and recommendations toward nurturing, uplifting and supporting ministry going forward.

The critical next step before submitting our work to Permanent Board was to offer the draft document to ministers and elders among us, inviting them into conversations to discern the good order (or not) of our recommendations. Our 19 March meeting was scheduled to finalize this next step of work. However, given the emergent pandemic, it was clear to us when we gathered that to ask ministers and elders for their time on this matter was not at all in good order; the energies of these Friends needed to be focused on the work that they do—actively caring for our spiritual health and communion. We could not ask either for their time to focus on our document or to sit for conversations. We were in unity to "pause" our work until the upheaval of the pandemic had settled.

The working group also saw that in this unprecedented time the very structures of our ministry and connection were cracking open and finding new and fruitful avenues of expression. We needed to pause to fully observe what lessons might be learned. What, learned in crisis, might serve us well in less taxing times?

Now, with the upheaval of the pandemic still impacting our lives and ministry, is added social upheaval demanding long overdue racial justice and the extirpation of our nation's foundational systems of white supremacy. How shall we proceed when our longstanding ways of discernment are not fully available to us? How can we not proceed when the need for progress is so important?

And so, when the working group met in May, we were in unity that our work needed to move forward; that we would begin to schedule calls with our ministers and elders to further the discernment of the working group; and that, God willing, we would bring our report to Permanent Board in the fall of 2020.

—SARAH GANT (BEACON HILL), CLERK

Archives & Historical Records

The committee focused the first part of the year on hiring a consulting outreach archivist. The committee received 10 applications for this position. We then interviewed three strong candidates. We were pleased to find Elise Riley, a recent graduate of Simmons and resident of Beacon Hill Friends House, for this work. We look forward to working with her to meet the needs of monthly and quarterly meetings and to ensure that all know how to submit records to the Archives at the Special Collections and University Archives at UMass, Amherst. This work has begun more slowly than expected given the restrictions introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The committee prepared a draft section for the revised Faith and Practice on meeting records. The committee has recently been engaged with working with Sara Hubner on some changes to the new web design to make the content centered on ease of access for those coming to the site for information about the current location and content of the Archives as well as what should be submitted to the Archives and how a meeting makes those gifts to the Archive.

We are also saddened to learn of the death of Robert Cox, Director of Special Collections and University Archives, on May 11th. We look forward to establishing a strong working relationship with the new steward of the New England Yearly Meeting Collection at SCUA.

—CAROL FORSYTHE, CLERK

Board of Managers of Investments & Permanent Funds

In the midst of the appearance of the COVID-19 virus and the resultant financial uncertainty, the Board of Managers of Investments and Permanent Funds presents its 2020 Annual Report to New England Yearly Meeting. Over the first three quarters (Apr–Dec '19) of our fiscal year (FY), the Pooled Funds showed modest gains, which were largely overcome by the sudden market downturn in the 4th quarter (Jan–Mar '20). However, due to defensive measures taken by our financial managers, the deBurlo Group, the losses were less than that of the market as a whole.

In FY20, ending March 31, 2020, annual income distributed to constituents from the Pooled Funds was \$0.177424 per unit, paid in quarterly installments, which was a return of 3.74%. The unit value fell from \$4.742263 to \$4.569814, a decrease of 3.64%. When combined with the distributions, this resulted in a total return of 0.10% for FY20. A history of the performance of the Pooled Funds, including income and capital appreciation is provided at <https://neym.org/committees/board-managers>.

Because the income distribution is based on a 3-year average of unit value, the distribution for FY2021 (April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021) will increase slightly, \$0.183142 per unit. It will be paid at a rate of \$0.0457857 per unit each quarter.

As of March 31, 2020, the total market value of the Pooled Funds was \$10,837,334, with 50 separate constituent accounts. This was a decrease of \$84,245 (0.76%) over the total value of \$11,154,951 in 2019. The total of the quarterly distributions to our constituents was \$418,621. This year the deposits into the fund exceeded the withdrawals by \$84,860.

Expenses during the fiscal year ended on March 31, 2020, amounted to \$88,437, or 0.79% of the value of the fund at

the beginning of the year. These expenses are generally lower than comparable investment vehicles.

For the benefit of the constituents, the Board of Managers manages the portfolio to provide income for our constituents and a modest growth in the value of the investment. The Board achieves this by investing in companies whose businesses are aligned with Quaker values. The Board seeks companies that are making a positive contribution to the world's need for goods and services and are providing work in a healthy, equal-opportunity environment. Furthermore, The Board of Managers avoids investments that are inconsistent with Friends' testimonies, including companies that depend upon war materials, alcoholic beverages, tobacco or gambling, and companies that conduct unfair employment practices or pollute the environment. The policies and procedures are described in the Board of Manager Investment Guidelines & Procedures page which is available online at: <https://neym.org/board-managers-investment-guidelines-procedures>.

The Board of Managers reviews each company based on these principles before adding it to the Approved List. In addition, the Board follows a review process which is intended to insure harmony throughout the full lifespan of our investment in any company. Stock holdings (including preferred stocks) held in the portfolio will be reviewed by sector in a cycle, so that all holdings are rescreened on a triennial basis after initial inclusion on the Approved List. The Board remains committed to investing a portion of the Pooled Funds in community developments. Currently, the Pooled Funds community investments amount to approximately 3% of the total portfolio.

Yours in the Light,

—SHEARMAN TABER, YEARLY MEETING TREASURER

Coordinating and Advisory

I sometimes feel that Coordinating and Advisory is a hidden committee. Friends who are not intimately familiar with the inner workings of NEYM are often unaware of this body. The committee is made up of ex-officio individuals serving in leadership positions: the Yearly Meeting Secretary, the Presiding Clerk, the clerk of Permanent Board, the clerk of Ministry and Counsel, the Treasurer, the clerk of Finance, the clerk of Nominating, and the supervisor to the Yearly Meeting Secretary. Each individual brings a slightly different perspective on the condition and the needs of the Yearly Meeting. In our monthly (weekly during the COVID crisis) meetings we share both specifics of what work we are carrying, and general concerns, and are able to coordinate the work, advise each other, and at times make recommendations to the decision-making bodies of the Yearly Meeting.

In addition to a few set responsibilities (shepherding the financial priorities process, and the Purpose and Procedure review), the greater portion of our work is consideration of concerns that might benefit from our focus. This year we organized a consultation with the committees and working groups concerned with racial justice, hoping to enable greater mutual understanding, and alignment of work. We organized a consultation with the various nominating committees, again hoping to facilitate better coordination of their efforts. And we have given feedback to an ongoing process looking at a restructuring of the personnel committee. This year, much of our

work was informed by the conclusions of the Clerking Structures Working Group which reported to last year's Sessions.

Certainly the biggest concern for us this year has been the impact of COVID-19 on Friends in New England. As we began to realize the breadth of effects of the pandemic, C&A began to meet weekly, rather than monthly, in order to consider what we might do to support Friends across New England, and to support the staff in the work they were engaging in. After some weeks, it became clear that our annual gathering was in jeopardy, and we began to ask, "How do we make this decision, when do we need to make it, and who has the authority to cancel Sessions?" As more projections of the scope and duration of the epidemic came in, we became clear to recommend that Permanent Board have a called meeting to consider the question. PB, as you will be aware, concurred—cancelling in-person Sessions and approving a small planning team to engage with what online Sessions might look like.

I share these details in part so friends will know how the decision was arrived at, but also to give some insight into why this committee exists and how we work. While the presence of key leadership positions provides a valuable overview of the concerns and the condition of the Yearly Meeting, the trust and mutual support that we develop are key to our work.

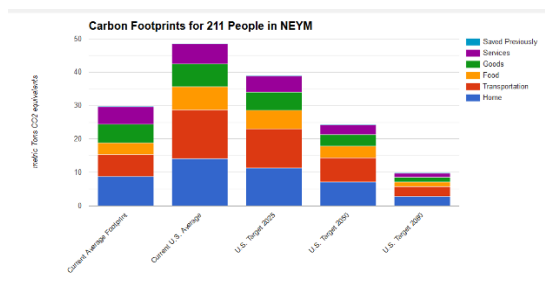
—BRUCE NEUMANN, PRESIDING CLERK

Earthcare Ministry

Earthcare Ministry Committee (EMC) has been focused this year on helping Friends in our Yearly Meeting take action on the Climate Crisis.

Sessions 2019. We began by erecting a white tent on the green at Castleton University, where, flanked by the electric bike that one of our members rode to Sessions from the Boston area, we talked with attendees about earth care, offered ideas on vegan cooking, and just enjoyed being outdoors together. During our report, we showed two inspiring videos of children in NEYM talking about the climate crisis—and what adults can do about it. We also shared the results of the first year of Friends' selecting ways to reduce their carbon footprints by 10% ([Minute 2018-36](#)) and asked them to work together toward an overall goal of reducing footprints by an additional 10% in 2020 ([Minute 2019-52](#)).

During the year. We began an effort to regularly contribute EMC-produced content for the NEYM Newsletter as part of a broader effort to improve our communications. Sponsored in part by a grant from the NEYM Legacy Gift Committee, we offered workshops at a number of meetings within NEYM on how to bring hope about the climate crisis by taking personal action. We also provided a new version of our Climate Calculator (climatecalculator.org) that would enable Friends to track their carbon footprints over time. Results from participants on the Climate Calculator for the overall meeting are shown below.



Further results for individual meetings are [also available](#).

New this year, one of our members brought to us the ongoing struggles of the Wampanoag nation, and the committee approved supporting the efforts of the Mashpee Wampanoags to keep their "land in trust" status in a pending case in Federal District Court (subsequently ruled in favor of the Wampanoag position). A new member offered a webinar on the idea using denuclearization as a means of helping to fund the Green New Deal and another member offered a webinar on bees and bee habitats.

Because of the coronavirus epidemic, we were unable to hold our in-person retreat this year, but we continued to meet monthly by teleconference. Much of the year has been spent planning for the 2020 Sessions.

During 2020 we have begun a process of videoing individual Friends about the climate crisis, with the intent of putting the videos on a private YouTube channel and sharing the videos with monthly meetings (and possibly yearly meetings) with encouragement to make their own videos. This work is still in the beginning stages and will continue during 2020.

Our committee expresses its particular appreciation to Mary Bennett and Reb MacKenzie, who served as co-clerks the last two years, and to each of its members who have contributed to making this committee such a pleasure.

—STEPHEN GATES AND GAIL MELIX, CO-CLERKS

Ecumenical Relations

Our committee normally meets over a meal during NEYM sessions. This past year, we were not able to meet. We do, however, have reports from our representatives to three of the state councils of churches in New England.

Maine Council of Churches (Diane Dicranian, Midcoast)

We've spent a part of every meeting discussing racism, after deciding at our retreat that we can't speak out against racism if we haven't done our own personal work. We've explored our traditions and their relationships with slavery and the Doctrine of Discovery. COVID-19 delayed a planned workshop (funded partially by the Yearly Meeting Racial, Social, and Economic Justice Committee grant) until next fall.

As we have looked at the impact of white supremacy on people of color, it was very important to the Council that our Wabanaki neighbors also be considered. I started an initiative with the Council of Churches to forgive loans made to Four Directions, a financial group established 20 years ago to aid the Wabanaki tribe. Since the Council forgave the loan, many other loans are following the same path of forgiveness versus repayment.

Andy Burt has been a tireless representative to the Public Policy Committee, advocating especially for environmental issues. We brought together the experts and developed a church/meeting response to COVID-19 explaining safe policies for groups to gather and when. This was distributed throughout the State of Maine to all denominations.

Massachusetts Council of Churches (Bruce Neumann, Fresh Pond)

Since the restructuring of the governance of the Mass. Council, there is only one person from our Yearly Meeting on the governing body. Previously it was Sarah Gant, clerk of the Permanent Board (PB), because Fritz Weiss did not live in

Mass. Now it's me, since I do live in Mass. and the clerk of PB lives in Maine.

What we'll do when neither the Presiding clerk or the clerk of PB live in MA, I don't know.

New Hampshire Council of Churches (Marian Baker, Weare)

We have been blessed to have Jason Wells as the director of the NH Council of Churches, a younger person with a real calling to ecumenical work. He was one of the leaders of the Poor Peoples Campaign in the state, worked extensively with the Immigrant population, and organized a walk in solidarity with immigrants from Concord to the Strafford County Jail just after Yearly Meeting Sessions last summer. A good number of us in NH joined in the walk.

In November, we held a special Unity Sunday dinner at which Barbara Keshen, chair of the NH Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, was given a special award, and we celebrated finally getting rid of the death penalty.

Two new issues include working with Interfaith Power and Light (an interfaith group working on environmental issues with churches) and an interfaith group working on opioid issues. At the annual meeting in February, we had an increase of denominations joining us, including scout leaders, military chaplains, and leaders of other faiths. During the pandemic Jason has held regular meetings via Zoom with all the heads of each denomination in the state (including Noah Merrill representing Friends), and also with clergy from all denominations, helping them with alternative ways to hold worship services outside of our regular buildings. We have worked with all the other faiths represented in the state (Jewish, Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist) with our state governor to caution opening up church buildings to large gatherings for worship. We have also issued statements against police brutality and racism.

Faith & Practice Revision

During the 2019–2020 year the Faith and Practice Revision Committee worked on four texts. The committee began its year by completing a text on Marriage and mailing it to our monthly meetings and worship groups in November. We try to organize our work so that new texts are ready for Yearly Meeting; this gives Friends at Sessions the opportunity to attend a Listening Session on the new document. Because the Marriage text went out in November, we hope that this year at Sessions there might be time to have a Listening Session on the text. During the fall and early winter we received comments from four meetings and five individuals on the Marriage text. We know that several meetings had begun work on the text before COVID-19 arrived and have not yet completed their work. We hope this input will make its way to us.

The committee usually divides into two or more small groups and works on more than one text at a time. At our meetings we review the work done, make suggestions, and discuss the work to be addressed before the next meeting. This year we reviewed the feedback from monthly meetings on the drafts of Personal Spiritual Practices and Pastoral Care and began the work of revising them. Personal Spiritual Practices is ready to come to Session to be reviewed for preliminary approval. While the committee was working on revising Pastoral Care, it also began reviewing work it had done earlier on Ministry and Counsel (M&C). The review of M&C documents has suggested a change to the organization of the

Pastoral Care text. The committee will continue working on these texts next year.

The work of Ministry and Counsel is organized differently across the New England monthly meetings. In late fall F&P Revision contacted monthly meetings and asked for their descriptions of how their meeting structured the work of Ministry and Counsel. Fourteen meetings responded, giving us a clearer picture of how the work is carried by different meetings. The committee also created a set of questions to use when interviewing Friends with experience on M&C and conducted a series of interviews. These two projects together gave the committee a sense of some of the challenges facing many meetings today.

The committee created a PowerPoint presentation which is now posted on the committee's page on the Yearly Meeting website. It describes the work of the committee and its interface with the Yearly Meeting. It also describes the work still to do and names the several ways that Friends can engage in the work with us. We hope this will encourage Friends to contact us with materials they have found helpful, and their own thoughts and writings.

This year the Committee welcomed a new member while one of our long-time members left the committee to devote more time to other work among Friends. We continue as a committee of nine Friends.

We continue in faith,

—PHEBE MCCOSKER, CLERK

Finance

From March onward, the Finance Committee did all its work via Zoom, and despite the limitations that placed on us, we were able to complete all our short-term objectives.

We developed a draft budget (or "spending plan") for FY21, which will be considered as part of our business together at the digital business meetings for Sessions. The Finance Committee understands that the draft budget may need to be altered prior to its presentation to Sessions in August 2020, should the circumstances warrant it.

In most years, the Committee has a pretty good idea of the spending we think aligns with the aspirations of the Yearly Meeting, but are less able to accurately predict the donations and other revenue we will receive to pay for those expenses. This year, not knowing the medium-term impact the pandemic will have on our programs, we are less certain of FY21 expenses and more uncertain (but hopeful) about contributions we will receive from individuals and meetings and 2021 Sessions income. I remain convinced that our work together as Friends is especially important now during this period of crisis.

The Committee continued our tradition of holding workshops for monthly meeting clerks, treasurers, budget committee clerks, and other interested Friends. This year's workshop, titled "Money & Spirit: Greening Our Meetings and Our Lives," was scheduled to be held at the Mattapoisett (MA) Friends Meeting, but with the pandemic making an in-person meeting too risky, we shifted to a Zoom meeting on the scheduled day. The agenda was slimmed down to just the special topic to reduce screen time for participants. Attendance was excellent and John Reuthe (Vassalboro Meeting) led us in a very informative discussion about how we can think about reducing energy use in our meetinghouses and what the some steps are in analyzing the problem and addressing it in a cost-effective

manner. Please consider whether you or someone from your meeting might join us for next year's Money & Spirit event.

This year, we came to the end of a multi-year project to update the Yearly Meeting Financial Handbook, which contains the financial policies and procedures under which Yearly Meeting operates. The Handbook was initially presented to Permanent Board in August 2019, and then approved by them in September 2019. The updated version now appears on the Yearly Meeting website. The online copy will be updated as new policies are approved.

The Finance Committee seeks to be a resource for all New England Friends. We are here for anyone (not only for Yearly Meeting staff and committees, but also local meetings) to provide help and guidance with financial matters. We look forward to hearing from you.

—BOB MURRAY, CLERK

Legacy Gift Committee

After four years of supporting a broad range of Friends' ministry, the Legacy Gift Committee paused the fall grant cycle of the NEYM Future Fund to discern how best to allocate the remaining \$50,000-plus. We continued to make grants from the NEYM Witness and Ministry Fund in spring 2020.

During this pause, we considered a number of concerns that arose during the past four years.

How should we respond to repeat applications for funding? In the fall 2020 cycle of the Future Fund, we intend to prioritize Friends and Meetings that haven't applied for a Legacy Grant.

We engaged deeply with the role of monthly meetings in providing oversight of ministry and how we can support and encourage Friends to provide both spiritual and financial care. Strengthening our Quaker oversight processes and connections has been an unanticipated benefit of the Legacy funding program.

Building on work begun last year, we considered the broader question of what it means to support ministry, including appropriate compensation for grantees. We know that many things influence what's needed to be released to engage in ministry including personal or family financial resources, geographical location, and community support. We feel more comfortable asking an applicant how they came to value their time. And we've heard some very moving answers.

We also spent time planning a workshop "A Call to Radical Faithfulness: What Do We Need to Be Released?" for the spring Living Faith gathering. And then the pandemic hit and everything changed.

Personal visits with applicants and their oversight committees have been a vital part of our work as funders. Our committee had already used Zoom, so the shift to virtual visits was not difficult for us, but we do miss our in-person meetings both with applicants and as a committee.

As a funding program, we endeavor to listen to the movement of the Spirit through our applicants, our meetings, and the Yearly Meeting, as well as our relationship to the wider world. For example, in 2018 we began a Time-Sensitive Application process to offer funding for activities that fell outside our regular deadlines. We have continued this process with \$10,000 set aside for this purpose ([click here](#)).

Recognizing the urgent crisis of racism and COVID-19, we added a second funding round for the Witness and Ministry

Fund with funds left over from the spring cycle. The deadline is August 15, 2020 ([click here](#)).

Since fall 2015, the Committee has awarded \$517,000 from the NEYM Future Fund. We began making grants from the Witness and Ministry Fund in spring 2018 and have awarded \$71,988 to date.

Finally, after four plus years of co-clerking this committee Suzanna and Jean began planning for a transition to new leadership. It has been an honor and a gift to shepherd this program that has nurtured Friends ministry and witness in so many ways. We know that NEYM will be in good hands with the new co-clerks, Sue Rockwood and Mary Link, faithful members of the Committee.

—SUZANNA SCHELL AND JEAN MCCANDLESS, CO-CLERKS

Ministry & Counsel

Don't revel only in the past, or spend all your time recounting the victories of days gone by. Watch closely: I am preparing something new; it's happening now, even as I speak, [do you not perceive it?]. (Isaiah 43:18-19, The Voice translation)

Dear Friends,

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to serve Friends and Friends meetings these past three years as clerk of Ministry and Counsel. In my time as clerk I have done my best to listen for how God has been calling me in this service, and to act in ways that support ministry, and Friends serving in local meeting leadership roles, as they in turn support their meeting communities in being faithful.

Over the past three years I have wrestled often with much of what I have heard, because it has meant taking risks and making some shifts to longstanding ways of doing things that I know have been deeply meaningful, and life-giving to many Friends who have also devoted their lives to service on behalf of the Yearly Meeting. But I believe that God is calling us to new ways of doing things, which means letting go of some of the old ways that are no longer serving—even (and perhaps especially) when we have found them deeply meaningful, and can't imagine doing them any other way. One of the major shifts has been a shift from an understanding that the work of the committee happens at the M&C meetings themselves, to a focus on the wider work many are doing to support ministry more broadly, and what we can do between meetings to support the life of local Friends and Friends meetings—essentially a renewed understanding of what "service" supporting the ministry and spiritual life of Friends might mean.

Like so much in our world, the work of Ministry and Counsel has been characterized by profound changes in the past year. Even before the pandemic, there was a recognition by Sessions (see the Clerking Structures and Practices working group report) that new ways of working to support ministry and spiritual life in our Yearly Meeting are needed in order to more fully support the thriving of ministry among Friends and Friends Meetings in our region. As we have been moving toward an emerging vision of what's to come, we spent the year reviewing the various responsibilities which M&C has sought to carry in the past and offered input on several key aspects of work that will be carried forward including: youth ministries; naming and noticing patterns of oppression and faithfulness; a vision for the future of Anchor Groups; and the work of the

Ministry and Spiritual Life Working Group. I hope that when the report from the Ministry and Spiritual Life Working Group is ready for publication and further discernment that Friends can be open to hearing what they have found, and consider what is needed now to best support resilience and the work God is doing among us.

As I conclude my service in this role, I feel deeply how much more work there is still to do. And I believe that if we can hear the invitation before us, and we choose to act boldly in response, we will see the Fruits of God's work, and with humility be Blessed to play our part in this time of turning in the world.

—HONOR WOODROW, CLERK

Nominating Committee

The scope of Nominating Committee historically has included discerning gifts and calling forth those gifts to serve our Yearly Meeting faith community. We met monthly to do that work. In keeping with Yearly Meeting priorities, our small committee of six has broadened that scope to include supporting both the health of Yearly Meeting committees as well as the ministry of monthly meeting nominating committees.

The first Meeting Care Day, organized in partnership with Quaker Practice & Leadership Facilitator Nia Thomas and NEYM Ministry and Counsel committee, took place at Mount Toby Meeting in February. Over 30 people participated, sharing best practices and challenges in nominating ministry. The role of mentoring and eldering in nominating was evident in the sharing. We also noticed a shift from nominating defined as beginning and ending with naming someone to a committee, to work that encompasses the health of the faith community overall. We hope to provide several consultations in the coming year, as well as continued support of clerking workshops. We are looking at the ongoing transitions of all committees with an eye toward mentoring rising leadership and providing capacity training. We encourage clearness committees for individuals when considering service.

As a result of the Inclusive Leadership findings, we continue to look for new pathways to leadership, and encourage all committees to include a new person (or several depending on the size of committee) who is growing into service. We also encourage all committees to consider ways to create opportunities for service other than full committee membership, such as serving on a working sub-committee or time-limited project. This is another pathway to service that provides rising leadership possibilities.

In March we chose to do only the essential work, as everyone embraced the coronavirus situation. We realized that the extra energy needed to take on a new role or service on a committee was in short supply. We are grateful to those Friends who have been able to extend service for a year as we all adjust and discover new ways of being.

Thank you to each of you for sharing your gifts. We look forward to hearing from you and growing together during the coming year.

With gratitude and joyful anticipation,

—JACQUELINE STILLWELL, CLERK

Committee for Nurturing Friends Education at Moses Brown School

Moses Brown School Report

This was a year of transition, challenge, and growth at Moses Brown School, as our school community adapted to new leaders (Director of Friends Education, Head of Upper School, Director of Communications, Director of Technology, CFO, and several new faculty members), adjusted to unprecedented changes in our social and educational environment, and accepted our responsibility to commit to deeper engagement in search of equity, justice, and inclusion both within our institution and in the wider world. One common thread throughout the year has been the consistency with which all community members—students, faculty, staff, administrators, and families alike—have turned to the school's Quaker identity as a lodestar in times of difficulty. This report briefly summarizes our key challenges and growth opportunities and offers a glimpse into the school's engagement with Quaker faith and practice throughout the year.

Challenge and Growth in 2019–2020

Attrition at the end of 2018–2019 school year was higher than usual, with consequences for MB's financial outlook for the current year. This year, administrators worked intensively to streamline budgets and remove inefficiencies, drafting a three-year plan to restore balance and adopting an explicit focus on enrollment and retention strategies. Early signs suggest this focus has been successful: attrition is at a historic low and the school will be fully enrolled next year. With 28% students of color and 38% receiving financial assistance, the school continues to prioritize enrolling those who can both benefit from and contribute to the school's historical mission, regardless of financial circumstances.

In February, Head of School Matt Glendinning made public the findings of a year-long external investigation into allegations of sexual misconduct by former MB teachers. (The full account of the investigation and its findings may be found [on the MB website](#).) The report provided a painful but necessary opportunity for the MB community to acknowledge its institutional and moral obligation to care for those harmed, and the school found its way forward through focusing on integrity, publicly acknowledging the hurts inflicted, seeking further disclosures that would illuminate the Truth, and offering care and support for those who suffered.

This year, the school committed to exploring ways that diversity, equity, and inclusion impact employees' experience at MB. A survey that was taken by almost every member of the faculty and staff affirmed progress in MB's efforts to expand the diversity of the student body and to educate the whole community about issues of privilege, power, difference, and injustice. But the survey also highlighted areas where the school could do more. Particularly in light of the political, economic, and social context of 2020, as well as MB's historical legacy of racial and economic privilege, this work feels absolutely imperative to us. Thirteen members of MB's senior administrative team just completed an intensive week-long professional development program through the NAIS' Diversity Leadership Institute. All faculty and staff are also undertaking common summer reading focused on the issue of race, which will serve as a platform for future work beginning in

the fall. The increased use of race- and gender-based affinity groups across the school this year was a welcome, meaningful space for students, and we look forward to continuing and deepening our work in those spaces in the coming year.

Finally, the arrival of the novel coronavirus dealt significant challenges for administrators, faculty, students, and families alike. The full financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on MB will not be known for some time, but the school anticipates an increased demand for financial assistance beginning in the fall. Proceeds from the recent annual MBeThere fundraiser are earmarked for this purpose, and the Board of Trustees has approved a significant increase in funds available for tuition support. The pandemic has also necessitated the delay of plans such as moving the fifth grade to the Middle School and the planned expansion and renovation of the Lower School building. The school's decennial accreditation process with NEASC must also be deferred, and is now likely to begin in 2021.

Quaker Faith and Practice in the MB Community

Our community's learning about Friends' faith and practice has taken place in various spaces and modes throughout the year. Some highlights include:

- In late August, the incoming ninth-grade class gathered at Friends Camp in China, ME, for a few days of orientation around MB's culture, vision, and values. Students gathered for their first meeting for worship as a class in the same meadow where young Friends have held sunset vespers for decades. The experience—the very first MFW for many—was reverent and profound. Ninth graders continued their learning around Friends' testimonies, history, and practices in a series of lessons throughout the fall.
- In September, new faculty and staff at MB gathered with new hires at Lincoln School to take part in an intensive two-day workshop for Educators New to Quakerism, presented by Friends Council on Education (FCE).
- In the Lower School, the Quaker Life committee engaged in a year-long project to help model and teach developmentally appropriate skills around reflection, stillness, and speaking in meeting for worship.
- Schools had the unique opportunity to learn from Parfaite Ntahuba, a Quaker minister, peace activist, and health care provider from Burundi, whose work has brought healing to thousands of survivors of racial and sexual violence in the wake of genocide.
- For the third year, Upper School's Immersion program worked to build partnerships between our ninth-graders and community organizations. After several weeks of preparation, in February student teams engaged with their partners in week-long service-learning opportunities throughout the greater Providence area.
- From January through March, in conjunction with their study of the civil rights movement, MB's fifth-graders worked with Sal Monteiro, a training coordinator at The Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence, to connect issues from the 1960s to today's world. Students learned about the skills and strategies that can transform conflict, and about the choices and behaviors that produce upstanders and allies.
- The sudden shift to distance learning presented an acute challenge but also an opportunity to explore our values from a new perspective. A focus on simplicity

drove many of our decisions as we sought to place student wellness at the center of a distance-learning plan. Though the transition was difficult for all involved, students, teachers and families worked hard to sustain and deepen class relationships while continuing to pursue creative, collaborative, and relevant opportunities for learning and growth.

From traveling to pre-primary students' homes to hold safe, socially distant read-alouds from the driveway, to scaffolding Zoom meetings as a space for reflection on injustice, antiracism, and the power of protest, Lower School teachers found ways to support heart-level connection, reflection, and engagement.

In the Middle School, cross-disciplinary projects had students exploring history and literature through drama, and video offered new forms to highlight student voices in classes across the curriculum. Eighth grade students created and demonstrated elaborate Rube Goldberg soap-dispensing machines at home ([here are a couple fun examples](#)). Students helped organize a Zoomed Meeting for Worship around racial injustice, and teachers facilitated later worship-sharings to help them process their feelings and ideas.

In the Upper School, performing arts through creative new formats became an important source of community joy. When COVID interfered with the production of a much-anticipated student-written spring musical based on the music of Lady Gaga, students and teachers pivoted. Students invested their creative talents in choreography, design, performance and production to create music videos based on the show that lifted spirits and hearts. (Those can be found on our Youtube channel [here](#) and [here](#).) Musicians in the Upper and Middle School created [an amazing collaborative virtual performance](#) for graduating seniors. Upper School teachers created new way of using student-led learning, real-time and asynchronous collaboration, and creative approaches to performance and assessment.

And as seniors approached graduation, they managed to reshape their final projects to pursue personal passions, curiosities, and forms of service, sharing them through Zoom with the extended MB community. Closing Exercises were profound experiences across divisions, as the school sought ways to lift up student voices, celebrate their gifts, and create space for reflection on their school journeys.

- Using Zoom to host meeting for worship during our pandemic isolation proved to be a valuable and significant opportunity for connection in a very challenging time. MFW in this format was encouraged but not required, and student engagement increased significantly week by week. At our last MFW for our full US community, we had over 300 participants join the online event. Especially in the wake of George Floyd's murder, as protests and cries for justice escalated, the school was able to hold meetings for worship with the entire community—students, faculty, families, board members, and alumni—who engaged in creative and empowering ways, turning to worship as a tool for provoking thought and action, for healing and comfort, and for sustained inquiry into the pressing question of what antiracist work looks like at MB and elsewhere.

—JENNIFER MCFADDEN, DIRECTOR OF FRIENDS EDUCATION

Puente de Amigos

This year was marked by sadness at the U.S. government's continuing prohibition on Cuban citizens' travel to the U.S., compounded by the recent coronavirus which has had the effects of freezing all travel and exacerbating injustices worldwide. At this time, it is soothing to experience how dear our loved ones are and to give thanks for the ways in which we can continue to warm our hands at communal fires, even though they are mainly electronic ones. Our committee members have found new ways to remain in touch with our Cuban Friends via Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, email, and sharing packages of letters and pictures at the time of our February 2020 delegation to Cuba.

That delegation was the only one this year, after four delegations in 2019. The travelers were Bruce Neumann (in his new position as NEYM clerk), Jackie Stillwell, Marion Athearn, and Em McManamy. We celebrated the opportunity to participate in Cuba Yearly Meeting (CYM) sessions, where we observed a new generation of leadership taking the helm. We contributed by honoring the outgoing CYM clerk with a plaque created by numerous NEYM hands. Bruce offered moving ministry at sessions, and the other travelers facilitated workshops as part of a wonderfully collaborative tapestry of yearly meeting events.

Much of our committee's work has the goal of animating the relationships among the pairs of sister meetings in Cuba and New England, as a means of knitting our communities together. Our NEYM gathering in August 2019 was blessed by video greetings and **an original Puente de Amigos** song sent to us by our Cuban Friends. Nine monthly meetings in Cuba have sister meetings in New England, and three more sister-meeting pairs are in process. NEYM individuals and meetings are also encouraged to communicate with Cuban Friends. An ad hoc group of the New England sister-meeting representatives gathers bi-monthly (via Zoom). Several delegations from New England that were scheduled for 2020, including a first-time gathering in Cuba of all Cuban and all New England sister meetings, will be postponed to a later date.

We were gratified to complete several multi-year projects this year. In September, an expedited and simplified process of approval for travelers to Cuba was approved by Permanent Board (PB). The procedure allows for preliminary approval of delegations by PB, allowing full discernment to proceed with a more flexible process. What a concept! Another task was the complete reorganization of our Handbook for those considering joining a delegation to Cuba (**Handbook for Friends Interested in Travel to Cuba**). The new Handbook refines and clarifies the discernment process and offers queries and guidance for individuals and monthly meetings.

In financial news, our committee has been able to transfer more funds to Cuban Friends for their own discernment and use, in the absence of Cuban travelers to New England. We also raised additional funds in New England to send Cuban travelers to the FUM 2020 triennial (postponed) and to assist with their internet communications. Despite obstacles, we continue in faith and love.

—MAGGIE FOGARTY AND EM MCMANAMY, CO-CLERKS

Racial, Social, and Economic Justice

The Racial, Social, and Economic Justice Committee has been working to nurture and foster relationships with other groups within the Yearly Meeting who are also addressing racism and white privilege. We welcome the connections we have made and we hope to continue to work together towards our common goal of equity and justice.

In another collaboration we co-signed a minute brought forward by the Israel-Palestine Working Group supporting AFSC's "No Way to Treat a Child" campaign. This important work seeks to address the unjust detention, mistreatment, and human rights violations of Palestinian children by the Israeli military.

As New England Yearly Meeting has worked to become clear about our relationship with Friends United Meeting in light of their discriminatory personnel policy, RSEJ became aware of a number of Friends who felt both deeply affected by this decision and also felt unheard. As a group that works to address injustice, we sponsored a Listening Session to allow all those who felt unheard to be given a voice.

We have continued ongoing work, including the oversight of the Freedmen's Fund, which offers scholarships to the descendants of those who were enslaved, and the Prejudice and Poverty Fund, which offers grants to those who are working towards justice for groups that have been discriminated against.

We also continued our book project by offering sets of the book *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas along with discussion questions and resources to local meetings who wish to use the book to engage with issues of racism and police violence.

We have pressed New England Friends to fulfill the commitment we made in 2018 when we passed a minute supporting the Poor People's Campaign. We continue to urge Friends to support the work of this movement.

RSEJ has had a historical role in New England Yearly Meeting raising awareness of problems of injustice and oppression. We have been devastated by the murder of George Floyd at the hands of police, yet another black citizen whose life ended too soon at the hands of our criminal justice system. We are heartened by Friends' response to this injustice. We are also all too aware of our tendency to raise concerns only to have them fall by the wayside as we move on to the next burning issue. Our goal as a committee in the coming year is to ensure that Friends continue with this justice work. We wish New England Yearly Meeting to move forward from awareness towards action. We urge Friends to make the commitment to become an actively anti-racist society.

—BETH MORRILL, CLERK

Youth Ministries

We write this report amidst a double pandemic of viral vulnerability and racial injustice. It is a time of grief, fear, and righteous anger, when our usual resources of communal strength and connection are challenged by the need for physical distance. Even before the coronavirus, our committee had been focused on the question of how to nurture a robust community across generations and geographic distance, amidst the pressures and time demands families and their young people face. Much of the work of this committee over the last few years has entailed visioning and restructuring Yearly Meeting

Youth Ministries and staffing to provide a richer web of support for young people developing their own relations to faith and Quakerism, for Friends seeking to raise their children in ways suffused with Quaker values, and for monthly meeting First Day schools and intergenerational programs. The last few months have affirmed the value of that restructuring, and have pressed us to live into it in urgent new ways.

We are grateful for the creative leadership with which all our Youth Ministers—Gretchen Baker-Smith, Anna Hopkins, Maggie Nelson, and Nia Thomas—have responded to these new needs with abundant love. Junior YM, Junior High YM, and Young Friends retreats all pivoted this spring to happen in remarkably vibrant, intimate, and engaging virtual ways (with some actual stuff coming by mail). In all three programs young people who had never attended physical weekend retreats joined these virtual gatherings. Virtual “hangouts” between retreats have been fun, sad, and affirming spaces for young people and their families. Harriet Heath and Gretchen-Baker Smith have held a virtual parenting “Tea” every Thursday evening since March, and many parents have used that time to think in community about parenting in isolation, amidst fear, against racism, and for healing. While Friends Camp has cancelled its in person summer sessions, everybody is invited to “Everybody Camp” online from July 15 through 19.

Last spring Youth Ministries Committee (YMC) undertook a listening project, implemented by Janet Dawson, visiting First Day schools and youth committees in many meetings. These visits strengthened connections and taught the committee a great deal about both shared and unique needs. A First

Day School Facebook Group was created to maintain these connections which, together with the QREC Valiant Together: Facebook Group for Quaker Religious Education, has provided a network of virtual support for First Day school programs. We want especially to thank Cambridge Friends Meeting for opening its online youth programming to welcome families in other meetings.

Over the years Beth Collea built a splendid library of Quaker curriculum and children’s books with rich spiritual and social-justice content. Without her leadership, we knew that YMC could not keep this lending library vital, so this winter staff and committee members sorted these books to create a smaller resource library of curriculum materials and a gifting library of children’s books. We had intended to bring the gifting library to the Living Faith Gathering and on our spring visits to First Day Schools. Of course there has been no gathering or traveling this spring, but know that the collection is particularly rich in anti-racism children’s books and that we will find ways to disperse them.

The June 4th JYM-JHYM newsletter expressed the confidence and commitment that we can do better in creating a truly inclusive and actively anti-racist community. “My experience,” Gretchen Baker-Smith writes, “is that we are more willing to be imperfect, honest, messy, and vulnerable when we feel loved. The wide multi-generational community that has grown from NEYM’s youth programs through the years gives that to many of us. Grounded in the Light, we can be that for each other. We need to be that for each other.”

—KAREN SÁNCHEZ-EPPLER, CLERK

Reports of Representatives to Other Quaker Organizations

American Friends Service Committee

More than ninety Friends gathered by video conference for AFSC’s Corporation meetings on April 17 & 18. Although physically distanced from each other, Friends were able to grasp the extent to which Quaker values of equality, worth, and dignity infuse the AFSC’s new strategic thinking. We celebrate explicit language in AFSC’s emerging strategic plan that guides us to “trust Spirit” and “assert the transforming power of love and nonviolence as a force for justice and reconciliation”— knowing that “our understanding of truth is incomplete.”

Joyce Ajlouny, General Secretary, described the strategic planning process as “a deep dive into AFSC’s work discovering our core strengths over time and what it means to be a Quaker organization.” Whether our role is governance, staff, or volunteer, AFSC aspires to “listen to community first, show people what we do, and demonstrate how they can do this as well.” Our professional peace and justice organization achieves impact by building relationships, carrying out research & analysis, and organizing community.

In break-out groups we considered what it would mean for monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings throughout the country to “more deeply engage with AFSC to leverage our prophetic voice to build a just, moral, and peaceful world.” Veronica Wetherill helped Friends see how strategic planning over the last two years has grounded this goal in “Quaker

approaches to young change-makers.” What an opportunity for our meetings to assist AFSC as it attempts to “equip all to demonstrate vibrancy of Quaker faith, testimonies and practices within a diverse and inclusive organization”!

Asking “which ideas have energy for us?” Lucy Duncan, Director of Friends Relations, explained how the emerging strategic plan “operates from our strength as a multi-racial organization,” even as it “recognizes differences among communities, meetings, and allies.” There is social solidarity as AFSC calls for the release of people from incarceration and outlines a comprehensive Covid-19 response, which invites Friends everywhere to engage in this moment.

During our concluding meeting for worship, many Friends honored our retiring Clerk of the Board and Corporation by sharing examples of wisdom and kindness, which typified Phil Lord’s six years of service.

In the late spring of 2020, Joyce Ajlouny reflected to staff and governance:

At this historic moment, we are called to be strong and bold to respond with the necessary urgency the moment requires us. As a Quaker organization that believes that there is an undeniable “light of God” in every person, we are compelled to act courageously for equity and justice. AFSC should not rest until every person is living a life free from violence, oppression, inequality, and discrimination. We need to continue

speaking truth to power and work in solidarity and consistently with many communities to hold our decision-makers accountable so we can achieve transformational shifts in power.

AFSC's new mission statement—"Guided by the Quaker belief in divine Light of each person, AFSC works with communities and partners worldwide to challenge unjust systems and promote lasting peace"—invites all Friends to engage.

—SUBMITTED BY SCOTT RHODEWALT

Quaker Earthcare Witness

QEW had a powerful meeting at Pendle Hill last fall. Several members who were new to QEW in the past year have returned and we continue to get new representatives from yearly meetings that have not sent them before. I served as a buddy mentor for a new member at this meeting and he has become quite involved in our activities since.

I now serve as assistant clerk to the Spiritual Nurturance Committee, which works to keep a deep spiritual base for all of QEWs activities and serves the clerk's table during business meetings. We initiated and provide guidance to worship-sharing groups at QEW sessions and these have become foundational to our meetings together. We also provide assistance

in the form of "buddies" to all new representatives attending steering committee meetings for the first time.

Between our normal steering committee meetings, QEW business is carried out by a council of the clerk's table and committee chairs. This group, led by our general secretary, has continued to build QEW's visibility within the wider Quaker community and signed on to a variety of position papers and legislative proposals to endorse meaningful change.

The spring Steering Committee meetings that were to be held in North Carolina this year were of course cancelled due to Covid-19. We held meetings over Zoom during the four days instead. While this served to get us together for discussions, much was lost of the community sharing that is normal for our meetings.

Last winter Mey Hasbrook and I were approved as co-clerks to revive the Sustainability Faith & Action working group which had been in abeyance for about a year. We held several informal discussions online to gauge interest and held our first working group meetings at the Zoom sessions this spring. We will be building on the work our general secretary, Shelley Tanenbaum, has begun to work across branches of the Society while sharing our love and concern for the earth. Several were also interested in the thesis of my book on reframing climate disruption and will be assisting me with a clearness committee on that project.

—CHRISTOPHER HAINES, REPRESENTATIVE

Memorial Minutes

Eileen Babcock
June 17, 1951 – March 20, 2018

It is with real sadness that we announce the passing of Eileen Babcock, who had been a member of Durham Friends Monthly Meeting for the greater part of her life. Eileen grew up in the Meeting, participating in Sunday school and vacation Bible school. She was active in many Meeting committees and activities, including trustees, the Women's Society, youth groups, and benefit dinners for the Kakamega Orphans Care Center. At the time of her death, she was the trustee in charge of the Meeting's cemeteries. She was deeply committed to following God's will and doing her best for the Meeting. She was always there to lend a hand in whatever was needed.

Eileen was active in the Durham community, working at town elections, helping organize the local Republican Town Committee, and holding at different times every elected office in the Durham Extension Homemakers.

After a brief teaching career, Eileen was a helper. She took care of her parents and other family members, and many, many others.

Eileen really enjoyed helping, experimenting with new recipes, walking with family members, and making cider with her father.

She was a giving, sharing, extremely private person, who is greatly missed.

Eileen is survived by her significant other, Tommie Frye; by her brothers Wilbert and Jerel and Jerel's wife Sheila Babcock, sister Priscilla Wormwood, and several nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her parents, Francis and Vivian Babcock, and her sister Sylvia Davis.

DURHAM MONTHLY MEETING

FALMOUTH QUARTERLY MEETING

Alexander W. Banks
(August 14, 1961–December 18, 2017)

Alexander W. Banks, a kind and gentle light, passed from this life on December 18, 2017. Alex was a skilled and compassionate lawyer, a generous and engaged teacher of law and, most important, a loving father and friend. He was a thoughtful man who reserved judgment of others and believed in seeing the good in everyone. His life reflected his sensitivity and commitment to people in need through his professional practices and in the ways he conducted his life. As a lifelong Quaker, Alex demonstrated a heartfelt interest in helping those less fortunate. He was devoted to equality and employed his legal skills to the benefit of humanity. Alex loved others, but sadly found it difficult to find love for himself. And alas, it was too much alcohol and a bout with *E.coli* that took Alex from this world.

Alex was devoted to his family. He and Sheilagh Smith were married under the care of Swarthmore Friends Meeting on August 12, 2000; their marriage was later made legal by a Baptist minister on Prince Edward Island. They began attending Hanover Friends Meeting in 2001; Carter was born in 2002 and Cole was born in 2004. Alex attended meeting for worship as his busy life allowed and nourished his Quaker roots in worship. His ministry was always welcomed and often reflected his gratitude for his family. Carter and Cole were often in worship, nestled in their parents' laps, before time to leave for the children/youth programs.

Alex and Sheilagh's marriage dissolved in 2006 and they divorced in 2008. Throughout this time, both were accepting of the support provided by the Meeting in helping them to listen to and use their Quaker values and inner beliefs as a guide to their interactions and process of divorce. It was not always smooth, but both remained involved in the Meeting. Sometimes Alex worshipped with us but often helped in the kitchen to prepare the morning snack. He loved his sons and tried to be sure they got to the activities and events that fed and nurtured them—both within and outside the Meeting. Alex adored spending time with his sons.

Alex was born in Philadelphia, PA, on August 14, 1961, the second child of the late Richard W. Banks and Ruth Alexander Hipple. He graduated from The Hill School, and went on to earn a Bachelor's degree in 1983 from Bates College and a Juris Doctor degree in 1987 from Vermont Law School, where he was a member of

the National Lawyers Guild and Women's Law Group. He was admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar Association in 1987, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania in 1987, the Vermont Bar Association in 1995, and the U.S. District Court for the District of Vermont in 1996.

From 1987 to 1995 he served as a staff attorney and eventually as a managing attorney at Northwestern Legal Services, assisting many low-income clients. Alex also wrote and implemented one of Pennsylvania's first countywide, mandatory pro-bono plans requiring members of the county bar to provide free legal assistance to low-income individuals. From 1995 to 2017 Alex taught at Vermont Law School (VLS) and served as a staff attorney at the South Royalton Legal Clinic, where he advocated for victims of domestic violence and children. He designed and implemented the clinic's Children First! legal advocacy program, which provides representation to children involved in difficult family proceedings, and served as a mentor to countless VLS student clinicians. He served on several county and state boards and committees organized to confront domestic violence and work toward judicial reform. Alex received numerous awards and certificates of appreciation, including the Outstanding Victim Advocate Award in 2000 from the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services and Vermont Domestic Violence Network. In 2005, he was recognized by the Vermont Supreme Court for Service to Children in Vermont Family Court, and recognized again in 2008 and 2011 by the Vermont Supreme Court for his advocacy and training with the Vermont Guardian-ad-Litem Program. Throughout his professional life, Alex was devoted to serve those in need and those without a voice—without the strength to fight for themselves.

His own hearing difficulty seemed to help him in his dealings with others who struggled with some difficulty, while it was, at times, difficult for him to navigate a career based on intense and frequent communication demands. He did so well.

Alex was a quiet, passionate, sensitive, compassionate, empathic, loving, and caring man. But indeed, he was also a complex man. While he often acted in service to others, Alex was always too hard on himself. He struggled with alcoholism for years, which dimmed his bright Light and contributed to his death. We can learn from his struggle and are better for having had him as a part of our faith community. He leaves behind his two boys, Carter and Cole, who are active members of our Young Friends group. Hanover Friends Meeting continues to hold them in the Light as they move forward in life, with their father in Spirit.

HANOVER MONTHLY MEETING

NORTHWEST QUARTERLY MEETING

Lois Pitkin Booth
June 14, 1922 – September 13, 2019

Lois Pitkin Booth, born in 1922, passed away in September 2019, having lived a long, inspiring life. She was raised in a Methodist family and in the 1950s she became an early member of the newly formed Concord (NH) Friends Meeting.

Lois was the fire that kept Concord Friends Meeting warm with her core belief in Love's power and her indomitable optimism. She was joyfully welcoming to all. She had a wonderfully inclusive ability to draw out strengths and gifts of service from others. In her humble way, she was able to step aside and let others assume leadership once they showed interest. She led by example and through her countercultural life modeled the change that she wanted to see in the world.

Lois started the Meeting's First Day School program with the central value that every child feel loved. The Meeting grew as families were drawn to the culture of love and respect that she cultivated with her gentle compassion. She promoted music and hymns as an important way for children to connect with the Spirit, believing that these songs would provide a resource they could draw upon for the rest of their lives. Thus, singing became a regular part of First Day School. This led to the whole Meeting singing together before unprogrammed worship, which has become an important spirit-building part of our Meeting.

Lois was a strong supporter of families; in the Meeting and in her extended family she was an advocate for communication and expression of feelings as a way to strengthen family relationships. Ever sensitive to the feelings of others, she made sure that people felt welcome in Meeting regardless of their ability to contribute financially, reminding us that we all bring diverse gifts to the community. Don and Lois' commitment to their 65-year marriage was an inspiration, as was her patient care for her father in her home in the last years of his life.

Lois' witness in the world grew out of her compassion for others, her belief in the transforming power of love, and her keen awareness of inequality and injustice in its many forms. Her deep faith in a loving God

centered her actions and witness. Her commitment to peace led to war tax resistance, starting with the Korean War. She was a person willing to speak truth to power, and a gentle yet persistent force for peace and justice. From the Nuclear Test Ban movement through the steady stream of wars and military actions since then, Lois was there organizing and educating. She believed that citizens would respond well to good information and that education would lead to positive change. She also was clerk of Peace and Social Concerns Committee for years.

Lois was a key force behind opening a New Hampshire office of the AFSC in 1978; she organized Canterbury Citizens for Peace and Justice in 1981 and she helped found New Hampshire Peace Action in 1982. For over two decades, Lois focused her energy on NH Peace Action as a full-time volunteer and lead fundraiser.

Lois concentrated on the root causes of problems rather than on the symptoms. She had a keen sense of how to motivate and organize people in order to not only achieve a purpose but also build community. We learned from her the lesson of the importance of food, music, and fun to engage us in community as we work for change.

Lois raised six children in their no-frills country home built by her husband, Don, who conscientiously opposed war and performed Alternative Service during World War II. Their yearning for deep relationships with others led them in the 1950s to try living in several intentional communities around the country. To our great benefit they always returned to Canterbury to deepen their roots there, where they lived from 1951 until 2003 when she and Don moved to the Havenwood Retirement Community in Concord. "Living simply so that others may simply live" was her way, not just a motto.

Lois loved to garden. It was a natural part of living simply. She grew a large portion of their vegetables, baked her own bread, and was committed to healthy eating, feeding her family whole grains and sprouts and vegetarian meals long before it was fashionable or common. She maintained an extensive flower garden and regularly brought a beautiful array of flowers to Meeting, another way of sharing God's bounty. She offered wholesome meals and a bed to many who came to the Concord area to try out lifestyles that earned them little money. She and Don joyfully shared their cars, their tools, their labor, and the fruits of her garden with others in need. The way they so freely shared was an expression of their love and sense of community. This generosity was a deep inspiration to many.

Although Lois was highly intelligent and a college graduate, she put her family, the Meeting community, and her peace work ahead of paid work outside the home. She did become a realtor and, as such, gave special attention to the appropriate use of the land, making wise purchases and then reselling to good people for good purposes whenever possible.

Lois and Don's generous spirit was also evidenced in their gift of land on the Merrimack River to the town of Canterbury, to become the town beach and the Riverland Conservation Area. Our meetinghouse would not have been built without their generosity. First, Lois's offer of land reignited a languishing meetinghouse project. Then when that plot proved too small, an organization to whom the Booths had previously donated another, larger tract of land, gifted a portion of it to the Meeting which is where the meetinghouse now sits—a powerful demonstration of the ripple effect of Lois and Don's witness of love and generosity.

One of Lois' greater gifts was her tolerance in the face of conflict. Many learned about Quaker ways from her creative responses to interpersonal conflict and her loving acceptance toward all people, particularly difficult people and those with mental illness. She fully embodied the concept of "let peace begin with me" in her interpersonal relationships and within the Meeting, the community, and the world.

Lois trusted in the power of prayer; for example, she suggested that members of the Religious Education Committee pray for Meeting children individually. Wisdom born from difficulty and hardship in her own life attracted others to seek her counsel. They were always met with compassion and prayers. She believed completely in a loving God, and often said that God is Love. Even in her last years, she gave vocal ministry of the loving words of Jesus.

Lois was never frustrated or bitter as her body and mind aged. She remained cheerful to the end. Lois' understanding of the importance of spiritual education for children, her leadership in peace and justice issues, and her personal warmth helped to make the Concord Friends Meeting a welcoming place that has attracted other Spirit-led people for generations.

Lois Booth's example continues to shine brightly in the lives of those who knew her. Many of us have asked ourselves, "How would Lois deal with this problem?" finding Light and courage in the answer.

CONCORD MONTHLY MEETING

DOVER QUARTERLY MEETING

Severyn T. Bruyn
October 26, 1927 – May 26, 2019

Severyn T. Bruyn, a noted college professor, vibrant peace activist, and long-time member of Friends Meeting at Cambridge, passed away peacefully on May 26, 2019, in the presence of his beloved wife and partner-in-life, Louise Muenzer Bruyn, and other family members. Sev died at home, in the Newton, MA, house where he and Louise had lived for more than 50 years.

Sev was born in Minneapolis, MN, in 1927. At one point during the Great Depression, his father lost his job, and Sev and his mother and sister went to live with relatives in California; from then on, Sev loved watching waves come in and playing in the water close to the shore.

Back in the Midwest after his father again found employment, Sev pursued his love of water and, during high school, won the Illinois state championship for high diving.

Sev and Louise met when they were students at the University of Illinois, where Sev took his B.S., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees, and Louise trained to be a teacher. Family lore has it that one day, while Sev and Louise worked waiting tables at a dormitory cafeteria, he asked her out. “I have a date,” Louise famously replied, “but I can break it.” That first date led to 67 years of marriage and 3 children—Rebecca, Susan, and George, whom Sev and Louise adopted when he was 11. Sev was so busy teaching and writing during his children’s growing up that he was not often a hands-on father, but a story his daughters tell captures his spirit of play as a dad. One summer, to free Louise to teach dance for several weeks at a summer camp in Michigan, Sev drove with the three children to California. They camped along the way. When mosquitoes swarmed and pestered at one memorable picnic lunch, Sev saved the day by giving each mosquito a name. He addressed the mosquitoes as friends in such a comical way that his daughters remember a lunchtime of uproarious laughter.

Shortly after their 1951 marriage, Sev and Louise joined the small Friends meeting at the Champagne-Urbana campus of the University of Illinois. “They were a fine little group,” Louise remembers. “They drew us in, made us feel welcome, told us what they were working on, let us join in.” During the several years that Sev taught at Illinois College in Jacksonville, they found their way to a small Quaker group that met for worship in people’s houses. When they moved their family east so that Sev could teach at Boston College, they transferred their membership to Friends Meeting at Cambridge (FMC), and they have been with us ever since.

Not long after they joined the FMC community, Louise experienced a leading to walk the 450 miles from Newton, MA, to Washington, DC, in 45 days, to protest U.S. expansion of the Vietnam War to Laos. “I said to Sev that somebody ought to walk to Washington and tell them they should stop this war. He looked at me and quietly said ‘That’s what it might take.’ Immediately, I got up and began looking for our maps.” Sev supported Louise in this leading, start to finish.

As a professor, Sev was far from an ivory-tower academic. Louise recalls the beginnings of his groundbreaking form of scholarship: During several years of teaching at Illinois College, Sev did research on teens in trouble, known at the time as “delinquents.” “He developed an idea of how to work with them, not just scold [or study] them ... we felt it was a more Quakerly way.” The young people came to the house, made themselves comfortable, put their feet up on the living room furniture. “It was Sev’s way of working with them,” Louise says with a smile. Sev’s research approach evolved into “participant observation,” a method that changed the field of sociology. He wanted sociologists not simply to analyze social problems, but to tackle them as well. Louise remembers him in the same Illinois living room, “lying on the floor with his head down, surrounded by books, using a typewriter or scribbling on paper.” That book, his second, was *The Human Perspective in Sociology: The Methodology of Participation Observation*. It helped to land him the coveted job at the Boston College (BC) Department of Sociology, where he would teach, write, and organize for social justice, democracy, and peace for many decades to come.

At BC, Sev continued to marry scholarship and activism. When worker-owned businesses became a center of his inquiry, for example, Sev worked on an ownership overhaul of a Massachusetts factory. As a teacher, according to a former student, Sev was “warm, welcoming, enthusiastic, curious, thoughtful—pretty much simultaneously.” He was “rigorous” in scholarship, and “intellectually passionate.” A former dissertation advisee recalls how Sev inspired her towards study and action for nonviolent social change. “Sev not only did no harm,” she says, “he showed how to do good.” In addition to teaching and advising, Sev helped to develop BC’s signature Leadership for Change program. Among his many academic grants, awards, and recognitions, standouts include a National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) grant of \$200,000 to support 18 Sociology Ph.D. students (1979); the Alpha Sigma Nu, National Jesuit Honor Society, Social Science Award for A Future

for the American Economy (1991); and a celebration of his career contributions at a joint meeting of the American Sociological Association and the Society for the Study of Social Problems (2011). Fueling this illustrious career, and grounding all his work, was what a long-time colleague recalls as “Sev’s indomitable hope, his deep belief that the future can be more just.”

A “gentle giant of a man,” Sev was committed to mobilizing for peace. Having served briefly in the U.S. Army stateside towards the end of World War II, he became a stalwart and vigorous member of the Boston Chapter of Veterans for Peace, known as the Smedley Butler Brigade. A fellow member recalls, “In many ways Sev was the conscience, if not the heart, of our chapter of Veterans for Peace.” At Smedley events, Sev spoke, read poetry, and even performed stand-up comedy to raise funds. His consistent, heart-felt message was that war is fought and suffered by the many to benefit the very few. As he told a young journalist at BC in 1980, “You have to stand up for what you believe, right down to your toes.”

Sev’s retirement in 2000 led to no diminution of activity, but rather to a riotous creativity that included writing a novel about the future of higher education, as well as painting, throwing pots, and sculpting. After learning to write music on the computer, Sev composed and produced musical pieces that ranged from famous poems set to song, to an oratorio on nonviolent direct action, to “The Song of Evolution,” a musical debate between poets and scientists, performed at Boston College in 2010. In all, as a friend wrote, “the energy that came from him was astonishing. He was involved with just about everything that a person with a heart of gold could be.”

During their decades in Newton, Sev and Louise’s family grew. Rebecca married Cindy Rosenbaum; Susan married Michael Collyer (now deceased), and they had a son, Matthew Collyer; George added two grandchildren to the family circle—Sev Bruyn (Jr.) and Tiffany Brister—and later partnered with June Epperson.

During his early and middle years at FMC, Sev’s chief Quaker service was with the American Friends Service Committee. After retirement, Sev joined Meeting activities with gusto. He was a steady presence in morning worship until the very last weeks of his life, sitting side-by-side with Louise. He rose, when moved, to speak with awe and joy of his unfolding spiritual adventure—even, at least once, to dance. Sev was a regular, too, in Afterthoughts, where he listened intently to every speaker and shared his own wisdom from a lifetime of social justice, teaching, and activism. A Friend recalls saying to Sev, “If I get to heaven and find it’s all you say it is, Sev, then I will be so delighted.” Sev responded passionately, “You will! You will!”

We were lifted by Sev’s passion for justice and his generous versatility, by his sense of humor, his exuberant laughter, and his infectious love of music. A fellow Vet for Peace remembers, “When we would have our fund-raisers at Johnny D’s in Somerville and the band would start playing, the first one onto the floor was Sev. If music was playing Sev couldn’t keep still.” As Louise said, “Sev loved the sound of the drum.” How fitting that a drumming circle closed his memorial meeting for worship at FMC.

We imagine that Sev is finding heaven to be all he’d hoped. We miss his great spirit immensely.

FRIENDS MEETING AT CAMBRIDGE

SALEM QUARTERLY MEETING

Bainbridge H. Davis
June 28, 1940 – November 24, 2019

Beloved member of Bennington Monthly Meeting Bainbridge H. Davis, 79, passed away on November 24, 2019, in Scarborough, ME.

Bain was born in Washington, DC, to Bainbridge C. Davis and Virginia H. Davis on June 28, 1940. He went to school at Sidwell Friends and St. Albans in Washington, DC, and graduated from Oakwood Friends in Poughkeepsie, NY. He graduated from Drew University and continued at Drew in seminary, during which he served as student pastor for three Methodist churches. He was recorded as a Minister among Friends in Chicago Monthly Meeting.

Bain taught and raised funds for the Ecumenical Institute and the Institute of Cultural Affairs for 15 years. He also was involved in Quaker education, both as a teacher and fundraiser at Oakwood Friends School in Poughkeepsie. Bain served as a community developer and was involved with the Greater Bennington Interfaith Council, where he worked to help set up the free health clinic. He served on the Faith and Practice Revision Committee of New England Yearly Meeting, as well as on the board of Woolman Hill Conference Center. He also worked on a cooperative project with Southern Vermont College, teaching a world religions

course. His ministry included writing several articles for the weekly Sunday “Speaking of Religion” column in the *Bennington Banner*.

Bain is survived by his wife of 55 years, Marjorie Hawes; sons Henry, Shawn and his wife Maria and their son Ryan, and Kirk and his wife Miriam; and sister Dana, along with several nephews and nieces.

Bain is remembered primarily as a bridge between groups and an ambassador for Quakers. Although for much of his life he considered himself Quaker, he was also involved with Methodists, the United Church of Christ, Episcopalians, and the Bennington interfaith group. He never considered himself Quaker to the exclusion of anything else but represented the best of Quakerism. He was committed to a deep concern for inequality between people and the violence and oppression that are used to maintain that inequality.

In his own words, “I began life as a Friend/Quaker and remain so today with a brief interlude as a Methodist and then UCC pastor. But spirituality for me is much deeper and broader than institutional religion. Whatever story you live out of is one of the most critical factors of our individual and collective journeys—along with the symbols we use to help us remember what’s really important.”

BENNINGTON MONTHLY MEETING

NORTHWEST QUARTERLY MEETING

Shawn Donovan
July 13, 1947 – February 19, 2018

Hanover Friends lost our member Shawn Donovan, 70, suddenly, on February 19, 2018. Raised in the Catholic church, Shawn first attended Hanover Friends Meeting in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Subsequently, he and his wife Margaret chose the Unitarian path for their family and helped to found the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Upper Valley in Norwich, VT. He loved his extended family and his children, Elias and Sarah, and maintained a warm friendship with Margaret in the years after their marriage ended in 1996.

Shawn returned to Hanover Friends in the early 2000s and became a member in 2004. He brought great energy, diverse skills, and passionate social activism to his work within and beyond the meeting for the 15 years that remained to him.

From an early age, Shawn was acutely aware of injustice. He named as his heroes Daniel Berrigan, whom he met in his high school years, and Dorothy Day, with whom he worked in the Catholic Worker Center in New York. Passionately opposed to the Vietnam War, he dropped out of the College of the Holy Cross to work with the Catholic resistance to the war, only returning several years later to complete his degree. In 1972 Shawn co-founded the Mustard Seed Catholic Worker’s Center in Worcester, MA. His association with this organization, whose members provide services to those in need while aiming to live according to spiritual values, continued through monthly trips for board meetings and service activities until his death.

He was a dedicated member of groups providing free monthly community dinners through the LISTEN organization in Lebanon, NH, annual luncheons for local senior citizens through the Black Community Center in Hanover, NH, and suppers at Dismas House in Hartford, VT.

Shawn’s search for truth in reading, in various faith communities, and annual retreats at St. Joseph’s Abbey, a Trappist monastery in Spencer, MA, fed his spirituality. It was many years before Hanover Meeting Friends knew the depth of Shawn’s roots in social justice work. We learned that his suspicion of today’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents grew from his personal experience in the early ’70s, when the Catholic anti-war community he worked with to remove draft files from Selective Service offices was infiltrated and raided by federal agents. Long quiet about these activities, in the ’90s Shawn came to understand their importance in the Vietnam War resistance and to share stories of his involvement with family, friends, and colleagues. In the 2000s, Shawn was proud to speak as an authority on Dorothy Day at a national conference in Miami.

A concern for the environment, developed and nurtured by summers spent on the Maine coast in his youth, life close to the land in New England in young adulthood, and study at Antioch New England, influenced his career in planning, engineering, and construction management. His activities helped lead to the development of several regional planning commissions and the creation of Advance Transit, which provides free bus service to riders in the Upper Valley.

Shawn used his planning skills and sense of justice when he worked with Rita McCaffrey, founder of two Dismas Houses in Vermont, to bring this program to our area. A Dismas House program provides supportive

transitional housing for people recently released from prison. Overcoming much public resistance, Dismas House of the Upper Valley opened in Hartford, VT, in 2014. Shawn spoke with pride of the success of many Dismas House residents, whose recidivism rate was markedly lower than that of others who had not completed its program.

His commitment to the value of each person and the protection of vulnerable and marginalized people propelled other projects as well. When homeless people congregating in Lebanon became the subject of police monitoring, Shawn insisted that homelessness is a community problem, not a police issue, and organized efforts to help these homeless people. He collected warm clothes and camping equipment, and one winter he housed a homeless person for several months. He encouraged the development of housing for chronically homeless and very-low-income people, and would have been happy to see the opening of the Parkhurst building in downtown Lebanon in June 2018.

In recent years, Shawn trained as a facilitator of the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), begun 30 years earlier when inmates at Green Haven Prison in New York State asked local Quakers to help them teach incarcerated youth to face the anger that led to their imprisonment and to resolve disputes without violence. Shawn served as a facilitator to AVP groups in prisons in Norfolk and Gardner, MA, and engaged other members of Hanover Friends in this work.

HANOVER MONTHLY MEETING

NORTHWEST QUARTERLY MEETING

Robert Stanley First
September 19, 1922 – May 25, 2019

Robert Stanley First (“Bob”) quietly passed away early Saturday morning, May 25, 2019. Bob was 96 years old at the time of his death and was surrounded by members of his family.

Bob was born on September 19, 1922, in Mt. Vernon, NY, the younger son of Lewis and Ruth (Gross) First. The Great Depression that occurred during his youth shaped Bob and set much of the course of his life. He was a serious student and loved mathematics, attending the University of Iowa, where he worked as a waiter to pay his way while earning his Bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering. Bob enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1944 and served on several ships as an electronic technician’s mate. He was honorably discharged in June 1946 following his last tour.

Bob moved to New York City, where he met and eventually married Nancy Genevieve Belcher of Darien, CT, in May 1955. They celebrated their 64th wedding anniversary just days before his death.

Bob and Nancy moved to Wilmington, DE, where their first child, Ginger Lee, was born. It was also in Wilmington that Bob and Nancy discovered a Friends Meeting where they began their lifelong devotion to the Quaker faith. Bob started a consulting firm in New York City and the family moved to Mt. Kisco, NY, where they had their second child, Katherine Ann. Mt. Kisco is where they raised their girls and made their home until 1992. They also joined and became deeply involved in the Quaker community at the Purchase (NY) Friends Meeting.

Bob returned to school to earn his Master’s degree in business administration from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Bob loved international travel and his consulting firm, Robert S. First, Inc. was very successful, expanding to offices in Brussels and Tokyo. Bob retired in 1991.

Bob and Nancy moved to Olympia, WA, in 1992 to live near family. Bob was an avid hiker and took advantage of many fantastic hikes in the Olympic and Cascade mountain ranges. After ten years of being in community with family and Quaker friends in Olympia, they returned to the east to be near daughter Katherine and her family in Leeds.

Northampton was Bob’s home for the remaining 17 years of his life, where he attended Northampton Friends Meeting, transferring his membership from Olympia Friends Meeting to Northampton in 2006. He enjoyed his grandchildren, continued to sip piping-hot coffee while reading the *New York Times* from cover to cover, and took over the job of shopping and cooking. Bob loved dogs and enjoyed taking his late, beloved dog Maggie for long walks in the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation area and later along the Northampton Bikeway.

Bob had a sharp wit and showed his affection for Friends with playful teasing. No matter how quick the response, Bob had another comeback at the ready. Some Friends were also fortunate to know a gentler side of Bob, and to enjoy his thoughtful conversations and kind heart.

Bob's voice and actions in the life of our Meeting served as a relentless and provocative reminder to act. He was impatient and never satisfied that Friends' efforts were adequate to the needs and sufferings of the world.

NORTHAMPTON MONTHLY MEETING

CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING

Ruth Estelle Taber Gates
June 27, 1927 – July 23, 2019

*I come to the garden alone, While the dew is still on the roses,
And the voice I hear falling on my ear, The Son of God discloses.*

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He tells me I am His own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there, None other has ever known.*

*I'd stay in the garden with Him, Though the night around me be falling,
But He bids me go; through the voice of woe, His voice to me is calling.*

This hymn, which Ruth Gates asked to have sung at her memorial meeting, captures her life in both practical and spiritual terms. Her long life was anchored in her Christian faith and in the small but abundant garden that she and her husband Don lovingly tended.

Born in Greenfield, MA, Ruth graduated from the Northfield School, where she enjoyed volleyball, basketball, and choral singing. She received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from Simmons College, and started her first job as a visiting nurse in Worcester. She met Don Gates in a non-Quaker church youth group in 1952 and married him after a brief courtship, just before he was called up for military service. They later joined Worcester Friends Meeting, transferring to Providence when they moved to Rhode Island in 1960.

Caring for others was central to Ruth's life. Her nursing jobs most often involved visiting new mothers and newborns. After she retired in 1982, she cared for an elderly aunt, and then for her husband during his final illness in 2008. She took a break from nursing while raising their four children, pouring her energy into her family. Her children could always find her in the kitchen, where they helped her bake cherry pies or can applesauce or tomatoes from the garden. The Meeting counted on Ruth's pies for potluck meals or on meeting work-days. She taught First Day School and served on the Sewing Committee. She also quietly drew in newcomers to the meeting, introducing them to other members and getting them involved in helping with coffee hour. Friends remember her quiet, steady presence; her caring visits when a new baby joined a meeting family; her warm sense of humor; her practical assistance with tasks that almost went unnoticed but undergirded the meeting community; and her authentic example of how to live a good life.

Ruth lived in the faithful assurance of God's living presence, reflected in Psalm 139, which was read at her memorial meeting: "O Lord, you have searched me and known me" Her daughter also shared one of Ruth's favorite poems, which showed the faith undergirding her life of service:

God hath not promised skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways all our lives through,
God hath not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, Peace without pain.

But God hath promised strength for the day,
Rest for the labor, Light for the way,
Grace for the trials, Help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, Undying love.

Ruth Gates died peacefully after a period of declining health, a few weeks after joyously celebrating her 92nd birthday with her extended family. We are grateful for her many gifts to our community.

PROVIDENCE MONTHLY MEETING

SOUTHEAST QUARTERLY MEETING

David M. Holdt
May 12, 1941 – December 6, 2019

David M. Holdt passed away peacefully from Alzheimer's Disease on December 6, 2019. Born in Cleveland in 1941, David grew up in Stratford, CT, and graduated from Stratford High School in 1959. David received a B.A. in government from Wesleyan University in 1963, an M.A. in history from Duke University in 1967, and a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study in the humanities and writing from Wesleyan in 1993. He was a lifelong lover of nature who once canoed the entire length of the Hudson River, as well as a skillful writer and an astute historian. A master teacher, David taught at Hotchkiss School from 1963 to 1965, Germantown Friends School from 1967 to 1970, Westledge School from 1970 to 1977, and Watkinson School in Hartford, CT, from 1978 to 2008. David also taught at the University of Hartford from 1995 to 2011, where he was given the Sustained Excellence in Teaching Award.

David was beloved by his students, who understood that, in spite of his fascination with content, his primary focus was always on their growth as human beings. Upon his death, their testimonies to David's impact on their lives were remarkable. As the parent of three former students offered:

If you are lucky, a few times in your life you will encounter someone whose heart is so massive, whose aim is so true, that they transform all who have the great good fortune to know them. David was a magician, a sorcerer for good, seeing beauty in everyone.

One former student wrote:

David was such a close family friend, advisor and teacher. I feel so lucky to have known him for the majority of my life and to have him there to celebrate all of the special milestones. We will miss him so much. His wisdom will continue to inspire me as a teacher for the rest of my life.

Another volunteered:

An indescribable loss. He was the Fred Rogers in our lives. The always available wisdom giver. I know how much he loved Robert Frost and I think it's fitting he passed when "the woods are lovely, dark and deep."

David's long commitment to Quakerism, nourished at Germantown Friends School, flowered at Hartford Friends Meeting, where David became a dedicated member, served as recording clerk, contributed to various committees, and regularly offered moving messages. He also served for several years on the board of Moses Brown School in Providence, RI.

David was a gifted and prolific writer whose work spanned multiple genres. He published poems, short stories, essays, prose, and plays; and attended the Breadloaf Writing Conference and Wesleyan Writers Conference, as well as serving as Artist-in-Residence at the St. Lawrence Theatre festival. For ten years he participated in the University of Connecticut Memoir Club. David also shared his poetry with many other writers in various poetry-writing groups including, most recently, the Poets of the River's Edge. The last few lines of his poem, *Sun Through Trees*, reflect David's generous spirit.

*The way to live is to get to your
 self, and give;
 to hang on there to what is real:
 that which you cannot touch but only
 feel.*

*No story ends,
 it just blends in.*

David's family always was a central focus of his life. He is survived by his loving partner, Karen I. Case; stepdaughter, Amanda Frost, and her husband, Michael, and son, Sef; his daughter, Brooke Stratton, her husband, Peter, and children James and Ada; and his son, Christopher Wood-Holdt, his partner, Jenna Wetzell, and their daughter, Avery. They will always cherish their times with David, especially the long walks in the woods, Red Sox games, and sitting around talking and laughing.

HARTFORD MONTHLY MEETING

CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING

Natalie Faith Pierce Kent Kempner
January 18, 1924 – November 14, 2019

Natalie Faith Pierce Kent Kempner, a long-time member of Brunswick Friends meeting, died on November 14, 2019. (She was always adamant about not using any other phrase to express our departure from this world.) She was born on January 18, 1924, to Gertrude Lindahl and George Kyle Pierce in Binghamton, NY. In a 2018 oral history interview with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, she noted that she got two big things from growing up: frugality from the Depression and pacifism from the war. Through a family she babysat for while attending Smith College in Northampton, she discovered the Society of Friends and joined the Northampton Friends Meeting. In her oral history she noted “One of the things that drew me to Quakerism was the ‘practice’ part of faith—finding things to do to witness to your faith.”

She married Orlow Albert Kent, a friend from her early school years, in 1947 and they settled in Ithaca, NY. In keeping with her commitment to putting her faith into action, in 1948 they set out for two years of voluntary service with the American Friends Service Committee in Munich, Germany. Working in Bad Aibling at the International Relief Organization’s Children’s Village, their job was to provide, as much as possible, a “home life” for some of the international displaced children who landed in the village after the war. After their first child was born in Munich in 1950, Natalie and Orlow returned to Ithaca, where they worked as co-directors of the Ithaca Children’s Home and where their second child was born. From 1951 to 1953 they lived at a low-income housing project in Cleveland while Orlow was in graduate school, and a third child was born there. The next four years saw them in Rhineland, WI, where Joe McCarthy was Senator. “It was a time when even my small job as International Project Director for the Girl Scouts Council was considered suspect. My reaction was to take a strong political stand!” Their youngest child was born in 1956.

During 1963 and 1964 the family lived in newly independent Tanganyika, East Africa, where Orlow directed the AFSC’s Voluntary International Service Assignments (VISA), which provided grass-roots work experience for young adults and alternative service for conscientious objectors to the draft. In 1964 Orlow died in an automobile accident, and Natalie and the children returned to Ithaca. Here, Natalie worked as program coordinator for the parents of Head Start children and then became a full-time student at Cornell. She earned an M.A. in teaching history and social studies, designing a program of African studies for Ithaca High School.

Natalie married Fritz Kempner (who had immigrated to the U.S. from Germany just before the war) in 1971, moving to Philadelphia where she taught elementary school, focusing on environmental education. She co-founded and directed the Norris Square Neighborhood Project, a non-profit bilingual learning center in a Puerto Rican neighborhood in Philly which is still active today. By 1981 she was a very active participant in Philadelphia’s Sanctuary Movement, giving shelter to Central American refugees at the Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting house. The Sanctuary work and the Norris Square project were very significant passions of hers.

In 1990 Natalie and Fritz retired and moved to Woolwich, ME, where they joined Brunswick Friends Meeting. Continuing her focus on action, Natalie served on the National Board of the American Friends Service Committee. At various times in her life she served as clerk of Friends meetings in Ithaca, Philadelphia, and Brunswick. Even when not clerking, she acted as a center around which the Brunswick Meeting swirled. She represented the Meeting at the Brunswick Peace Fair, drove other members to Meeting when they could not drive, participated in monthly play readings, and opened her Kennebec River-side home to the Meeting for potlucks and cookie baking. Most of all she relished sitting in the silence of unprogrammed meeting for worship, where she felt renewed. In her last visit with members of the Meeting, she asked that her love for the Meeting be passed on, and reminded us all to “be wise.”

BRUNSWICK MONTHLY MEETING
 FALMOUTH QUARTERLY MEETING

Mary Burnside Mangelsdorf
April 3, 1927 – October 24, 2018

Mary Burnside Mangelsdorf, 91, died peacefully after a brief illness on October 24, 2018, at Riddle Hospital in Media, PA, surrounded by family. A member of Sandwich Monthly Meeting on Cape Cod, she was active in West Falmouth Preparative Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, and Swarthmore Friends Meeting in Pennsylvania, where she and her husband, Paul, lived during the academic year for more than four decades.

Mary was born in Wilkes-Barre, PA, on April 3, 1927, the daughter of Malcolm MacNair Burnside, a Scottish immigrant who rose up through the ranks to become president of a local department store, and Helen DeRemer Burnside, a nurse. luded everything from facilitating meetinghouse rentals to creating the meeting's monthly newsletter and helping prepare for the annual Swarthmore Meeting "jumble sale" fundraiser. In West Falmouth she served as meeting librarian and was active in vocal ministry and in Children's Meeting (First Day School). Mary also engaged in significant research on the Quaker history of West Falmouth, giving a presentation at the Falmouth Historical Society and playing a role in a reenactment of an early Friends' business meeting. The Mangelsdorf family, with their four children, regularly attended New England Yearly Meeting Sessions, where Paul and Mary became the "Quaker Books People," running the Sessions bookstore together for many years. With Paul, she was involved in the creation of the new Friends hymnal, *Worship in Song*, published by Friends General Conference in 1996.

Mary is survived by her four children and their spouses: Helen Mangelsdorf and Roman Tybinko of Philadelphia; Paul Mangelsdorf III and Laurice Mangelsdorf of Atlanta, GA; Sarah Mangelsdorf and Karl Rosengren of Rochester, NY; and Martha Mangelsdorf and Roy Peabody of Boston, MA. She is also survived by her brother-in-law, Clark Mangelsdorf of Carmel, IN, as well as by five grandchildren and nine nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by both her husband and her brothers, Frank Burnside and Robert Burnside.

Mary will be deeply missed by her family and friends. She is remembered for her kind heart and lively intelligence, her integrity, and her concern for social justice. Her many interests included history, Quakerism, choral music, and politics. She had a great love of books and reading that dated back to her childhood and that permeated many aspects of her life, whether she was reading to a small child, working or volunteering in a library, relaxing with a good book, or sharing her insights about something she had read. She remained actively engaged in community, family, and intellectual life until just a few days before her death.

A Friends memorial service for Mary was held on March 30, 2019, at Swarthmore Friends Meeting. An additional memorial service celebrated her life at West Falmouth Meeting on June 29, 2019.

SANDWICH MONTHLY MEETING

SANDWICH QUARTERLY MEETING

Paul Christoph Mangelsdorf Jr
January 31, 1925 – March 6, 2015

Born on January 31, 1925, Paul Mangelsdorf joined the Religious Society of Friends in Chicago in the 1950s, at the same time as his wife, Mary Burnside Mangelsdorf. His early life was in a scientific, non-religious household, but he felt that Quakerism was a religion that did not conflict with his own life as a scientist. He graduated from Swarthmore College, where he met his future wife, and received his Doctorate from Harvard. He returned to Swarthmore to teach physics for 29 years, concurrently working as a research associate at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, where he worked summers, vacations, and sabbaticals. At Woods Hole he studied the chemical composition of oceans and their sediments. His research took him around the world and even up the Amazon River.

Living in both Swarthmore, PA, and Falmouth, MA, gave Paul a perspective on Friends that few will ever experience. He and Mary were part of the small group of Friends who in 1965 restarted the West Falmouth Preparative Meeting of Sandwich Monthly Meeting as an unprogrammed meeting, bringing it back to its 1685 roots. Previously the meeting had been open only in the summer for many years, and had before that been a pastoral meeting during the Gurneyite separation. Paul's devotion and affection for the meeting continued until his death. His engagement with the Society of Friends both in Swarthmore and West Falmouth led him to be a confident explicator of Quaker practice both to youth growing up in a meeting and to adults experi-

encing Friends' ways for the first time. Most summers from the '60s on, Paul and Mary attended New England Yearly Meeting Sessions with their children. He and Mary ran the Yearly Meeting bookstore and built it up into the large resource it is today. Paul participated in Yearly Meeting in other ways, serving on the Permanent Board and acting early on as advisor to the then newly hired secretary of Yearly Meeting, Jonathan Vogel-Borne, but most publicly and perhaps most joyously playing trumpet in the "coffee house" Dixieland band that marked the last night of Sessions. He had learned to play trumpet as a child, hardly missed an opportunity to play with Friends, and played for more than 20 years with the Falmouth Town Band.

Paul's Quaker life was active also in Swarthmore Meeting, where he would serve a simple breakfast to students coming to worship and often was called upon to explain Friends' ways at weddings and memorial meetings. His activities for Friends General Conference (FGC) included serving as a representative to the World Council of Churches and as a member of the committee that produced the FGC hymnal *Worship in Song* (published in 1996). In its inclusion of African-American hymns and spirituals, songs from the civil rights movement and anti-war protests of the '60s and '70s, as well as newly composed songs celebrating famous Quakers, the new hymnal reflects the rich spiritual diversity of 20th century Quakerism as well as a historical perspective. The historical notes included in the hymnal are mostly Paul's scholarly work. Paul also was a founding member of Friends Association for Higher Education, served on the board at Pendle Hill Conference Center, and in retirement volunteered at the FGC office.

Paul was a witty, aphoristic, and carefully gentle speaker, easy to like, brilliant in insight. He felt the world was endlessly fascinating and worth learning about, from the most local details of the Quaker cemetery surrounding the West Falmouth meetinghouse to abstruse science, the arts, and the sometimes recondite matters of history. He died on March 6, 2015, in Newtown Square, PA.

Paul is survived by his wife of 65 years, Mary Burnside Mangelsdorf; four children, Helen Mangelsdorf (Roman Tybinko), Sarah Mangelsdorf (Karl Rosengren), Paul Christof Mangelsdorf III (Laurice), and Mary Mangelsdorf (Roy Peabody); five grandchildren; a brother, Clark Mangelsdorf (Peggy); and nine nieces and nephews.

Two memorial services celebrating Paul Mangelsdorf's life were held in 2015, one in the spring at Swarthmore Meeting and one in the summer at West Falmouth Preparative Meeting. His ashes are buried in the West Falmouth Meeting's graveyard.

SANDWICH MONTHLY MEETING

SANDWICH QUARTERLY MEETING

Clarabel Hadley Marstaller
November 19, 1922 – December 2, 2019

Clarabel Marstaller, 97, died peacefully on December 2, 2019, in Brunswick, ME. Clarabel was the daughter of Milton and Freda Morris Hadley, born November 19, 1922, in Vermilion Grove, IL. She was the last surviving sibling of six: Mark, Robert, David, Ruth, and Phillip. Robert and Phillip died in infancy.

Clarabel graduated from Olney Friends School, Barnesville, OH, in 1940, and Earlham College in 1944, with a B.A. in mathematics. She worked for Eli Lilly Company for a year and taught for three years at Olney Friends School and Earlham College before she married Louis Marstaller of Freeport, ME, in 1948.

Clarabel was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, Friend, and friend. She loved people, especially her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. In her later years when she didn't see them very often, she got tremendous pleasure in talking on the phone and seeing pictures and videos of her grandchildren, and then great-grandchildren. These were some of her most joyous moments. She was devoted to her communities and communicated with people near and far, taking interest in their activities and families. Her Christmas card list numbered in the hundreds! When her mobility made travel difficult, she continued to correspond with many and appreciated visits.

She helped in the family business, the Maine Idyll Motor Court, and served as treasurer of its corporation for over 20 years. She did substitute teaching in Freeport and Brunswick during the 1950s and served as office secretary of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends from 1959 to 1982, while Louis was its field secretary. She and Louis opened their home to many travelling and local friends and Friends, generous with time, food, and hospitality. She was a mentor to many in her local meeting and broader community.

Clarabel was known for her deep faith. She wrote: "I thought I could be a good person without God's help, (but) realized I couldn't." She prayed and read the Bible and other religious works daily, and helped others on their spiritual journeys. She was courageous and stood up when she saw injustice, and was generous with her support of organizations that helped others.

Clarabel was a birthright and faithful Friend and member of Durham Friends Meeting from 1949. She served as presiding clerk, trustee, Sunday School teacher, choir director, organist, on Ministry and Counsel and on the Christian Education Committee, and was active in the Women's Society. She was recorded as a Friends minister for her gifts in ministry by Durham Friends Meeting and Falmouth Quarterly Meeting. She served the United Society of Friends Women of New England Yearly Meeting as president, newsletter editor, and treasurer, attending several triennial sessions of the United Society of Friends Woman International. She was active in Friends United Meeting for a number of years, serving on boards, as recording clerk and assistant clerk. She served several years as a representative to the Friends Committee on National Legislation in Washington, DC.

She was a member of the Freeport Woman's Club from 1968 and served it as president, treasurer, and on committees. She represented the Woman's Club on the Women's Legislative Council for many years and encouraged others to become and stay interested in issues that affect communities and our world.

She is predeceased by her husband Louis, daughter-in-law Judy (Robert's wife), and Judy's son Michael Burns.

She is survived by her children, David and wife Sally of Brunswick, ME; Nancy and husband David Brooks of Harpswell, ME; Robert of Savannah, GA; Thomas and wife Betsy of South Hampton, NH; grandchildren Wesley (wife Rebecca and their children Will and Pippa), Tess, Amelia, Syretha, Erik, Kris, Ashley, Darrik (wife Kate), and Lance.

DURHAM MONTHLY MEETING

FALMOUTH QUARTERLY MEETING

Michael N. Meller
December 26, 1935 – July 3, 2016

Michael N. Meller of New London, NH, generally known as Mike, died July 3, 2016, at the New London (NH) Hospital, surrounded by his family. Mike was born in Budapest, Hungary, on December 26, 1935. His parents were cultural but not assimilated Jews who saw the imminent rise of Nazism and Hitler and converted to Catholicism. Mike was baptized and attended the Christian Brothers School in Budapest during the war. His mother, Dorothy, wanted to leave the country for the United States, where they had relatives, but Mike's father, Victor, a fourth-generation lawyer, would not leave the country as an illegal immigrant. Consequently, they stayed in Budapest. Victor served time in Hungarian Jewish work camps that were hard but not fatal.

Dorothy was associated with Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved many Budapest Jews from Auschwitz. The Meller family lived in Swedish Protected Housing in Budapest. It was because Sweden was a neutral country that they were allowed to operate housing in the city during the war. The family has documentation to suggest that Dorothy worked for Wallenberg and was there when the Russians arrested him.

This was far from an ideal childhood for Mike. His own grandmother died after the Russians came in 1945 and had to be carried to the Jewish cemetery in a converted ox cart. Mike was frightened about being called a Jew and was reluctant to tell even close family for fear of being arrested or bullied.

After living in Sweden for a time, the family immigrated to the U.S. in 1948, when Mike was 12 years old. Eventually, his father found work at the Voice of America as a Hungarian broadcaster. Mike graduated from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY, with a B.S. degree in chemical engineering. He also graduated with a law degree from George Washington University, specializing in patent law. Mike gravitated to international work, as he knew four languages and felt the American establishment did not welcome him as a foreigner. He became very well regarded in patent law for founding one of the first patent-law journals and for his book, *International Patent Litigation*. In the 1980s Mike traveled extensively to Asia, Europe, and China, where he helped write patent laws. He also sponsored many Chinese interns at his law office.

Mike married Elizabeth Voelker in 1965 and they raised three children: Michael, Gretchen, and Katie. They lived in several places, but finally settled in Sleepy Hollow, NY. Liz worked as a visiting nurse in Upper Man-

hattan and Mike's law office was in the city as well, so they commuted together. Mike spent his early years as a patent examiner at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in Washington, DC. Later he worked as a patent attorney at General Electric Co. and then with Exxon. He had private practices first in Chicago and later in New York City in the international arena.

Mike taught at the law schools of the University of New Hampshire, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Fordham University, and wrote extensively on international patent law. He represented major U.S. companies as well as Japanese and European companies. The international travel that Mike's profession required was a high point in Liz and Mike's life together. Liz and Mike's children were introduced to international travel during some of these trips.

Mike remained a practicing Catholic until 1980, when the family found they could no longer embrace the teachings and practice. He and his family became Quakers in 1982 after finding so many "like-minded people" at the Chappaqua (NY) Friends Meeting. Mike served there in many capacities, including clerk of the meeting and on Ministry and Counsel, and was involved with Powell House, a Quaker conference and retreat center. The family especially enjoyed the Meeting for the strong sense of community it fostered. Mike ended up hiring more than a few members of the Meeting to work in his law firm. He also hired several former felons to work in his firm, where they began a new life both personally and professionally.

Mike and Liz retired to New London, NH, after Mike witnessed the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center from his office in New York City. They became members of Hanover (NH) Friends Meeting in January 2006. Two of their grandchildren, Jacob and Jersey, attend Hanover Friend Meeting's youth programs. A third grandchild, Sofia has attended on occasion.

Mike became involved in local politics. He carried particular concerns around issues of equality and justice, having seen the deterioration of life in Hungary during the war. He ran for the New Hampshire House of Representatives and was the president of the New London Democratic Party.

Mike was also active on several committees at Hanover Friends Meeting and especially enjoyed the men's group. This dedicated group came to visit Mike often when he became too ill to travel, and he greatly appreciated their visits. One friend related that because of Mike's frequent travels and experiences, he was especially tolerant of others and their foibles.

HANOVER MONTHLY MEETING

NORTHWEST QUARTERLY MEETING

Anne Hollingsworth Thomas Moore
August 15, 1929 – January 24, 2019

Anne Moore did not arrive at Northampton as an empty vessel. She came to us as an alabaster jar filled with precious ointment. It has been wonderful to learn the ingredients.

Anne Hollingsworth Thomas was born on August 15, 1929, and grew up in a small house on the edge of the Thomas family farm and tree nursery near Valley Forge, PA. She attended Old Eagle Elementary School, George School—where she was exposed to Quakerism—and Swarthmore College, graduating in 1951. After college, Anne worked at Baxter Labarch assistant at Penn in Philadelphia. After hitchhiking across the country with her sister Amy, Anne was cooking at a Friends General Conference in Cape May, NJ, when she met Tom Moore, who was attending the conference as part of his exploration of Quakerism.

Anne married Tom Moore in 1954 and they moved to Lansdowne, PA. In 1956 their first child, daughter Lydia, was born. In 1957 Ann and Tom moved to Washington, DC, to be co-directors of the International Students House. Their second child, Howard Thomas, was born in Washington in 1958. In 1960 they moved to Lawrence, KS, where Tom was director of the University of Kansas Student YMCA. Their third child, Charles David, was born in Lawrence. For the next two decades, while raising three children, Anne was active in a number of community institutions. She was one of the core members of the Oread (KS) Friends Meeting. She was a member of the board of the American Friends Service Committee and collected clothing for them. Anne was also active with the Friends Committee on National Legislation from 1957 until 2018. She sold cards for UNICEF and pecans for Koinonia Farms, a racially integrated farm community in Americas, GA.

Anne was a director of the Volunteer Clearing House, which connected organizations in need of volunteer labor with people seeking to do volunteer work. She was a supervisor of Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) volunteers, a founding member of the Lawrence Coalition for Peace and Justice, and an organizer

of Breakthrough, a mental-health support group. She was a founding member of the Lawrence Peace Center, organized Nuclear Freeze activities, and lobbied Bob Dole against the war in Vietnam.

Anne and Tom moved east to live with and care for her parents in 1983. She became active with Pendle Hill Conference Center, the American Friends Service Committee, Friends World Committee for Consultation, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, and Valley Friends Meeting (Wayne, PA).

Anne's father died in 1993. A year later, her daughter Lydia, a doctor in Kansas City, died in a car accident. In 1998 Anne and Tom moved to the Hickman, a Friends senior community in West Chester, PA. Anne joined the Chester County Peace Movement and was an early supporter of the Nonviolent Peace Force. She served on the Hickman Building Committee and was active in West Chester Friends Meeting.

In 2008 Anne's husband Tom died; a month later her mother died. Anne's sister Amy died in 2013, and that summer Anne moved to Northampton, MA, to be near her son Howard and his family. She quickly made new connections, becoming an active and vibrant presence in Northampton Friends Meeting and attending New England Yearly Meeting. At Northampton Meeting, she served as clerk of Pastoral Care Committee and as elder to the Meeting clerk. She became active with the local chapter of the American Friends Service Committee, the Pioneer Valley Interfaith Refugee Action Group, and Swarthmore Alumni. She truly valued each of the people she knew throughout her life and maintained many connections.

When first meeting this quiet, tender, forceful woman, it was clear that her life was a continuous expression of faith into action. Anne had the uncanny capacity to mentor younger folks into engagement in social action without communicating disappointment if her mentees did not pick up on the mission she regarded as essential. She had the rare gift of being able to cast seeds of inspiration onto the earth, hoping that some rooted and grew, and knowing that some would never take.

Her death marked the end to a decline that had been increasing over the previous year. Yet Anne continued to participate as much as her health allowed, walking with her walker from her apartment to vigils in downtown Northampton. She spearheaded and coordinated the Voluntary Carbon Tax Initiative at Northampton Meeting, and we are still trying to find ways to fill all the roles in which she served our community and for our community. Anne continued to grapple with her own understanding of race and class, a feeling of pride in her own family history, and perhaps embarrassment at her own unearned privilege. She continued to strive to express her ideals through action. Action was important to her. Many of Anne's conversations wrapped up with "Well, this isn't getting the dishes done."

Anne is deeply missed in our Meeting and by the many people whose lives she touched and inspired.

NORTHAMPTON MONTHLY MEETING

CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING

Elizabeth Bradford Foulds Noel
October 24, 1930 – January 23, 2019

Brad Noel was known for her dedication to Hartford, her students, her family, and travel, as well as for being a cheerful participant through it all.

Born in West Hartford, CT, Elizabeth Bradford Foulds, or "Brad" as she was known, lived most of her life near her home town. At least 60 of those years were spent attending Hartford Monthly Meeting of Friends with her family.

After graduating from Hall High School in West Hartford, Brad attended Oberlin College in Ohio because it was co-ed and didn't have sororities. She earned her B.A. in history there in 1952 and then spent a summer volunteering in European workcamps sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). At Cornell University, where she went for a graduate program in guidance counseling, she met her husband, Don Noel, at a meeting of Young Friends. He had attended Friends' summer camps and was a pacifist and conscientious objector. They were married on August 29, 1953.

The early years of their marriage were spent in Japan, where they directed workcamps for AFSC and Don fulfilled his alternate draft service obligation. They then traveled home through Hong Kong, Vietnam, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Israel and, finally, Europe, where they directed another work camp in Berlin. In later years, they traveled around the world again, and twice went halfway around and back!

Brad and Don built their first home in New Hartford, CT, from a Japanese design, often with the help of family or friends from Hartford Meeting, which they had begun attending. Daughter Emily was born in 1958

and son Ken in 1960. In 1967 they moved to a racially changing community in Hartford called Blue Hills, where they lived until 2018, both of them being very active in community affairs.

Brad's professional life was spent in service to students in Hartford schools. She was a guidance counselor and then head of the guidance department at Weaver High School for 25 years. She pioneered the use of computers in maintaining guidance records, led a student exchange with Japan, co-wrote a booklet encouraging young women to take control of their own lives, and helped hundreds of students become the first in their families to attend college.

In subsequent years, she was the first woman trustee of the Fox Foundation, which awarded scholarships to Hartford students, and served four terms on the Hartford Board of Education. Brad had a lovely way of getting the attention of her superiors there who felt they were too busy to see her. She would bring a bouquet of garden flowers to the secretary with a reminder that she wanted to see "the boss," who somehow then became available! She later used her vast experience with public schools to initiate and host a public-access TV program, *Brad's Beat*, dealing with city schools.

In addition to her international travels, for many years Brad and her family enjoyed a vacation home in Jamaica and were part of a group of friends from Hartford who bicycled 70 miles for concerts and camping at Tanglewood, MA. At home she loved her garden and the birds who visited there, enjoyed canning, sewing, knitting, and mowing her own lawn. She taught First Day School in the early years at Hartford Meeting, and later ensured that her greeters committee made newcomers and visitors feel welcome. With other Friends, she helped start a women's book club that is still going today. She and Don loved and supported the arts in Hartford.

While her son Ken predeceased her, her daughter Emily has continued to live in Hartford, and grandson, TJ, was a source of pride. During Brad's final years she was tragically robbed by Alzheimer's Disease of her memories of the full and rewarding life she had lived. Three years ago, she and Don moved to Seabury, a retirement community in Bloomfield, CT, Brad in the memory unit. She died while being cared for in the skilled-nursing unit there.

HARTFORD MONTHLY MEETING

CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING

Stella Slawin Penzer
September 9, 1921 – August 7, 2018

Stella Slawin Penzer, 96, died on August 7, 2018, at home in the Old North End of Burlington, VT, embraced by family and friends.

Stella and her twin brother, Lazar ("Lolek"), were born on September 9, 1921, to Ala Wajnsztejn Slawin and Szaja Slawin. Stella graduated from the Warsaw School of Nursing in spring 1942, after it was relocated to the Warsaw Ghetto. She escaped the Ghetto shortly thereafter and survived by assuming the gentile identity of Sabina Gasiorowska. Her parents meanwhile were killed by the Nazi-led genocide and buried in a mass grave in their hometown of Otwock, Poland, in August 1942. Her aunt Szenka Wajnsztejn, uncle Abram Willendorf, and cousin Aleksandr perished at Treblinka that same month. Her twin Lolek was recognized as a Jew and shot dead by a police informant.

Stella met her future husband, Victor Penzer, in a displaced persons camp after the war. Together, they came to the United States as refugees and settled in the Boston area in 1950. In their Boston apartment, Stella found a discarded copy of *The Deepening Stream* by Vermont author Dorothy Canfield (later Dorothy Canfield Fisher). Considered a biographic novel, this is an account of a girl growing up into the fullness of womanhood and marrying into a Quaker family. Matey, the protagonist, helps in the relief efforts in France during World War I. Pacifism is a strong element in the story. *The Deepening Stream* became a treasured family book.

In 1962–63 Stella and her family took in 18-year-old Moses Scott, a black youth whose Virginia county had closed its schools to protest desegregation. The placement was under the aegis of the American Friends Service Committee initiative, Prince Edward County, VA, Emergency Placement Program. Moses finished high school while living with the Penzers. So began the family's first contact with Friends Meeting in Cambridge.

Stella worked tirelessly for civil rights, nuclear disarmament, ecological conservation, and many causes relating to peace and reconciliation. She boycotted Woolworth's during the lunch counter sit-ins by Black

students in 1960, followed by her opposition to American involvement in Vietnam. In 2001, she joined demonstrations to oppose any military response to the terrorist attack at the World Trade Center. For nearly 40 years, Stella sent letters to the *Boston Globe* focused on peace and social justice.

Throughout this period, the Society of Friends was a central point for her inspired activism.

In 2012, Stella moved to Burlington, VT, to live with her daughter, Martha Penzer. Stella's love of life was irrepressible and nowhere more evident than in dancing. She was dancing in the last months of her life—at Burlington music festivals and in the streets. Stella's great joys also included poetry, music, friends, and family. She is survived by her beloved children Martha, Daniel, and Rosita (Rosie) Hopper, son-in-law Roy Hopper, two grandchildren, cousins, and many friends.

Stella attended meeting for worship at Burlington Monthly Meeting with Martha and Martha's partner, Paul Hood, where she often exclaimed "I love the Quakers!" Among the many poems penned by Stella is the following verse.

Brooklyn Friends Meeting—November 17, 1985

*Shadows above the white-creamy
windowsill
giggly, squiggly, volatile
exchange vows with pyracantha bows [sic].*

*Pyracantha in orange and green truth,
shadows on the white-creamy ceiling
their testimony into the Silence spilling.*

*The Silence tolerant, forbearing
Welcomes all—is not forswearing
Agnostic nor believer.*

*Unruffled by accidental sounds, stillness
You bring respite from the wordy world.
Into your presence, joys and sorrows flow
to be sustained by tranquil glow.*

BURLINGTON MONTHLY MEETING
NORTHWEST QUARTERLY MEETING

Jean Elmer Robinson
December 4, 1927 – January 21, 2017

Jeanie Elmer Robinson died at her home at Kendal at Hanover on Saturday, January 21, 2017. The daughter of Wellington and Elizabeth Taylor Elmer, and step-daughter of Paul M. Butterworth, she was born in Bronxville, NY, in 1927, and grew up in West Hartford, CT.

Jeanie weathered some difficult times as well as wild adventures and rich experiences throughout her lifetime. From age two to seven, she lived with her grandparents while her parents traveled seeking a cure for her father's asthma—leaving her with a sense of abandonment that never fully left her. After her father's death, her mother married a birthright Quaker, Paul Butterworth, who was a founder of the Hartford (CT) Monthly Meeting of Friends. Paul was a loving and attentive father, and gave Jeanie an early introduction to Quakerism. She attended George School for a year and then transferred to the Walnut Hill School in Natick, MA, to be closer to the family during the war.

Jeanie had an early interest in nursing, and started working in the operating room at Hartford Hospital when she was 15. She was on duty when victims of the Hartford Circus Fire came to the hospital, an experience that affected her profoundly.

Jeanie graduated from Smith College in Massachusetts in 1950. She attended the Yale University School of Nursing from 1953 to 1954 and earned a Master's degree in nursing. She met her future husband, Franklin Robinson, who was at Yale training as an Episcopal minister, and they were married soon afterwards. She worked as a nurse in Connecticut before their son Morgan was born in 1955. When he was still a baby, the

family moved to the Philippines for three years as missionaries for the Episcopal Church. Jean and Franklin served at the Brent School in Baguio and Holy Trinity Church in Zamboanga City.

During their time in the Philippines, their daughters Beth, Mary, and Deborah were born. While in Zamboanga, Beth contracted polio, which caused paralysis in one leg. Their son, Morgan, was four years old; Mary one year; and their daughter, Deb, only a month old at the time. The family moved back to West Hartford, and then to Rochester, NY, where Jeanie devoted herself to Beth and her recovery while working part time, serving as a clergy wife, and managing a large family.

In Rochester the family's ministry included joining an African American church, where Jean sang in the choir and formed lifelong friendships. When Jean and Franklin decided to leave Rochester in 1965, Jeanie planned a journey following the route of Saint Paul. The 4-month camping trip took the family across the Atlantic to England and through Europe to the Middle East, visiting family friends, traveling off the beaten track, and experiencing many wonders.

After this odyssey, the family lived in Princeton, NJ, for a year, then in Greenwich, CT, from 1966 to 1973, where Franklin served as minister at a large Episcopal church. Their youngest son, Ken, was born in 1968. Jean worked as a public health nurse and taught at Fairfield University. The marriage unraveled and the couple divorced in 1972 after 20 years of marriage.

Jeanie moved to Hanover, NH, in 1973 and returned to nursing and teaching at Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital, where she worked for 20 years. She was a parishioner of St. Thomas Episcopal Church for many years.

When Kendal at Hanover opened in 1991, Jeanie moved in and made her way back to Quakerism. She became a member of the Hanover Friends Meeting and immersed herself in Quaker activities and reflection. Jeanie loved being at Kendal. She loved the Quaker faith and practice, and was very proud to be a Quaker. She served for several years as clerk of the Quaker worship group at Kendal and on Ministry and Counsel of Hanover Meeting.

She was friendly, welcoming, and very caring of others. Jeanie enjoyed traveling and adventure. She participated in College Cevenol, a work camp in post-war France; survived an Austrian avalanche; camped for four months in Turkey, the Holy Land, Greece, and Europe with her young family; traveled in Nepal and Bhutan; stayed in an ashram in Bali and in village homes in the Cook Islands, American Samoa, and Fiji; and was a member of an American medical team studying geriatrics in China. In her 50s she got into shape for a trek led by Tenzing Norgay, a Nepali-Indian Sherpa mountaineer who was one of the first two individuals to reach the summit of Mount Everest. Her time in Sikkim (in the Himalayas) hiking with Tenzing was a peak experience of her life.

She had many hobbies: She enjoyed reading biographies, making pottery, doing puzzles, woodworking, studying Renaissance art, watching old movies, kayaking, and cutting brush around her beloved Squam Lake. She also spoke French and German.

Most of all she was devoted to her large family: her sister, Lucy Townsend of Wellesley, MA; her former husband, Franklin Robinson of Sarasota, FL; her children, Morgan Robinson (and partner, Patti Waller) of Seattle, WA; Beth Robinson (husband, Alan Dehmer) of Chapel Hill, NC; Mary Mailand (husband, Ron) of Center Sandwich, NH; Deborah Robinson (husband, Jay Cary) of Lyme, NH; and Kenneth Robinson of Pittsburgh, PA; and grandchildren, Noah and Zoe Dehmer, Sam and Dillon Mailand, and Ellenora and Rowan Cary, as well as many nieces, nephews, and cousins. She was predeceased by two stepbrothers, Oliver and Harrison Butterworth, stepsister Virginia Parmalee, and a foster sister, Shizue Dobashi.

Throughout her life, Jeanie liked planning things—possibly because her own life deviated from the expected. As a young mother, she worked to balance the many demands involved with having five children. As she got older, she struggled with depression and slowly turned inward and became more isolated. As with all of us, she had her public life and the parts of her seen only by those who knew her well.

Jeanie was very caring and giving to many people—families she stayed in touch with and supported in the Philippines for many years, hospital patients and coworkers, students, neighbors, friends, family members. She had a loving and welcoming smile that was enjoyed by all who knew her. She will be loved and remembered around the world and is greatly missed at the Kendal community and at Hanover Friends Meeting.

HANOVER MONTHLY MEETING

NORTHWEST QUARTERLY MEETING

Leon “Jack” Ross
October 16, 1928 – June 5, 2019

Jack Ross, age 90, died at his home in Wellesley, with his loving children, Wendyl and David, at his side.

Jack was born in the “People’s Republic of Cambridge,” the youngest of four children of Somerville Alderman David Y. Ross and Amy (Irving) Ross. He was a WWII-era veteran of the U.S. Navy and spent most of his working life as an active member of the Graphic Communications Conference union member in the lithography trade. He married Ruth Georgette Perry in 1951 and together they raised their family in South Weymouth, MA. In addition to his two children, he leaves four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. He was the last family member of his generation.

Jack’s passions included current events, civil rights, politics, the Patriots and Red Sox, conversation, humor, gardening, and constant self-improvement—physical, mental, and spiritual. In retirement he finally found time to go to college. At Mass Bay he delighted in the challenges of “keeping up” with his young classmates and was honored to see several of his humorous short stories and poems published in the college paper and magazine.

A “Friend of Bill’s” for 49 years, Jack was a dependable presence in his local meetings and reached out with compassion and humor to guide countless others along the path to sobriety. Jack’s humility did not lead him to speak of his many acts of generosity and service.

He sought his Higher Power in the company of Friends and made his spiritual home at Wellesley Friends Meeting. He particularly enjoyed the AA meetings at New England Yearly Meeting Sessions.

For 32 years Jack lived with his daughter, Wendyl, in the Wellesley Friends meetinghouse. Together, their care of the building, the grounds, and of the meeting community was a valuable and much appreciated ministry.

Jack is deeply missed by us all; we wish him “fair winds and following seas.”

WELLESLEY MONTHLY MEETING

SALEM QUARTERLY MEETING

Marlee Turner
February 16, 1933 – November 28, 2018

Marlee was ebullient. Like a high-energy blacksmith, she always had as many irons jammed in the fire as possible. She loved to be creative and get things started. It could get chaotic but her good-hearted enthusiasm was irrepressible. She was feisty and compassionate. A lifelong Quaker, she always sought a Spirit-led life.

Marlee Turner of Raymond, ME, died peacefully on November 28, 2018, in Enchanted Oaks, TX, at the age of 85. Marlee was born in Bronxville, NY, to Quaker parents Henry Chandlee Turner, Jr. (son of the founder of Turner Construction Company), and Virginia Ann (Melick) Turner. The family moved where Henry’s construction work took him, including several years in the Philadelphia area, where they attended Haverford Meeting. (Turner Construction Company built several buildings at Swarthmore College.)

Marlee graduated from an all-girls school, Rosemary Hall in Greenwich, CT. She went to Swarthmore College for 2 years, then finished at Stanford University, where she received her Bachelor’s degree in education. She began a career in teaching in the Greenwich area. She met John “Jay” Whitcraft when he sailed his yacht into the Indian Harbor Yacht Club in Greenwich. They married and together raised three boys, John, Steven, and David, where Jay’s work with IBM took them—Cincinnati, Dallas, and Los Angeles. Never content with staying at home, Marlee was active in the League of Women Voters, and in Los Angeles co-founded the public relations consulting firm CKT Associates (which had critical assignments leading to the success of the 1984 Olympics and the start of the Los Angeles “Metro” transit system). During their time in California, the family attended Sylmar Friends Meeting in the San Fernando Valley. In the early 1970s Marlee’s marriage ended and she moved to Maine, where she became an owner of Northern Pines Health Resort and Bed and Breakfast in Raymond, ME. She began attending Portland Friends Meeting, where she was active throughout the remainder of her life. Over the past several years, Marlee went to Texas for Thanksgiving with family and to spend the winter with the many friends she met in the area.

Quakerism was always important to Marlee. She was raised in the Quaker tradition in New York and Philadelphia and at Swarthmore College. For the last few decades she was an involved member of Portland Friends Meeting (PFM) and was also active in Falmouth Quarter. As she began spending winters in Texas, she started sojourning with Dallas Friends Meeting. She also supported American Friends Service Committee and the historic Quaker Ridge Meetinghouse in Casco, ME. We will miss her profound vocal ministry, which was delivered in a few brief sentences.

Marlee loved to build connections with people. This seemed to motivate her in all areas of her life, from her work as founder and manager of Northern Pines health spa to welcoming visitors to Meeting. She ran for the office of State Representative for her district in Maine, and although not elected, she met many new people who became friends. In her Bridgton, ME, community, she was active in many groups including local politics, the Rotary Club service projects, and senior lunches at the community center. On her recent annual Maine-to-Texas train rides, she claimed that they always generated at least one permanent email friend.

Marlee loved to help others connect. Many have commented that this was one of her gifts in her work in Northern Pines; for example, connecting guests with practitioners of the healing arts. Several PFM events were held at Northern Pines, connecting her work and her meeting. Marlee volunteered to visit all meetings in Falmouth Quarter. As she traveled she would enthusiastically work to build connections between meetings. Recently she invented the After Meeting Lunch by standing at the rise of meeting to invite any and all to have lunch for fellowship at some small local restaurant.

Marlee really engaged with her health challenges. She was diagnosed with both cancer and multiple sclerosis in the 1970s. Her thyroid was removed and her cancer was in remission. Her MS slowly reduced her mobility. Her health spa shrank to a bed and breakfast, then to an Air BnB, but each iteration reflected her welcoming care and her belief in nature's restorative power. As she dealt with MS, she treated herself based on her own study and intuition, even against the advice of doctors—a strategy that many of her doctors would come to acknowledge was effective. We will always remember Marlee's faith and courage in these last years as MS decreased her mobility even more. She would use crutches or her walker to climb over obstacles to get to a new lunch place, and let her laughter overcome all.

Marlee lived in the present and was hopeful about what was coming next in her colorful life. Portland Friends Meeting is grateful to have had so many years with Marlee's ebullient spirit.

PORTLAND MONTHLY MEETING

FALMOUTH QUARTERLY MEETING

Greg Williams
August 28, 1949 – February 14, 2019

Greg began his faith life in the arms of his local Catholic parish in New York. The life of prayer and service suited him, and he decided in high school to pursue monastic life. In high school, often coming home late from church activities, Greg would bring his baby sister some kind of sweet and assure her of his love. His departure for the novitiate was a hard blow.

Greg found life as a novice deeply rewarding, but either was not invited or chose not to take his vows after tensions arose when he attended a Black Panther trial. He eventually found his way to the Third Order of the Franciscans, a fellowship of lay individuals committed to following the ideals of St. Francis, an association he cherished throughout his life. Justice leaders who shared Greg's Catholic roots, especially Oscar Romero and Phil and Dan Berrigan, always held a special influence in his heart and thinking.

The civil rights era and accompanying civil unrest, the horrors and absurdities of the Vietnam War, and the nuclear arms build-up all demanded Greg's engagement as a young black man with acute spiritual and ethical sensibilities. He found the violence perpetrated against poor people and black and brown people intolerable, and never missed an opportunity to name it and call out those complicit in it. He marched, protested, sat in, and organized.

Unswervingly committed to the "least among us," Greg worked in the 1980s with a street ministry that approached people who were homeless as equals and leaders. For decades, he moved between communities of color and Quaker circles, bearing witness and urging those with privilege to take responsibility for transformation. Greg was a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War who drew inspiration from both Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, whom he called Brother Martin and Brother Malcolm, and from Quakers

Bayard Rustin and Barrington Dunbar. His own prophetic voice in our Quaker world made many uncomfortable and strained relationships. But his most consistent critics were often his devoted admirers.

His ministry among us posed many questions; important among these was the price of having among us a Friend whose witness was, in spite of Greg's personal gentleness, more prophetic than comforting. Essential to this Friend's life and work was a singular focus on the message with which he had been entrusted. Working with him required a clear-eyed choice; he welcomed the help and comradeship of others, but he would not be diverted from his primary task of building bridges between mostly white Quaker bodies and communities of color.

Greg's formal involvement with Quakers began in his mid-twenties, with a job in the American Friends Service Committee's Cambridge office in 1975, which required him to attend New England Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions. As he related shortly before his death in a series of interviews conducted by John Fuller, he soon decided that "if I'm going to really do this and learn about Quakers, I've got to be there." Instead of attending just to do a workshop, he began to stay for the whole week. "What I did was hook onto Doris Ashley, and Jan Hoffman. Jan Hoffman! As I wandered through the world, she was my support within Quakers—and she knows a lot about Quakers!" At Sessions, Greg found community among the youth workers. "We decided, 'I don't want to go to meeting. Why would I want go to meeting? It's boring! Let me hang out with Young Friends. That's where the action is. That's where I can offer them stuff.'" Many adults who are active in the Yearly Meeting today remember Greg as a Resource Person during their teen years. Then and afterwards, Greg unfailingly saw and named the Young Friends as full moral and political members of our Quaker community and the world. Many parents among us also warmly recall his more recent care for their babies and toddlers, as in his later years he often staffed the childcare program during Sessions. With children of any age, he was a loving and unflappable guide who called forth integrity and courage.

Greg's employment with the Service Committee ended in 1984, but he remained involved with the organization as a member of local and regional governance committees in New England, AFSC's nationwide Third World Coalition and National Affirmative Action Committee, and the Corporation. In 2014 he joined AFSC's newly formed Board Advisory Committee on Community, Equality, and Justice. The AFSC Board attests in its memorial minute for Greg that through these many forms of service, he contributed greatly to the Service Committee's understanding of structural racism and the need to address it both within and beyond the organization.

Greg's first membership in the Society of Friends was at New Bedford (MA) Monthly Meeting, and he always recalled his collaboration with others who were also dedicated to reviving and sustaining that meeting, as one of the spiritual treasures of his life. His many political activities in the city of New Bedford included a run for mayor which, as Greg wryly recalled later, featured a visit by Jesse Jackson—to campaign for Greg's opponent!

His membership was transferred to Beacon Hill Friends Meeting in May 2014. For several years he and other local Friends maintained the Jamaica Plain Worship Group, which initially met in Friends' homes but eventually, led by Greg and others, chose to meet publicly—at the First Baptist Church, and later in a trailer out front during repairs to the church building after a fire. It was a precious hope of Greg's to start a truly accessible Quaker meeting along the lines of a storefront church, embedded in community and actively engaged in justice and outreach.

Though he bore all change with equanimity, the end of the worship group was a disappointment to him. A few months before his death, describing his frustration with the weakness of efforts to bring more Friends of color into our meetings, Greg reflected: "There's such wonder and beauty in the Society of Friends. That's what makes me sad. I get to taste that wonder, and other people taste that wonder, but most people don't." An active Yearly Meeting Friend, Greg served on the Peace and Social Concerns; Racial, Social, & Economic Justice; Clerks Nominating; and Sessions committees. He facilitated workshops at Sessions, and served as a Reading Clerk at meeting for business. He joined the Faith & Practice Revision Committee in 2013, and is quoted in the "Extracts" sections of the forthcoming edition.

Greg's vocal ministry often called us to tap into Quakers' historic legacy of courageous witness. He lamented that "we don't, as Quakers, know our history well enough so that it's beating in our hearts." He delighted in studying and sharing the lives of brave change-makers from every tradition, feeling that if this kind of education were more fully incorporated into Friends' practice, we would be bolder and more united in our corporate witness. Yet respect for those who came before us, whether Quaker luminaries or civil rights icons, was to Greg no excuse for complacency or delay. Rather, he insisted that the work of the Friends who came

before, while it should inspire and guide us, is still not completed. The revered leaders who came before us were often limited by unexamined acceptance of some forms of injustice, even as they accomplished powerful changes and opened the space for more truth to be revealed. Those of us lucky enough to have heard him will not forget Greg's beautiful voice exhorting each and all of us—now and here—to keep moving toward radical solidarity and true integration.

In the mid-2000s, Greg started a listserv through which he sent out spiritual reflections, and he received a grant from the NEYM Legacy Fund to launch "Stone of Hope," a ministry originally envisioned as a way to move closer to starting a justice-oriented, fully inclusive Quaker meeting or worship group. Once started, though, the ministry evolved in response to new light—including from a joy-filled collaboration between Greg and Boston-based drummer and educator Toussaint Liberator. But Stone of Hope was also hampered in its growth by Greg's increasingly unstable health, and by disorganized oversight resulting from a mix of Greg's orneriness, a persistent lack of unity in his home meeting about the validity of his ministry, the endemic over-commitment of Friends in New England, and the challenges of cell phones. There was frustration. There was grace. As is generally the way, the grace has outlasted the frustration: A monthly Stone of Hope drumming and conversation circle at Cambridge Friends Meeting, led by Toussaint Liberator, is now in its third year of gathering and inspiring people.

In the months since Greg died, many people have shared some small, precious story about being touched by his grace at a key point in their lives. Many of these are memories of interacting with him in his role as an overnight security guard at hospitals and universities, a position that not everyone would recognize as an opportunity for ministry. Greg was not afraid of sadness in others, which meant that in a crowded space that might feel very lonely to a person carrying a heavy burden, he would come right over, kind and unflustered and present, and you could breathe again. Quaker meetings are sometimes challenged to fully welcome people who behave in unusual or alarming ways—but here, too, Greg's embrace was always immediate and unfettered.

In fact, he wasn't afraid of much. As one Friend summed up Greg's approach to his own personal health and life situation, "Whatever will happen, will happen." Toward the end of his life especially, this attitude often placed a burden on others, leaving his community to wonder whether our duty was only to support him, or also to challenge him to apply his guiding principles closer to home. Most confusing for some of us, as we look back, is the question of whether we should have urged Greg more strongly to attend to damaged relationships in his own life. Would addressing these issues with the same courage he showed in other areas not only have brought healing, but also cleared some vital channel for his ministry to thrive?

Greg was at home, and a sojourner, wherever he went. He was a Quaker, and a Franciscan. He was a militant and a peacemaker; angry and sad; patient and restless; surrounded by friends and a loner; eager for peace, ready to provoke; ever the same, always on the move. He was a messenger, translator, interpreter, bridge-builder, and provocateur. Many in his Quaker community barely knew him after 30 or 40 years, but respect, admire, and love him nonetheless.

Friend Greg aspired in his youth to the rigorous silence of Thomas Merton's Cistercians—but his memorial meeting began with the raucous, thunderous, roiling sounds of African drums in the cultivated stillness of a Quaker meeting room. It was the kind of mischievous disruption of expectations that he thrived on. He dropped his stone into our pond, and the ripples go on.

BEACON HILL MONTHLY MEETING

SALEM QUARTERLY MEETING

Paul Manthey Zorn Jr.
May 8, 1927 – April 29, 2016

Paul Zorn was a weighty Friend who carried himself Lightly.

Paul Manthey Zorn was born on May 8, 1927, in New Haven, CT. He kept his boyhood love of learning and adventure throughout the course of his life.

Paul enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1945 after graduating from high school. Following his Navy service, Paul attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, graduating in 1950 with a degree in chemical engineering. While at MIT, he was a founding member of the Logarithms, an a cappella singing group. On a visit to his sister Sue at Bryn Mawr to attend the Army/Navy football game, Paul met Sue's good friend Sally Brown. Paul and Sally were married at Sally's home in Winnetka, IL, on August 30, 1952.

Paul and Sally began their lives together in Reading, PA, where they joined the Religious Society of Friends. They resided in various neighborhoods around Philadelphia, including Concord Park, a planned integrated community dedicated to achieving racial integration in a suburban setting.

Finding work in the chemical industry unfulfilling, Paul pursued an alternative and in 1960 received a Master's degree in teaching from Harvard University. He and Sally moved to Wycombe in Bucks County, PA, where they lived for 42 years. Paul taught chemistry and environmental sciences at William Tennant High School and was the faculty advisor for the astronomy club, inspiring scores of young scientists and stargazers. He designed the sundial placed around the Creation Pole at Bucks County Community College. While living in Wycombe, Paul was an active member of Wrightstown Meeting and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, participating in the work of many committees, including a restructuring of the Yearly Meeting.

Paul was a man of many interests. He served on the Mohawk Canoe Club River Rescue Team, which focused on canoeing on the Delaware River. He founded the Wrightstown Township Parks and Recreation Board. Paul and Sally, both avid bicyclists, took several bicycle trips to places such as the Canadian Rockies and the Mississippi River valley, as well as Belgium, France, Germany, and New Zealand.

Paul retained his love of music and reading all his life. He shared his love of reading by tutoring in literacy programs and working in prisons. After retiring from teaching, Paul developed an interest in the visual arts and produced a number of photomontages and screen prints.

In 2003, the Paul and Sally moved to Northampton, MA, and immediately started attending Northampton Friends Meeting, transferring their membership from Wrightstown Friends the following year.

Paul generously shared his time and gifts with Northampton Friends, whether introducing a college-bound young Friend to MIT or ensuring the Meeting's heating and air-conditioning system operated efficiently.

Paul's presence in our Meeting was a gift that we cherish.

NORTHAMPTON MONTHLY MEETING

CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING

Epistles

General Epistle

“Let me make the songs for the people, / Songs for the old and young; / Songs to stir like a battle-cry / Wherever they are sung. / Not for the clashing of sabres, / For carnage nor for strife; / But songs to thrill the hearts of men / With more abundant life.”¹

To Friends Everywhere,

The 360th Annual Sessions of New England Yearly Meeting met virtually over the course of ten days in Eighth Month 2020, in the midst of quadruple crises—a global pandemic, the ongoing epidemic of racism, a climate disaster in the form of Hurricane Isaias, and nationwide political unrest. The time for us to change is now.

684 Friends joined us, of whom 150 were under the age of 35 and 53 were visitors from outside our Yearly Meeting. We were grateful to be joined remotely by Friends from Kenya, Britain, Cuba, El Salvador, Canada, and Mexico, as well as a number of Friends from across the United States.

We were reminded at the opening celebration to treat our respective locations as holy spaces, and to view our devices as part of our pathway to the Divine. In the agenda for our business sessions we set aside the organizational work of the Yearly Meeting to focus more directly on the vital actions and living ministry among us. We were moved by Friends’ testimonies of the work they are called to in response to the ills of our world.

Last year when we wrote to you, we noted that there is a tide which, when taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. This year as we meet, we know we are swept up on such a tide. Yet we also see that we are adrift in a leaky boat; the forms of Quakerism we inhabit are not up to the task ahead. We have a religious organization and ways of being together that still embody empire.

On our first day of virtual Sessions we were given the gift of a three-part framework for change from our Quaker tradition: revealing, surrender, and turning, or in more traditional language, conviction, conviction, and conversion. We are suspended in a moment of revealing, being convicted by the Light as we wake up to our sin. We are allowing our hearts to break, recognizing that the process of surrender and turning must be repeated over and over again.

We are naming the forms of white supremacy in Quaker culture, including participation in slavery and ongoing anti-Black racism, the history of Quaker leadership in the Native American boarding school system, and the settler colonialism practiced by early Friends. We continue naming the patterns of domination at every level, in our person, our household and community, through the industrial economy and our extractive relationship to the ecosphere. These patterns are active in Quaker forms and practices today. We stand convicted.

We are stuck in the whirlwind, and need to choose surrender. We can cling tight in fear to the forms we know or release the forms to trust the Divine Spirit will show us our way. We know we need to move from the head to the heart and the Word must be made flesh. “And the end of words is to bring [us] to the knowledge of things beyond what words can utter.”²

Our plenary speaker, Friend Amanda Kemp, implored us to move from our heads to our hearts, from our analytic mind to our imagination. Through a shared experience of living music we felt how music is not the notes on the page. She invited us to embrace the mess, and to not let ourselves be limited by the framing of the status quo. Asking us to create from a place of possibility that can invite what we don’t yet know, she said, “your imagination is essential for our liberation.”

During the plenary Friend Amanda also helped us lean into what it means to be a harmonizer—a peacemaker. She reminded us that walking the path of the harmonizer does not mean we will all be playing the same role. Too often we mistake unanimity and sameness for unity with the Spirit.

In our business this year we cautiously practiced surrender. When we found ourselves caught up in words, we tried to allow new patterns to rise among us. As a yearly meeting, we began the process of apologizing for harm to Native Americans in our region by Quakers. Recognizing that our apology must come from the head and the heart, indeed from the whole body, we sent a draft of an apology to monthly and quarterly meetings

1 “Songs for the People,” Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

2 Isaac Penington [<https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/passage/27-27/>]

for them to consider and to allow the words to work more deeply in us.

We also heard calls to action from the Friends General Conference Pre-Gathering of Friends of Color, from the Native American Reparations Working Group, and a joint call from the Racial, Social and Economic Justice and Earthcare Ministry Committees. We know we need to surrender and turn to move from words into action. To help us do so we shared these calls with our monthly and quarterly meetings so we may unite in the Spirit that animates our work. We are shifting our understanding of what it means to unite with a minute. We know that our corporate statements must honestly name our present condition while also inviting us into Spirit-led action.

Our Bible Half Hour speaker, Friend Cherice Bock, painted the road ahead for us—the turning, our conversion—as an eco-reformation that shatters the hierarchies of the empire, replacing our egocentrism with our rightful place in the household of life. We yearn to more fully enter into the kingdom of God which is always present. We know, and are beginning to internalize, the Truth; that more abundant life comes only after surrender, and our conversion is complete only when we turn, when we imagine, when we embody, and when we do.

As our virtual time together comes to a close, we go forth, imperfect and humbled, with faith that our next steps will be planted exactly where they need to be. We feel the companionship of a Spirit that walks among us, and we feel the companionship of Friends and others around the world on this journey into the future the Divine Light invites us to imagine.

Therefore, I urge you ... in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—that is your true and proper worship. (Romans 12:1 New International Version)

In Love,
Your Friends in New England Yearly Meeting
Bruce Neumann, Presiding Clerk

Junior Yearly Meeting

Dear Friends,

We are a group of 24 Quakers ages 5 to 10 who came together under extraordinary circumstances from August 1–9, 2020. Although the COVID-19 pandemic kept us at home, we were able to participate in JYM through Zoom. Our theme was “Row On, There’s Dawn Beyond the Night.” It meant to be hopeful and keep going.

Sessions this year was both a happy and sad event. Talking and hearing each other on Zoom could be challenging. It was tough spending so much time on the computer. We wished we could spend time with older kids and adults outside of our group, and we missed hugging people.

Our staff members helped us to have fun, though, with games, songs, and stories. We had family time in the morning with younger kids and families joining JYM. We especially enjoyed creating art together on a shared whiteboard. In the evening, we split up into three smaller groups. Being on Zoom allowed us to see stuffed animals, pets, and other interesting items in each others’ homes. It also meant that people could join us from outside of New England, including some Friends from Cuba!

In our small groups, we enjoyed games like dressing up as different objects shown on the screen and taking a pretend journey in rowboats. Gretchen mailed us boxes before JYM started, and we had fun opening them on Zoom to see what was inside. We made our own boats out of foil, and some of us tried them out later in the bathtub. We talked about making sure there was room for everyone in the boat and not having to be perfect when we travel together—sometimes we “catch a crab” with our oars!

We learned that our community is strong even when we can’t physically be together, and that connecting with friends makes it easier to get through this difficult time. We hope to be able to meet in person next year, but we will keep our loving connections no matter what.

In love and Light,
New England Yearly Meeting JYM

Junior High Yearly Meeting State of Society

Note: The Junior High Yearly Meeting elected to write a State of Society report this year rather than an epistle.

Earlier this week, in the storm that blew through, I was standing at the window and watching the trees sway in the wind. The wind was really, really strong but the trees held on. In the past year, I've had so many moments like that. I've had to realize who I am, and who my friends are. I've had to help people who are in really hard places. I've had to deal with some crazy technological disasters. I've had to survive seeing my friends only three times in the past five months. But I've grown to be like those trees. I've swayed really far, but I've never broken because of the connections I have here, with my family, and with my friends. - JH'er

This really describes our community this year. We've had to be flexible, and grow. We've shared so many of these challenges as a community.



We have been challenged by all the changes that have arisen. We have not been able to give each other hugs or blow bubbles together. We haven't been able to eat meals or clean dishes together.

We have found strength in our community and have realized how lucky we are to have it. So many of us have kept hanging on, even though we don't know what will come. We have learned that our commitment has kept this community going and helped us all adapt in all the ways that we've needed to.

We have learned to be flexible in how we connect with each other. We don't get to hug each other, but we can send packages and letters, have phone calls and Zoom calls. We can't do Sunday morning chores together, but we can find silliness and laugh at staffers giving us all chores to do at home.

We have grown in our ability to stay connected, no matter how we have to do so. We have learned that retreats via Zoom and UPS can work when they have to. And we've learned that they don't just have to work, but that they can be good, too.

We have found our roots in inclusivity, laughter, silliness, and gratefulness. Through a ministry of bubbles, games, music and so much more, we've grown closer in a lot of ways.

We have stretched our capacity to accept mistakes and imperfections. We have been learning that it is okay to be messy, and bold, and bright, and that mistakes aren't things to get stuck on but instead things that we can use to grow.

We have opened our community in ways we've never before been able. Some JHers or JH staff live in places that inhibit their ability to come to retreats, but virtual retreats have allowed them to join us again.



Roots are where nutrients come from, where you get food and water. They also keep you firmly in the soil. Roots are what keep you alive and yourself. We have found our roots in our community in JH.

When the water rises, you have to grow mangrove roots. You stay basically the same, but you have some different roots, more of them, sometimes stronger ones, and together with the other trees' (people's) in a forest that can be identified firmly as a forest. We grew our mangrove roots this year through the high water of virtual meetings during a pandemic, and they will stay with us individually and collectively.

Junior High Yearly Meeting, NEYM August 9, 2020

Young Friends

To Friends everywhere,

We, the Young Friends of New England Yearly Meeting, met from August 1–9 2020 over Zoom. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to meet at our planned site—Castleton University in Castleton, VT. Although we were not able to be around each other in person, we found great joy in seeing each other online. The theme for this session was “Row On,” a theme that taught us to keep striving to stay present in the community online and work to make our community stronger and more just.

On the first day of the program, the Young Friends Coordinator, Maggie Nelson, told us to write any questions about Quakerism into the chat box on Zoom. The queries were used to help us connect to our Quaker community. Throughout the week, we got into home groups and discussed the queries in depth. The queries included “What is your interpretation or experience of God?” and “What do words like “God”/“the Spirit” mean to you?” Through silent contemplation and sharing our beliefs with the Young Friends group, we were able to answer the queries to our own truth.

We worshipped in many ways throughout this week to stay in touch with our community spiritually. We joined Junior High Yearly Meeting (JHYM) and held worship with clay. To close the week, we worshiped with rocks. Both talked about how life molds us and how we connect to each other through the earth we all held. With JHYM we broke off into small groups to discuss a series of queries relating to fear. This brought about discussions on the difference between fear when we feel in control and when we lack control.

Throughout this week, Young Friends (YFs) have explored the theme of “Row On” through racial justice topics. Some YFs attended a plenary that was open to all of Sessions, discussing racial justice and spirituality in a creative and inspiring way, led by Dr. Amanda Kemp. Another way the theme was discussed this week was during our workshop on police and race where we discussed how to keep working towards social justice. In this workshop, we were together with Young Adult Friends (YAFs), who shared their experiences with the police. YFs made a space for each other to ask and answer questions that helped us go deeper into the need for defunding the police. These workshops were a place for us as YFs to explore a topic or activity in depth. We heard many other people’s views and learned from the experiences of others. We wanted to know more and got to deepen our knowledge.

During the week, we found ways to connect in a variety of ways on- and off-screen. We deepened friendships across YFs through “Walk and Talks,” paired chats on the phone. We listened independently to podcasts to meditate and reflect on presence, fear, and the unknown. Some of us attended creative writing workshops and wrote our own personal celebrations. We played games (the Codenames competition was fierce), created whimsical stories together, built crazy hats, and each night we checked in with our home groups and sang together before bed. These connections helped us grow as a community despite our distance.

Though the week started off with apprehension for some, we grew to cherish the Zoom calls we could share with each other. By having time with friends and exploring our emotions as we face personal challenges at this time we were able to become a more vulnerable and caring community. We hope to meet in person at Castleton University in Castleton, VT, next year.

Sending love from the Young Friends of New England Yearly Meeting

Epístola de Los Amigos (Cuáqueros) en Cuba

The Cuba Yearly Meeting Epistle is included in acknowledgement of NEYM’s long sister relationship with CYM, a relationship overseen by NEYM’s “Puente de Amigos” committee.

Gibara, 23 de febrero 2020.

A todos nuestros Amigos Cuáqueros:

Llegue a ustedes, en la unidad del Espíritu Divino, nuestro deseo de compartir las experiencias vividas en la 93 Asamblea de la Junta Anual de los “Amigos Cuáqueros” en Cuba.

Durante este tiempo de aprender y crecimiento en construir una comunidad de amor y gracia, donde el mensaje de Dios nos convoca a través del libro II de Corintios 13: 11-14, a ser de un mismo sentir y vivir en paz; esa paz que rompe las barreras del miedo, la incertidumbre y el desamor.

Hermanos, así como los vientos soplan en diferentes direcciones, así el Amor de Dios, como silbo apacible llega a sus buscadores y nos ayude a ser un solo cuerpo, consolándonos, siempre unidos en el Alfarero de la vida.

Nuestra Iglesia en Cuba se proyecta a explorar nuevos campos para llevar el evangelio, así nuevos obreros surgen dispuestos a trabajar para el Señor, una nueva Iglesia se reconoce como Junta Mensual: Floro Pérez en Holguín.

Entre alabanzas, mensajes y oraciones recibimos los informes del año de trabajo, así como proyectos de nuestra comunidad de fe para enfrentar nuevos desafíos en el contexto histórico que vivimos. La realización de talleres y grupos de interés sirven de motivación para instruir nuestras vidas en la obra de la Iglesia.

Nos sentimos gozosos al compartir con los hermanos de Nueva Inglaterra: Em Mc Manamy, Bruce Newman, Marion Athearn, Jacqueline Stillwell, y también Jade Souza de la Junta Anual de Sierra Cascades, quienes compartieron sus experiencias espirituales en la hermandad que vivimos, aún con diferencias geográficas y culturales.

El hermano Bruce Newman, predicó el mensaje de Dios sobre la verdad. Las personas tenemos una parte de la verdad, ésta viene de Jesucristo. Lo que indica que es imprescindible escuchar de forma más continua la voz de Dios.

Disfrutamos temas sugerentes que nos instruyen para lograr una mejor comunicación, construir la paz desde la humildad, la sencillez, la integridad que necesitamos para perfeccionar nuestras comunidades y así nuestro testimonio en la sociedad en que vivimos.

Amigos, somos buscadores de la luz, gracia divina, unamos nuestro sentir y juntos construiremos un mundo mejor. Seamos luz para el mundo.

Junta Anual de los “Amigos Cuáqueros” en Cuba.

Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:11-14 NIV)

Gibara, February 23, 2020

To all our Quaker Friends:

In the unity of the Divine Spirit we want to share with you the experiences we lived in the 93rd session of the Yearly Meeting of “Quaker Friends” in Cuba.

During this time of learning and growth in building a community of love and grace, the message of God through 2 Corinthians 13:11-14 calls us together to be of one and the same mind and to live in peace: that peace which breaks the barriers of fear, uncertainty, and the absence of love.

Brothers and sisters, just as the winds blow in different directions, the Love of God comes to those who seek it like a still small voice; it consoles us and helps us to be one body, and always unites us in the hands of the Potter of life.

Our Church in Cuba is planning to explore new fields where we can bring the Gospel, as new workers emerge willing to work for the Lord. A new Church has been recognized as a Monthly Meeting: Floro Pérez near Holguín.

Along with praises, messages, and prayers, we received reports from a year of work, together with ideas for projects for our faith community to face the new challenges in the historical context we live in. Workshops and interest groups helped motivate and instruct our lives for the work of the Church.

We felt joyful being able to share with brothers and sisters of New England: Em McManamy, Bruce Newman, Marion Athearn and Jacqueline Stillwell; Jade Souza of Sierra Cascades Yearly Meeting also joined us. They told us about their spiritual experiences in the fellowship we share despite geographical and cultural differences.

Brother Bruce Newman preached the message of God about the truth. As people, we all have a part of the truth, which comes from Jesus Christ. Bruce tells us it is indispensable to listen to the voice of God in a more ongoing way.

We were enriched by the discussion of themes which suggested that we learn how to achieve better communication and to build peace from humility, simplicity, and integrity — qualities we need to make our communities more perfect, and thus develop our testimony in the society in which we live.

Friends, we are seekers for the light and for divine grace. We join together in this feeling and together we will build a better world. May we be light for the world.

The Yearly Meeting of “Quaker Friends” in Cuba.

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