

**Permanent Board Meeting
Held over Zoom Video Conference
October 31, 2020**

20-91: Opening Worship and Welcome

Friends opened with a period of worship. The Clerk invited Friends to share any joys and sorrows with the group.

20-92: Roll Call

The recording clerk called the roll:

Present: Leslie Manning, Clerk; Hannah Zwirner Forsythe, Recording Clerk; Travis Belcher, Martin Zwirner Forsythe, Chris Gant, Beth Hansen, Ian Harrington, Rebecca Leuchak, Ed Mair, Christopher McCandless, Jean McCandless, Gina Nortonsmith, Carole Rein, John Reuthe, Martha Schwope, Sara Smith, Will Taber, Tom Vargo, Diane Weinholtz, Donn Weinholtz, Morgan Wilson, Mary Zwirner

Ex-Officio: Scot Drysdale (Finance Clerk); Noah Merrill (Secretary); Bob Murray (Treasurer); Bruce Neumann (Presiding Clerk); Elizabeth Reuthe (Secretary's Supervisor)

Visitors: Polly Attwood, Clarence Burley, Marian Dalton, Jeremiah Dickinson, Diane Dicranian, Sarah Gant, Jan Hoffman, Janet Hough, Becky Jones, Fran Lightsom, Richard Lindo, Hugh MacArthur, Phebe McCosker, LouAnne McDonald, Nancy Middleton, Nia Thomas, LVM Shelton, Sarah Spencer, Jackie Stillwell, Marilyn Vaché, Susan Vargo, Eleanor Warnock, Honor Woodrow, Kathleen Wooten

Regrets: Peter Bishop, Deana Chase, Darcy Drayton, Kim Harvey Garcia, Anna Raddochia, Elizabeth Szatkowski, Bill Walkauskas

20-93: Minute Approval

The minutes from our September meeting were distributed for review.

Friends approved the minutes from September.

20-94: Revised Sessions Minute

Sessions minute 2020-23 returned to the Clerks' Table for revision after the discussion at the September Permanent Board meeting. The revised minute was distributed for review.

With one clarifying question, Friends approved the revised minute.

20-95: Ministry and Spiritual Life Working Group Presentation

Sarah Gant, clerk of the Ministry and Spiritual Life Working Group (MSL), introduced the members of the working group, many of whom joined us for the Permanent Board meeting. This group has been working since Fall 2019, having grown out of the report from the Clerking Structures and Practices Working Group.

The full proposal and working paper from MSL are appended.

Ministry and Counsel (M&C) is the structure in our Yearly Meeting (YM) to nurture ministry and our spiritual life. Together MSL shared the work they have done over the last year, prayerfully discerning and listening to how ministry is alive in our YM, how the spirit is currently served by our structures, and the ways that both could be more fully nurtured. The group found that while the work done by M&C is vital to the YM, M&C is often overburdened with administrative and unnecessary activities which keeps M&C from more fully and tangibly supporting ministry and the spiritual life of individuals and monthly meetings.

The MSL proposes laying aside the current structure of M&C and making space for new life with the creation of new "Meetings for Ministry and Spiritual Life". These gatherings would be open to all Friends and hosted by the interim clerk of M&C and a hosting team, to be named. The goal would be to hold space for all who are actively engaged in ministry and its nurturing, particularly in local meetings. The first of these gatherings would be in Spring 2021 and would be reviewed at Sessions 2022. More details on the proposed meetings, including how other M&C responsibilities would be carried out, are in the full proposal.

The MSL proposes a Ministry Transition Team to name the hosting team for the new gatherings.

Reflections and questions from the PB and approval of the proposals from the working group continued later in the agenda.

20-96: Report from Interim M&C Clerk

Jeremiah Dickinson, interim clerk of Ministry and Counsel (M&C), shared a brief report. M&C met several times in the past few weeks to reflect and discern their response to the recommendations from the Ministry and Spiritual Life Working Group. There are many Friends on M&C who were in support of the recommendations and there are also many Friends who hold deep sadness and discomfort with the observations in the working group's report. M&C is willing to move forward with the recommendations but was in unity to formally endorse it.

20-97: Reflections on the Report from Ministry and Spiritual Life

Friends returned to the report from the Ministry and Spiritual Life Working Group (MSL) to offer their reflections and ask questions.

Friends expressed their joy that the report from the MSL feels like a continuation of the “We Need a Plan” document from 2015; the desire to assess and improve the supporting structures for our spiritual life is a clear effort to support monthly meetings. There is immense gratitude for the hard work done by this working group. Many Friends are excited to consider who in their meeting should be encouraged to attend the new gatherings.

Friends also expressed their concerns about moving forward with the proposed plan while some members of Ministry and Counsel (M&C) are opposed and feel pain and sadness about the changes. The relationship between M&C and the Permanent Board (PB) is often challenging and PB sometimes subsumes the work of M&C. PB taking over the work of M&C should be done with care. How can we mind the grief and the areas that need healing? There is hurt that needs to be healed and pastoral work to be done with the members of M&C who have misgivings about moving forward with the new plan.

Friends shared questions about the logistics of moving forward with the proposed plan: how would this experiment be measured; what would happen with the current members of M&C; what would happen at the new meetings?

The working group emphasized that all current members of M&C are warmly invited to attend the ministry meetings, as is anyone else who is led to attend. We are asked to trust the group of hosts to plan these meetings with the general focus of supporting the spiritual life of meetings and individuals. We are challenged to embrace a state in which we are open to God's direction, trusting faithfully that we will be well-guided. Sitting together in less-directed and scheduled meetings offers the opportunity to hear God's direction. And we are reminded that while this dramatic change is different from the incremental changes that are more common, it does not mean that what was done in the past was wrong. This would be a transition from a formal appointing process to an invitation process in which anyone with spiritual concerns is welcome to join. The goal is to build capacity in local meetings in addition to supporting individuals.

The proposed Ministry Transition Team would be in charge of creating the hosting team, in consultation with the existing working group. The Ministry Transition Team would consist of the Interim Clerk of M&C, the Clerk of the PB, the YM Secretary, the Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator, and the Clerk of the MSL working group. If approved, the Ministry Transition Team would come to the December meeting with charge and composition of the hosting team.

Friends approved the proposed plan, setting aside the current form of M&C, and creating a Ministry Transition Team to create the host team which will have care of coordinating the new gatherings.

20-98: Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group

Polly Attwood, clerk of the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group (NPWG), introduced that group's report. Their report is appended and gives an overview of the work they have done over the last two years. Polly brought three requests to the Permanent Board (PB) from the NPWG:

- The NPWG requested that the PB take the practice of noticing patterns, and the NPWG, under its care.
- The NPWG requested that the PB approve Polly Attwood as clerk of NPWG.
- The NPWG requested that the PB affirm the NPWG's original charge and approve their sense of an expanded purpose and vision for NPWG across NEYM.

Friends had a chance to comment and ask questions about the requests from the NPWG.

Friends expressed a desire to know how the PB could best support the working group. The group expressed that the most tangible support from the PB is continued individual and PB participation in deconstructing patterns of oppression and lifting up and strengthening patterns of faithfulness. We were asked to trust in the faithfulness of the working group's discernment, and to support outreach to monthly meetings so that the NPWG work might be adopted more fully around the Yearly Meeting. Some Friends suggested the creation of a 2-3 person care committee to nurture the NPWG with special attention paid to ensure that this doesn't muddle the communication between the NPWG and the PB.

Friends approved taking the NPWG under our care.

Friends approved Polly Attwood as clerk of the NPWG.

Friends affirmed the charge and expanded purpose of the NPWG.

Friends approved the creation of a care committee to support the NPWG. One Friend stood aside with a concern about whether we are allocating our limited resources in an efficient way.

20-99: Unity Agenda

Leslie Manning, Clerk, shared a unity agenda for approval by the Permanent Board. This included the staff, committee, and representative reports typically accepted at Sessions; the names of Friends nominated for positions by YM Nominating Committee, Clerk's Table Nominating Committee, and Internal Nominating Committee; a request for the Shoemaker Grant; and a minute from Sandwich Quarter concerning native peoples. Documents approved in the unity agenda are appended.

Friends approved the unity agenda.

20-100: Lincoln School Land Swap

Following up on the decision from the Permanent Board on July 11, 2020 (Minute 20-70) to approve a transfer of land between the City of Providence and the Lincoln School, language from the Lincoln School's lawyer was brought to the Permanent Board for our approval. Details from this item of business are in the minutes from the July meeting.

That the NEYM exchange with the City of Providence two parcels of real property of equal size as further described in the deeds set forth in Schedule I and Schedule II attached hereto, and that any one of the Permanent Clerk and Secretary acting singly as aforesaid is hereby authorized and empowered on behalf of the NEYM and in its name to make, execute and deliver any and all instruments necessary or desired by the City of Providence to effect the same, including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, deeds setting forth the metes and bounds of the real property to be exchanged and to execute any and all instruments necessary or desired by the City of Providence, to effect the same or incidental thereto, including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, and generally to execute any instrument or do any other act required, necessary or deemed advisable in connection with such exchange of real property, and that all past acts of each of said officers of the NEYM in conjunction with the exchange of real property are hereby ratified and confirmed.

That the Secretary is authorized to certify to the City of Providence that the persons now holding said offices and any changes hereafter in the persons holding said offices, together with specimens of the signatures of such present and future officers, and the NEYM shall fully protect, indemnify, and save harmless the City of Providence from any claim, loss, cost, damage, or expense arising out of its acting on such certification.

Friends approved these actions.

20-101: Closing worship

Friends closed with a period of worship. We are reminded that there is a faith that is overcome by the world and there is a faith that overcomes the world. This faith begins with how we care for one another and it extends outward to those with whom we disagree. We carry this message out into the world in the next week.

Our next meeting will be December 12, 2020.

Leslie Manning

Leslie Manning (Feb 4, 2021 13:17 EST)

Leslie Manning, Clerk

**To Permanent Board
From the Clerk's Table
October 31, 2020**

Friends gathered for the September 19 PB meeting, in the process of reviewing Sessions minutes, expressed some reservations about minute 4.5. The clerk's table reviewed the minute, and the recording of that Business session, and offers this revision. Note that the text which was revised is the "bullet" points, currently in italics.

4.5 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 nonindigenous 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 - 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 __)**

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 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 discomfort 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.

“It is a living ministry that begets a living people...”
- testimony to the life of John Banks, 1710

Background Working Paper

prepared by the
[Working Group on Support of Ministry and Spiritual Life](#)
to provide context and inform recommendations

Part I. An emerging vision of thriving

If we were successful in this work, what might thriving ministers, elders, and the spiritual life of local meetings look like? What evidence would we see that our work has been fruitful?

The articulation below seeks to affirm a vision that emerged during the Working Group’s process. We offer it as an **invitation to inspire our shared work** going forward, and a **horizon toward which we might journey** together:

Through the thriving of gifts in ministry¹ given to New England Friends, the Reign of Heaven would be more fully expressed in our region and in the wider world. As an essential part of our life together, Friends in New England would consistently and joyfully expect, recognize, call out, name, and nurture gifts in ministry. Friends would affirm and recognize a wide range of forms that ministry can take—including both expressions that primarily build up the spiritual life of the Religious Society of Friends, and those that primarily foster hope, inspiration, challenge, healing, and transformation in the wider world. Friends would be able to recognize that distinct expressions of ministry require distinct forms of support, nurture, and oversight, both at different stages of the ministry’s life and because of the distinct vocation to which each Friend is called.

Friends of diverse backgrounds, life stages and circumstances, and identities would serve in ministry. A recognition that growth in ministry is a *developmental* process—Friends can grow in their gifts through experience in faithful service over time—would be paired with an acknowledgement of the need for experimentation, risk-taking, and mentoring that lifts up the efforts of those less experienced alongside more seasoned Friends. Opportunities to explore support of and service in ministry would be accessible and widely-known to Friends throughout our region.

¹ For a working definition of *ministry* used for the purposes of the working group’s charge, see Part 2: Context, Background, and Analysis.

Because of their participation in their local meetings—and those meetings’ capacity to support ministry—Friends would have a clearer sense of their own gifts and the gifts of others in their meetings, and of how they work together in the ministry of the whole. Celebration and recognition of gifts in one person would be seen as a blessing to the whole community. Meetings would understand their role and responsibility in stewardship of the gifts in their members, and members would understand their responsibility to be faithful in the exercise of their gifts for the good of the meeting community and the world.

People both inside Friends communities and beyond would identify the nurture and oversight of ministry as a core element of what it means to practice the Quaker tradition. Friends called to ministry would be challenged to greater boldness and fuller expression of their gifts, and would be able to receive healthy oversight that realigns or corrects their course when they are outrunning their Guide. Humility, courage, and reverence would be evident in Friends’ exercise of ministry. The life of Friends communities would bear witness to the infinite Love of God.

Part 2. Context, Background and Analysis

A Working Definition of Ministry

In approaching this work, it has been helpful to be clear on a shared definition of “ministry.”

New England Friends use the term “ministry” in many ways. Examples range from the highly specific (“vocal ministry” referring to led speech in meeting for waiting worship) to the more institutional (a program of the organization of the Yearly Meeting is sometimes called a “ministry”) to the most broad (any action taken by Quakers, whether acknowledged as arising from a sense of leading on the part of the individual involved or not). Some Friends also speak of “a ministry” to describe the consistent body of work/religious service of a particular Friend over a sustained period of time. Each of these uses serves a purpose in a particular context.

For the purposes of *this* work, we have found helpful the following definition from Callid Keefe-Perry of Fresh Pond (MA) Meeting (whose service is under the care of that meeting):

Ministry = Actively Stewarding Gift(s) of X for Service beyond oneself
Stewarding = Sustained Intention, Prayerful Attention, and Guided Action
Gifts = Prophetic² Speech, Prophetic Action, Healing, Eldership, etc.

² “Prophetic”, in this context, may be understood to refer to both articulating (speech) and embodying (action) the vision and expression of God’s inbreaking Reign in the world (a world of justice, liberation, healing, wholeness, and joy). In Friends’ tradition, “prophetic ministry” characterizes the fundamental motion of inspired speech in the meeting for worship, in which those who speak seek to be channels for

While “corporate” ministry happens in many forms, we believe it is helpful for these purposes to focus on the *person* as the channel through whom the gifts are expressed, supported by the community, for the good of the whole. Each individual is part of a wider ecology of faithfulness, but it is at the place where the individual brings forth the gifts they’ve been given to steward that it’s possible to observe the *ministry happening*. Ministry at its most fruitful happens by the action of *gifts* expressed through *people*, stewarded and grounded in worshipping *communities*.

With this in mind, we could consider the relative *effectiveness* of New England Friends’ forms and practices “for supporting ministry and spiritual life” through the lens of whether they bear fruit in more (both more *fully* and greater *quantity*) faithful exercise of gifts by individuals for the good of the local meeting, the wider community and the world.

Friends sometimes use the term “ministry” to describe work directed toward Quaker communities, and the word “witness” to describe work more focused on non-Quakers, including organizing, activism, service, or advocacy.

For the purposes of this work, we are choosing to encompass *both of these kinds of activity* under the heading of “ministry”, recognizing that what unites these categories is not the context in which the work is done, but *the ground from which the work arises, the stewardship of the call, and the accompaniment, reflection, and faithfulness that is needed* so that the gifts can be fully expressed.

We believe this way of understanding ministry is consistent with the definition above. While different expressions of ministry need different kinds of care in some particular ways³, at the root we believe they need similar tending, if Friends are to be faithful.

We also know that, for many Friends, the work of nurturing ministry and spiritual life is inextricably connected to, and distinct from, the exercise of spiritual gifts in *eldership*—Friends’ tradition of spiritual midwifery, encouragement, discernment, and prayerful holding of both individuals and the wider community. We see (drawing on diverse perspectives among Friends deeply engaged in reclaiming eldership for our times) that we can view eldership as both an

the immediate inbreaking of the power of the Spirit into the particular context in place, relationship, and time. Prophetic ministry includes criticizing and energizing that helps people to move from oppression to right relationship, that dismantles systems and structures of injustice and empowers liberation and wholeness.^a

³ In this work, we have especially heard the need for Friends to give attention to nurturing gifts in “preaching” (Spirit-led vocal ministry) and “teaching” (religious education, spiritual formation, and training in Quaker spiritual practices and disciplines) at this time. This is not because these kinds of gifts are in an absolute sense more valuable than other gifts, but because thriving ministry in these areas is an essential part of nurturing the spiritual life of local meetings and the ministry of the whole body. We hope this guidance, reinforced by many voices in our work, will be heeded and taken to heart going forward.

essential kind of ministry, as well as a distinct form of spiritual service and giftedness in its own right.

In the darkest days of World War II in Europe, theologian Simone Weil took the position that the value of “collectivities” (institutions or groups of people acting from a shared identity) must be judged by their effect on *actual human beings*, on bodies and souls. She warned of the tendency, present among Friends as with other humans, to become lost in abstractions, or understandings of “how it should be done” rather than focusing on *what is actually happening* and *what fruits that activity bears*. We have sought to focus our attention on shifting from abstraction to concrete fruits, and from theory to practice.

Whatever work we do as Friends, we bring our best intentions. This is a moment for us to examine the current fruits of our work supporting ministry, and to ask how we might make changes that could encourage a more nourishing and vibrant harvest.

This Work in Context

In 2015, after many years of discernment and labor⁴, Annual Sessions (re)affirmed that the core purpose of the organization of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends is to support the thriving of local Friends meetings and the web of relationships in which they are held.

We were particularly moved and challenged by these words from the 2015 report, “We Need a Plan”:

We envision a growing network of transformative, witnessing local faith communities in the Friends tradition across New England

We have sought to be accountable, and to help Friends respond, to this vision through the nurture of gifts in ministry.

Since 2015, changes in structure, budget, staffing, culture, and practice have sought to help Friends live into this renewed commitment and direction. The fruits are being felt in the witness of new life.

Our work as this ad hoc working group has sought to build on this work and discernment⁵, and to ask how changes to NEYM’s structures and practices in support of ministry and spiritual life might help us more fully align with this core purpose and this vision. In offering this working paper and the recommendations of the working group, we recognize that we are participating in a much wider, integrated, and ongoing process. We hope the recommended changes will contribute to the thriving of the whole.

⁴ Including the work of the Structural Review Committee, Long Term Financial Planning Committee, Procedural Review Committee, and many others over several decades

⁵ Building on the work of the Clerking Practices and Structures Working Group

How Ministry is Now Supported among New England Quakers

Across New England, much good and faithful work is being done and has been done to support ministry. And yet there are also significant gaps between what we say we do, or hope to do, and the relative level of effectiveness or fruitfulness of that work.

In some cases, our formal processes are clear, but are inactive or rarely used (the process of recording gifts in ministry is one example). In others, there is a lack of clarity about where agency and responsibility lie, and this leaves crucial gaps unfilled, or blocks the flow of the Spirit among us.

Here is how primary support for ministry is happening at this time:

1. **Informally through relationships** among Friends active in public ministry, or those with experience supporting them (both within a given meeting, or more commonly crossing the boundaries of a given local meeting, quarter, or even yearly meeting). Periodically, these informal connections have been supported through one or more intentional invitations to gather, organized by a particular Friend or small group of Friends who feel led to do so.

These relationships have often formed through shared service in ministry, through personal connections initially made at **wider Friends gatherings** (FWCC, FGC, FUM, or NEYM Sessions), or through participation in **spiritual formation or ministry programs** (such as the School of the Spirit, **Nurturing Faithfulness**, etc.) *This is a primary way ministry is currently supported among New England Quakers.*

2. **Local meetings** (formally through **support/oversight/care/accountability committees**, informally through worship, spiritual friendships, and mutual encouragement). This is an active part of the work of a growing number of local meetings in New England. In many others, there is not a culture or experience of intentional support of ministry in this way; in some, there is hostility. Several support, oversight, care, and/or accountability committees include members from beyond the ministering Friend's home meeting. In some small meetings, individual Friends or the meeting as a whole might serve some of these functions of support, oversight, accountability, etc. In the meetings served by pastors, there is often support and guidance for pastors from the local meeting's ministry & counsel committee, or by a distinct committee for this purpose.
3. **Quarterly Meetings** are charged by Faith & Practice with endorsing travel minutes and recording gifts in ministry. In most quarters, travel minutes, when brought from local meetings, are received and endorsed as an understood practice, though later follow-up or reporting back happens far less frequently. The practice of recording gifts in ministry

is currently very rare, and is not an active or widely-understood practice in any quarter. It is receiving new interest in some local and quarterly meetings. Some quarterly meetings have funds (Salem Quarter is the most active example, Sandwich Quarter and others have funds as well) that are used to make grants that can support Friends in public ministry.

4. The **NEYM Committee on Ministry & Counsel** has periodically contributed to, or formally sponsored, programming and events to support ministry (a recent example is the “sponsorship” of the Women in Public Ministry Conference and its successor, “At the Well”. These were funded by the Legacy Gift Committee, and organized and led independently by Friends from New England and elsewhere).

The Ministry & Counsel Committee is formally charged with nurturing and caring for (in support of local meetings) Friends in public ministry, including those with travel minutes endorsed by the Yearly Meeting. While there have been significant and important efforts in recent years to clarify, prepare for, and raise awareness of this responsibility, it has not yet been robustly taken up.

This work has been inconsistent, the needs sometimes not being clearly understood, the skills for doing so not being well-developed, the responsibility at times vague, and the implementation frequently challenging.

5. The **Permanent Board** of the Yearly Meeting is [charged with endorsing travel minutes](#) forwarded by quarters for travel beyond the Yearly Meeting, and then sending notification to **Ministry & Counsel**, which is responsible for follow-up and ongoing care (though there have been few examples of this process happening fully since a new procedure was approved two years ago). Permanent Board is charged to receive and consider endorsements of completed travel in ministry.

While there have been significant and important efforts in recent years to clarify this process, it has not yet been widely implemented.

When this has happened in the past few years, it has mostly happened in writing, though there have also been in-person reports and reflections by the travelers at meetings of the PB, by invitation of the Clerk of the Permanent Board.

6. **Friends serving as Yearly Meeting Staff**, especially the YM Secretary and Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator (QPLF), have regular contact with Friends serving in public ministry, offering support and collaborating on **programmatic events** (such as retreats, workshops, and trainings).

Staff have played leading roles in several recent one-time events focusing on support of ministry, and engage in ongoing mentoring and accompaniment, including

“mentor-matchmaking” and engaging local meeting leadership or disparate Friends to create support and oversight committees for those with emerging calls to ministry.

The YM Secretary annually co-leads retreats for pastors from both New England and New York Yearly Meetings, as well as related opportunities for those who hold the whole of their local meetings. Through **visitation** and **correspondence**, the YM Secretary and Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator (along with other staff and other Friends) encounter and encourage Friends serving in (or at the edge of considering serving in) public ministry, often supporting ministers’ evolving journeys in various ways over the course of several years. The staff have also played a key role in developing, supporting, and envisioning next steps for the *Nurturing Faithfulness* program, a partnership with Marcelle Martin, Hilary Burgin, Woolman Hill, and New England Yearly Meeting.

7. The **NEYM Legacy Gift Committee** provides substantial funding in support of ministering Friends. At times, other YM Committees have offered support or accompaniment to Friends serving under those auspices or in contexts specific to the work of that Committee; a particularly active example is the **Puente de Amigos Committee**, which (in partnership with the local meeting and other bodies) has care for clearness, support, and preparation for Friends traveling in the ministry to Cuba Yearly Meeting as representatives of New England Friends.
8. **The youth and young adult retreat programs of the Yearly Meeting** (generally speaking, mostly weekend retreats with between 20-40 youth participants, accompanied by adult staff) foster the gifts of volunteer staff and facilitators/presenters, as well as nurturing the gifts of children and youth participants . This has been and is an important way that Friends (particularly youth and younger adults) are supported in discovering their gifts and taking risks to grow in their exercise. This is an area where this dimension of the work of supporting ministry could be strengthened and made more explicit, and to help connect this work with the service of youth ministers in local meetings.

Origins of Forms Supporting Ministry Among Friends

In Friends tradition, experience, and theology, spiritual gifts are understood as given to the community by God through each particular person for service in the world. This has been a foundational understanding since the beginnings of the Religious Society of Friends, and has its roots in the primitive Christianity on which early Friends built their movement.

In the early years of the Quaker movement, the cultivation and stewardship of gifts in ministry was supported by mutual mentoring and encouragement among Friends active in ministry, and (slightly later) by participation in the “second day meeting”, a gathering of Friends active in

public ministry, for worship, coordination, and reflection. This was a primary locus of support for ministering Friends—for mentoring, for apprenticeship, and for encouragement.

As the movement grew and stabilized, this form eventually evolved into the local meetings of ministers and elders, the ancestors of contemporary committees (meetings) for Ministry & Counsel/Ministry & Worship.

Historically in New England and elsewhere (and in some meetings today), these meetings were understood to constitute, not a “committee” of the monthly meeting, but a *separate meeting of Friends* charged with caring for the ministry and spiritual life of Friends in that local area, who would meet regularly (the “monthly meeting *on* ministry and counsel”). These meetings at the local level also sent Friends to constitute the “quarterly meeting on ministry and counsel”, which would in turn appoint Friends (some or all of its participants) to constitute the “yearly meeting on ministry and counsel”.

Historically, this “yearly meeting of ministers and elders” was an actual event that took place annually, prior to the annual sessions of the Yearly Meeting, and included Friends serving as part of the quarterly (and so, monthly) meetings on ministry and counsel throughout New England. In time, a key role of this meeting for worship and business was the creation of a reflection on the spiritual condition of the body as a whole⁶ (later, the *State of Society* report), which would then (along with any concerns or guidance felt appropriate) be forwarded to the annual sessions of the Yearly Meeting for consideration and, if appropriate, action.

Origins of Current Forms and Practices

Following the reunification of Friends in New England in 1945, the historical form of the *Yearly Meeting on Ministry and Counsel* (recognizing some differences between the Gurneyite YM and the Wilburite YM) was mostly preserved, though it faced increasing challenges in accomplishing the work with which it was entrusted.

By the mid 1960s, Friends recognized that they were in the midst of many changes: in the wider society; in the culture, lifestyle, and background of active Friends; in perspectives among sometimes divergent Quaker constituencies (a dynamic strengthened by the reunification of the disparate Friends groups in New England); and in the practices of both local meetings and the Yearly Meeting.

The recognition of these transformations prompted the Yearly Meeting to make alterations in the forms for supporting ministry, with the goal of improving function. Some of those changes served a valuable purpose in their time. And yet, something important was lost in this process.

⁶ In the Wilburite YM, the reflection on the spiritual condition took a different form, including written responses to the queries at the monthly meeting level, and a clerk’s reflection, rather than a formal “state of society” report.

Minutes of the Yearly Meeting and other contemporary documents tell an illuminating story. As a result of the work of an ad hoc *Quarterly Meeting Study Group* in the late 1960s and early 1970s, several changes in the structure and function of the Yearly Meeting were made, including a change in how members of the YM Finance and Nominating Committees were appointed, and a similar but more profound shift in how the work of supporting ministry and spiritual life was approached.

A basic guiding theme of these several changes was that, because of an apparent assessment that quarterly meetings were unable to effectively perform certain functions, responsibilities previously held by quarterly meetings were reassigned to monthly meetings, or to the Yearly Meeting.

The effects of these changes remain. The Finance Committee is no longer appointed by local meetings, the YM having recognized the importance of an integrated nominating process for Friends with appropriate skills and expertise. The Nominating Committee continues the practice of being constituted by monthly meeting appointments in form, in part, but few monthly meetings appoint representatives in practice. In the case of the Yearly Meeting on Ministry and Counsel, the changes in form and practice were especially significant.

To summarize the changes related to Ministry & Counsel:

Based on an apparent assessment that quarterly meetings were not successful/did not have the capacity to nurture ministry, spiritual life, and local meetings⁷, several steps were taken:

- Over a period of years, the *Yearly Meeting on Ministry and Counsel* was laid down, ending the practice of a distinct annual gathering to support ministry and spiritual life and create the State of Society report
- Around the same time, a new *Meetings and Extension Committee* was created, charged with supporting the creation of new meetings, fostering the health of existing meetings, and encouraging intervisitation (this built on the previous “church extension and evangelism” work in the former Gurneyite YM)
- A new *NEYM Committee on Ministry & Counsel* was created, to meet regularly during the year and to include representatives to be directly appointed by all monthly meetings (removing the quarterly meetings from the process).

⁷ While these functions were in theory transferred to the new Committee on Ministry and Counsel, the language in Faith and Practice (1985) relating to the responsibilities of quarterly meetings does not appear to have been revised to fully reflect this change. Some responsibilities of caring for ministry remain the responsibility of quarters, some are given to NEYM M&C, and some still seem to overlap. This inconsistency in Faith and Practice, and (perhaps relatedly) Friends’ conceptual understanding of the work, has led to persistent confusion and fear of overstepping or usurping the authority of one body or another, and has impaired the efforts of either (quarterly meetings or Ministry & Counsel Committee) to make further advances in the work. This lack of clarity and confusion has also been a key factor inhibiting the function and health of quarterly meetings overall.

- The *Meetings and Extension Committee* struggled to begin its work in this new context, expressing concerns about being daunted by the scope of its charge, and burdened by the challenge of organizing and coordinating visitation and support for meetings. This work proved more difficult than expected for a committee to accomplish.
- By the end of the several-year process, the decision had been made to merge the charges of the Meetings and Extension Committee with the new Yearly Meeting Committee on Ministry and Counsel, further increasing the scope of the overall work assigned to the one resulting Committee.
- Early reports of the Committee on Ministry & Counsel expressed concerns that care for meetings, outreach, and intervisitation were felt to be beyond the capacity of the Committee, or reflected that other concerns such as offering workshops at Annual Sessions and elsewhere, or caring for individuals who felt unwelcome at Sessions, were taking priority over these concerns.
- A report from 1972 (soon after the creation of the new Committee) mentions that fully one quarter of representatives actually appointed by local meetings had *never* attended meetings of the Committee, and that 16 meetings had *never* appointed representatives at all. Over the course of the two gatherings held in the previous year, the composition of meetings was approximately 50% consistent (meaning that fully *half of the group was different* each time).
- While there have been notable exceptions and periods of healthy activity, design problems relating to composition and scope, visible in the earliest reports of this “working” committee, **have persisted until the present**, as have the challenges of giving sufficient, sustained, skilled attention to fostering the growth of new meetings, caring for the health of existing meetings, caring for those serving in ministry, and engaging in outreach.

These above changes taken together resulted in the creation of the current form of the **Committee on Ministry and Counsel of New England Yearly Meeting**.

Obstacles Presented by Current Forms and Practices

Several of the concerns identified below are highlighted in the recent report of the [Clerking Practices and Structures Working Group](#)⁸, whose recommendations resulted in the creation of this Working Group on Yearly Meeting Support of Ministry and Spiritual Life. Those articulations may be helpful to reference.

⁸ The Clerking Practices and Structures Working Group was itself informed by the previous work of many other Friends over many years (as well as by new interviews and analysis), including the Structural Review and Long Term Financial Planning Committees, to name two, as well as the direct guidance of Sessions—concerns about inclusive leadership development arising from Sessions 2018 led to the Clerking Practices and Structures Working Group’s formation.

It's important to acknowledge again that much good and fruitful work has been done by Friends serving as members of NEYM Ministry & Counsel in the past 50 years. In particular, through the leadership of particular Friends, groundbreaking publications (*Living With Ourselves and Others*, *Faithful Sexuality*) have been created, and deeply challenging pastoral care situations and conflicts have been addressed with tenderness, courage, and profound compassion. Many Friends have also found the experience of service through Ministry & Counsel personally enriching, and spiritual friendships among members of M&C have been deeply nourishing.

The observations that follow are not intended to diminish that work or those experiences in any way, but to foster insight into how obstacles to further faithful work might be removed, and how the flourishing of ministry might be more fully supported today.

Again, the Ministry & Spiritual Life Working Group offers its gratitude to the many faithful Friends who have shared their gifts, time, energy, and prayerful devotion through the work of Ministry & Counsel over many decades. We are deeply grateful for the faithfulness, labor and devotion of countless Friends past and present, which has brought the Yearly Meeting to where Friends find ourselves today, as we consider new horizons in this vital work.

Observations and Obstacles

1. The current charge (Purposes, Procedures, and Composition) of the Committee on Ministry and Counsel is extremely broad and varied in scope and function, and current practices of organization aren't optimal to perform these various functions
 - a. An example of this: At a given daylong, large-group meeting, there may be a need to both share news and resources for supporting local meetings with Friends attending M&C for the first time AND to focus on detailed and ongoing discernment relating to controversial—and perhaps seemingly arcane—NEYM policy. This often makes it difficult to accomplish either task well.
2. The independent appointment of most members of the Committee by local meetings, rather than through an integrated nominating process, has several effects that can be challenging.

This approach:

- a. Poses a barrier to consistent participation (a different constellation of people is often present at each meeting throughout the year)
- b. At the same time that the composition of the group changes frequently, because many Friends serve as representatives from their meetings without term limits, there can be a tendency for some part of the group to remain the same over many years, leading to, at times, both a sense of constant transition *and* a challenge in embracing new perspectives due to entrenched attitudes or a perception of “knowing how it is” among some (even when conditions have changed over time)

- c. Diminishes a sense of responsibility (there are so many people, and roles aren't differentiated; absences are frequent)
 - d. Can result in a misalignment of the gifts and experience of those appointed with the gifts needed for the work before the Committee
 - e. Can create a situation in which disruptive or harmful behavior on the part of some participants is more difficult to address, since group membership is "porous", and appointees from local meetings can feel little accountability to the Yearly Meeting for their participation. The YM can exercise limited discipline if the MM has appointed the person, and doesn't feel a responsibility for the behavior or service of their appointee
 - f. Can mean that since monthly meetings often find the request to appoint members to NEYM M&C burdensome, many people are in fact self-nominated, since local meetings are often happy to approve a willing volunteer
 - g. Means it is very difficult for a group that theoretically consists of 70+ members to develop a sense of mutual accountability, cohesion, and "team" functioning, especially when fewer than half of those theoretical members are appointed or attend meetings
 - h. Because of the varying understandings of the role of appointees (on the part of those appointed and the local meetings or nominators appointing Friends), relatively few members understand themselves as being responsible for ongoing work between meetings; there can be a tendency to see the already-significant commitment to attend all-day Saturday meetings five times a year as the majority of the work they are able/expecting to offer
3. There is a desire and an expectation (on the part of many attending) for "open space" (meaning both available time and attention) for worship and for prayerful engagement with whatever concerns may arise at the time of the meeting, BUT the Committee/Clerk is also required to respond to a long list of detailed activities and issues throughout the year, most of which require substantial consultation, decision-making, experience, planning, promotion, implementation, evaluation, and follow-up.
 4. The significant programmatic dimension of some aspects of the work understood to be (at least partially) under the purview of Ministry & Counsel (trainings, workshops, retreats) requires specific gifts and skills which may not be present on the Committee at any given time (see #1). Also, the provision of high-quality programming would benefit from greater continuity of planning and support. Little learning or institutional memory is possible for the Committee as a whole given the inconsistency of attendance, and the turnover of members.
 5. It *is* clear that the current model/practice responds to a real and substantial need on the part of many Friends (some of whom have been long-time attenders of these meetings) for spiritual friendship, rich worship, and social connection. If the current form were changed, it is important to recognize that the absence of this way of meeting this need,

unless addressed in another way, would be keenly felt by some Friends.

6. The practice of holding four regular daylong meetings throughout the year (regardless of the type or quantity of business) in addition to a meeting at Annual Sessions shifts the focus of energy and attention toward *the event of the meeting itself*, rather than the meeting(s) happening in order *to plan and prepare for or to reflect on the ongoing work* being done outside the meetings. This approach to meetings, and the tendency to presume that work being done by the Committee should/must be planned and conducted by members of Ministry & Counsel, limits the gifts and perspectives available for the work of supporting ministry and spiritual life, and raises significant obstacles to participation by many Friends, including especially younger adults and families with small children.
7. The perception (articulated by some Friends) that Ministry & Counsel Committee “owns” or is “THE place for” support for ministry and spiritual life in the Yearly Meeting, and exercises the only appropriate authority to approve and be central to such efforts, tends to foster and reinforce a sense of superiority and “one right way” on the part of the members of the Committee and beyond, and creates a substantial deterrent to new approaches being shared and developed.

This perception also does not align with the current reality, where many others have responsibilities for spiritual nurture, religious education, pastoral care, and other service overlapping with the current charge of Ministry & Counsel.

Some Friends engaged in public ministry outside of M&C—including some Friends who have served as members of M&C—express concerns that the structure of M&C can be experienced as “controlling”, a roadblock to new initiatives or expressions of ministry. Because of this, these Friends often either refrain from embarking on new efforts to support ministry, or conduct such efforts independently (and indeed, intentionally don’t share them) out of fear that they will be “stifled.”

When those who are frustrated undertake these efforts independently, they sometimes do so without benefitting from integration or coordination with others charged with the care of ministry and spiritual life by the Yearly Meeting.

From one perspective, this sense of the “primacy” or exclusivity of the role of the M&C Committee could be seen as a reflection of—and a quality reinforcing—what some have come to understand and articulate as “white supremacy culture.”

8. Because there is little outside accountability for the work of Ministry and Counsel (including both mechanisms of accountability to local meetings, and to the wider Yearly Meeting), because of a culture of “niceness” (doing what avoids conflict and keeps things comfortable, rather than raising difficult issues in a loving and direct way), and

because the measure of the success of an activity is often judged by whether those who led or organized it were pleased with it, **both the quality and the focus of the work have at times suffered.**

The cultural practice of tending to ask for feedback exclusively from attenders of committee meetings of Ministry & Counsel (asking those who are present at in-person meetings five times per year) limits the opportunity for listening directly to those we most desire to serve (in local meetings or those serving in public ministry), and can be a barrier to making timely and responsive adjustments.

9. Because the Committee is seen by some as “representative” of the whole Yearly Meeting, there is a tendency to believe that activities in a given area of work described by those in attendance are all that is happening, and to base decisions on this limited perspective.

This therefore partial knowledge, coupled with a sense of primacy of the role of the Committee and an absence of some needed skills and gifts, has at times formed a poor basis for fruitful action. We suggest that it is not loving or realistic to presume that Friends participating in the structure as currently constituted can maintain a “complete picture” of the activities and condition of Friends in the many areas of responsibility with which the Ministry & Counsel Committee is charged.

10. Organizing and providing four+ daylong meetings annually requires significant energy, volunteer and staff time, and other resources. It is worth considering how the carbon, energy, time, and money involved in these meetings could be more fruitfully stewarded or employed in support of visits to local meetings, workshops, connections with those serving in public ministry, preaching and teaching, etc.

*For God has not given us a spirit of timidity;
but of power, love, and discipline.*

- 2 Timothy 1-7

31 October 2020

Report to Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM)

From the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group

Imagining Unbounded Diversity in Wholeness

*May I meet you where you are
 May I never lose my center
 May I meet you where you are
 May we never lose our center
 Reaching back for truth
 Bringing forth the healing
 Healing for the future
 Born of living from the heart right now!*

—From a song by Niyonu Spann, founder of Tribe One

Purpose of this Report

This report fulfills the Noticing Patterns Working Group (NPWG or simply NP) commitment to report on its work in the last year, including work at and coming out of Sessions. It will be followed by a second report to the wider NEYM community.

We affirm the continued importance of this Noticing Patterns work, and this working group, to the spiritual life and organizational growth of NEYM. We value being a working group that can be flexible to the needs of NEYM as we carry out this work.

In this report, we

- articulate our evolving understanding of NEYM's hope that it become an institution where Revolutionary Love is practiced and where systemic versions of racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and other elitisms can find no home,
- provide some background on the process that brought NPWG into being, ● document some of NP's work of the last year, some fruits of that work, and some reflections upon that work and its fruits,
- articulate our current understanding of the NPWG's role in the transformative process NEYM has undertaken,
- outline some of the specific endeavors we see before us for the coming year.

Further, NPWG requests that the care, support and accountability for the Noticing Patterns work and the Working Group rest with the NEYM Permanent Board, the body that represents the Yearly Meeting (YM) and carries forward its work between annual sessions.

Noticing Patterns Work Group expresses its deep gratitude for NEYM M&C's faithful commitment, consistent support, and skillful care of our working group and our work during these first two years. However, given the centrality of our work and given that NEYM M&C is in a process of reflection and change, NPWG was guided by the Presiding Clerk, Clerk of Permanent Board and YM Secretary to bring our 2020 report to the Permanent Board.

NEYM's Hope: A Paradigm Shift

Most Quakers fervently desire to remove the social injustices found in the cultural systems of domination (often abbreviated as *Empire*) that shackle all of us. Many Quakers have begun to understand intellectually that the most severe of these pursuits of power over others are

2

systemic, and that anyone with privilege used unthinkingly is complicit in them. The systemic nature of the injustices means that attempts merely not to participate, to say to oneself, for example, “Don’t be racist!” “Don’t be sexist!” “Don’t be homophobic!” (etc.) and expect thought and action to comply, does not work. In fact, to berate the biased thought that leads to an act of oppression may merely increase the “frequency and power of the original” bias.¹

To change the world, we allow ourselves to change. Allowing a state of wonder and humility as application of the Quaker testimony of Simplicity, we begin to practice thoughts, feelings, and actions that are anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-elitist, and totally anti-hierarchical of persons as persons. Otherwise, at best, the pendulum of injustice swings between wrongs, as those oppressed in one way pay damages to those oppressed in another.

From its beginnings, NPWG has understood this work to be the work of the whole of NEYM. It entails a paradigm shift. Before the work began, we were immersed in a paradigm born of Empire. It states first, that whiteness and its intersection with the other systems of oppression, such as male domination, heterosexism, classism, cis-genderedness and their associated values, are now at the center of NEYM. Second, the paradigm implies that bringing folks on the margins into this center is a process of helping them discard their “darker,” “uncivilized,” ways—a process of assimilation. This paradigm has shaped our understanding of our Quaker testimonies, not only before the mid-twentieth-century Civil Rights Movement², not only during the era of affirmative action³, but today, as well.

The new paradigm is one of continuing transformation: to move away from NEYM’s organizational structures and unstated, but powerful, Empire-infused organizational values; to move away from micro-aggression-rich processes in business; to move away from our Empire-motivated actions during fellowship; and to move away from all these things within our constituent programs and meetings. Finally, and most basically, we Friends can take the step of surrendering our individual will to this lifelong process of transformation. Our vision is that the people of NEYM allow themselves to become instruments of Revolutionary Love, love centered in wonder and humility and faithfulness. To adopt this new paradigm with integrity, requires each of us to begin to prune away those beliefs and practices centered in the culture of domination that most people of NEYM have assimilated during childhood.

Background: Beginnings and 2019-2020 work of NPWG

Our working group was formed under a charge from Sessions to Ministry and Counsel to “develop a practice to appoint people who will observe, name, and reflect back to us long-standing, unseen patterns and practices that result in our complicity in oppression” (NEYM 2018-53).

An overview of how this working group formed and the first phases of the work can be found in our report to Sessions 2019 (page 10 of the [Advanced Documents for 2019](#)). In addition, our report of a year ago, [September 2019 report to NEYM Ministry and Counsel](#), reviews the

¹ Valarie Kaur, in *See No Stranger* (Random House Publishing Group. Kindle Edition) makes this point on p. 26.

² See, for example, Paula Palmer, “Quaker Indian Boarding Schools,” *Friends Journal*, 1 October 2016.

³ John Punshon, author of *Portrait in Grey: A Short History of the Quakers* (1984), during the 1980's, held up the rallying cry “bringing the margins to the center.” Many, including one co-author of this report, fervently espoused this statement, even though covertly, because of systemic racism, it implies the *assimilation* of exceptional, teachable people of color. The paradigm was (and often is, still) invisible to most Quakers.

3

specific work that we have felt led to do as we have faithfully sought to live into the ministry given us by NEYM M&C. Also see [Lisa Graustein's article in Friends Journal](#) (4/27/2020) that describes the first year of NEYM's experiment with noticing patterns.

In the attached appendix, you will find a list of NPWG's meetings, retreats, workshops since Sessions 2019 and a list that documents how NPWG carried out its work during Sessions 2020.

Observations from Sessions

The following patterns reflect some of the observations we find especially salient. They emerged through the Noticing Patterns email box at Sessions, what we heard and tracked during Business sessions and from our attendance in the other YM Sessions spaces mentioned earlier.

Growth and Deepening through Patterns of Faithfulness

- Much joy, freedom, gratitude, love, compassion, honesty and encouragement was expressed. This felt like what "accountability" is supposed to look like in our tradition. ● Attenders of Annual Sessions are more grounded in, and comfortable using, language of noticing patterns of oppression and faithfulness.
- Less resistance and more openness to feedback, practice with noticing, and taking risks in Business, Home Groups, and other YM spaces.
- More demonstrated curiosity and less judgment in what people shared in noticing email box. People engaged each other in conversations about noticing patterns ● Growing recognition that words and the ways that words land, regardless of intention, matter.
- Less debate and reactivity to words such as white supremacy/ white supremacy culture.
- Less claiming that patterns of faithfulness “cancel out” patterns of oppression. ● The shift in YM Sessions Business to centering voices of color, their experiences and insights, highlighted YM Sessions Business commitment to listen and respond to calls for justice among BIPOC.
- Growing collaboration across the social witness committees, evidenced by the shared minute brought forward by Earthcare Ministries and Racial, Social and Economic Justice. Their shared call challenged NEYM to see climate disaster at the intersection of racial and economic oppression, and called for faithful action to be continually examined and informed by that understanding.
- More trusting of committees in their work and discernment.
- Moving past wordsmithing to hearing the deeper call in the Letter of Apology to Indigenous People and its call to action.

The Challenge of Persisting Patterns of Oppression

- Persisting perfectionism with a focus on “getting it right” reflects deep patterns of white supremacy culture, and is “spirit-killing”. It focuses on the rules/right behavior as a “destination” to arrive at rather than a joint journey of learning with all its imperfection.
- This perfectionism also perpetuated a pattern that allows the blocking of actions/motions.

- Tyranny of urgency persists.
- The language and ways we act from an unexamined “we”; emphasized the importance to examine who it includes/excludes.
- Around midweek, more noticing (from Friends as a whole) on the patterns of oppression and faithfulness that others were engaged in, but much less looking at our own internalized patterns.
- Pattern of white men in the YM taking up a lot of space, holding up unity, and/or repeating (and unintentionally taking credit for) what has already been ministered. ● Impugning aggressive intent when plain speaking and lifting up patterns.

4

- Relatedly, an overemphasis on “being gentle” centers white people’s comfort/fragility. Having to take so much care to be “gentle” makes the conversation about the tone, not the pattern.
- Hiding behind the walls of our own comfort. What might we learn from our discomfort if we were to face it more honestly.
- More learning needed around stepping up or back (e.g. in contributing insights) in consideration of what the whole group needs, rather than in consideration of our own importance or lack of it.
- The four microaggressions scenarios practiced in Home Group trainings (othering young people, parents, Asian Americans and misgendering someone) surfaced in Home Groups (again this year). AND, many Home Group facilitators reported using what they learned in trainings for positive interventions and some preventing of microaggressions.
- ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERN: YM continues not to proactively create spaces before and during Annual Sessions for people of color and their families to ground their participation in Sessions. Such a space respects the need of people of color to gather together for support and nourishment as they engage with Annual Sessions, a white dominant and normed space, and honors the need for people of color to meet alone.

NPWG’s Role in the Transformative Process NEYM has Undertaken

1 Corinthians 13: 3: *“If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.”*

NPWG’s role is not to fix our behavior, but to provide a mirror that opens us to transformation.

Transformation, becoming a person whose thoughts, attractions, and actions are centered in Revolutionary Love, is not accomplished by merely changing our outsides, our appearances. Yet we must notice appearances—such as the differential ways we speak and respond to people of color versus white people or straight versus gay/trans people, and our use of language that gives voice to our unexamined assumptions. Changing these appearances is one concrete step toward showing our willingness to be open and transformed.

We are together as a yearly meeting to support each other in the surrender of will required for each of us to be true to the light and love within us. In this process we can uncover together right action—and ways of being—around the various commitments our yearly meeting has made. The words above, from 1 Corinthians, lift up a focus on Transformation and inform the purpose of the NPWG. We note that work on reparations and other actions of integrity arise out of this transformation and ongoing listening. There is a central pattern of faithfulness here. “Let Love be the First Motion.”

We see ourselves and NEYM on a journey of faithfulness and transformation that will not end at a single destination. As one among us has said so clearly, *“The journey in some ways is simple,*

'thy will be done,' and also more nuanced and context-specific. No list/formula/recipe works in every situation." AND, we are clear that if we do our work well, this working group will not be necessary in three to five years, or as one among us says, *"We are working to notice ourselves out of existence."*

We wish to keep the Working Group small enough to stay flexible and responsive to what unfolds, and to be able to meet regularly and coordinate these efforts. We shall draw on support from the wider circle of friends interested in actively learning and promoting the work, and also seek support from NEYM staff where useful and appropriate.

NPWG's original understanding of its reason for existing remains alive and at the heart of the spiritual wholeness and growth of NEYM—to observe, name, and reflect back to NEYM

5

members and constituents long-standing, unseen patterns and practices that result in our complicity in oppression.

Going forward, NPWG intends to bring this work to a wider audience and to accompany people as they join our paradigm shift. Our hope is that a loving practice of noticing patterns of oppression and faithfulness will become an active and persistent feature of the life of most of NEYM's meetings, committees, and programs. To make that vision manifest, we seek to develop a wider circle of people who can engage and facilitate groups in all aspects of NEYM, inviting in those who are ready to join us now. We also want to create ways for many to grow their capacity to support this outreach work. Ongoing revelation and the transformation that results from it has been at the heart of Quakerism from its earliest beginnings.

When a sufficient state of such engagement is reached, NPWG will have "noticed itself out of existence."

REQUEST:

In light of all of the above, NPWG requests that Permanent Board be the body of NEYM that holds NPWG in care and support and to accountability in its calling.

* * * * *

... there are no strangers. There are only versions of ourselves, many of which we have not embraced, most of which we wish to protect ourselves from....

Morrison, Toni. *The Origin of Others* (The Charles Eliot Norton lectures, 2016) (p. 38). Harvard University Press. Kindle Edition.

I will meet you at your center. You will meet me at my center. The mystery: We each find the same new center. That center is dynamic and living. It is where the true unity of unbounded diversity without hierarchy is.

It is the pattern, the true self: that of the divine within each and everything.

Tat Tvam Asi

Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone; whereby in them you may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.

Statement of 1656, from *The Works of George Fox* (1831)

Thank you, from the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group, which currently includes Polly Attwood (clerk), LJ Boswell, Melody Brazo, Melissa Foster, Lisa Graustein, Becky Jones, Aiham Korbage, Anna Lindo, Richard Lindo, Heidi Nortonsmith, L.V.M. Shelton, Pamela Terrien, and Honor Woodrow.

**Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group
Appendix to Report to Permanent Board – October 31, 2020**

Since September 2019, the NPWG work has included:

Internal Meetings and Collaboration with NEYM Leadership

- **Meeting monthly on Zoom**, we reviewed lessons learned during Annual Sessions 2019, identified members to be liaisons to Racial, Social and Economic Justice (RSEJ), Challenging White Supremacy (CWS), NEYM M&C and NEYM Youth Programs, various members attended meetings with Ministry and Counsel (11/9/19), with Committee Clerks from RSEJ and CWS (1/11/2020), and Coordinating and Advisory (January 2020).
- **January 14, 2020: NP met for a day-long retreat** to welcome two new members to the group, identify specific next steps and goals for Spring 2020 and look toward Annual Sessions 2020. The new Presiding Clerk was present and together we explored new ways to collaborate and position the NPs work and NPWG as integral to Business at Annual Sessions.

Workshops with and by Noticing Patterns

- **Northampton Friends Meeting**: an introductory conversation after YM sessions in September, 2019, to review and expand on the Noticing Patterns work at sessions, attended by 16 Friends. A second workshop in October, 2019 expanded on the noticing theme and gave us an opportunity to role-play and practice responding to noticed patterns.
- **Salem Quarterly Meeting** (at Friends Meeting Cambridge 1/26/20): A basic workshop introducing and practicing noticing patterns of oppression and faithfulness.
- **Hartford Friends Meeting** (2/8/2020): In coordination with NEYM M&C's retreat, NPWG developed two workshop spaces for the afternoon – one, the basic workshop introducing and practicing noticing patterns; second, a “training for trainers,” where people strengthened their skill with facilitating Noticing Patterns work in their Monthly Meetings.
- **JHYM Staff Workshops** (1/16/20 and 3/12/20): Lisa Graustein developed two workshops for JHYM staff and members of NPWG co-facilitated with Lisa.
- *Amid growing concern around the coronavirus, by early March it was clear that additional workshops we had hoped to offer at and with Monthly Meetings would not be possible.*

Preparation for Sessions and Sessions, Itself

- **Met on zoom monthly** in March and April and almost every other week beginning in late May and up until Annual Sessions 2020.
- **A late June meeting** with the Presiding Clerk present, we were deeply led to explore a profound shift for Sessions Business. That shift manifested with
 - bringing forward more and different voices to speak to the body about Quaker leadings in response to the twin pandemics of coronavirus and racism facing U.S. society and a focus on two items for discernment: 1) “The Letter of Apology to Native Americans” from the NEYM Reparations Working Group and an accompanying Call to Action and 2) “A Call to Urgent, Loving Action for Earth and Her Inhabitants” from RSEJ and Earthcare Ministries.
- **Supported three 90-minute trainings of every Home Group facilitator** led by Lisa Graustein with members of the NPWG co-facilitating.
- At the request of the Presiding Clerk, **two members of the NPWG sat with the Clerks**

Table in their planning meetings prior to Sessions and each day during Sessions that they met.

- Arising from our experience last year at Sessions and evaluations received, the **NPWG brought its observations on both patterns of faithfulness and oppression to each Business Session**. Different members of the working group shared their observations thereby modeling the collective and evolving nature of the work that is necessarily rooted in the body of the Yearly Meeting. See [Noticings for Business 8/4](#) and [Noticings for Business 8/7](#).
- **Managed an electronic Noticing Box via an email address** – noticingpatterns@neym.org – through which we collected noticings, questions, and feedback from many Friends throughout the week.
- **Collaborated with the two Young Adult Friend coordinators** to facilitate a 90-minute debrief/discussion of Dr. Amanda Kemp's Plenary.
- **Collaborated with JHYM** to facilitate a 60-minute workshop on noticing patterns work and microaggressions which led to a follow up 60-minute workshop on October 18, 2020.
- **Met daily for one hour during Sessions** during which we shared our reflections and observations about Business Meeting, Home Groups, Bible Half Hour, the Sunday Plenary, and the Tuesday night discussion. There we also coordinated our responses to concerns and questions that came through the noticing patterns email and other avenues. These meetings gave rise to our Noticing Patterns reflections offered during each Business Session.

Staff Reports

See Presiding Clerk's Report

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 well-being, 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 co-workers, 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 steady 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 co-workers 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 ad-minister-ative 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 lukewarmness 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.

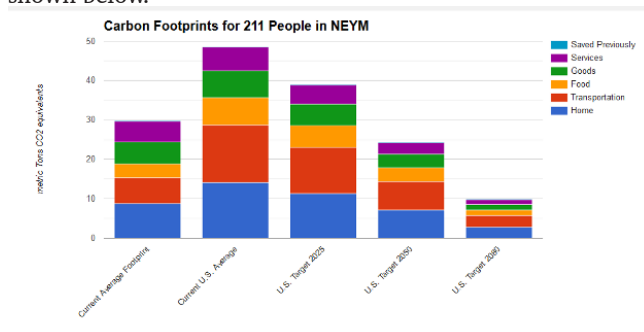
—BRUCE NEUMANN, PRESIDING CLERK

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 [VOICE])

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 ac-

tion. 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 Nurture Committee, which works to keep a deep spiritual base for all of QEW's 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

Internal Nominating Committee Report to Permanent Board October 31, 2020

Clerk: Leslie Manning 2019-2022 Recording Clerk: Hannah Zwirner Forsythe Aug. 2018- 2021

Permanent Board – Reference Only

2020	2021 2022	2022	2023	2024
# Ben Guaraldi Anna Radocchia Carole Rein	Kimberly Allen Rebecca Leuchak Christopher McCandless Mary Zwirner #William Walkauskas	Gina Nortonsmith Darcy Drayton #Hannah Zwirner-Forsythe Sara Smith Elizabeth Szatkowski Travis Belcher	Will Taber Martin Zwirner- Forsythe Jean McCandless Ed Mair Peter Bishop Thomas Vargo	@Leslie Manning John Reuthe #Ian Harrington #Christopher Gant

in second term (can't be reappointed) * filling out term – can be reappointed 2 entire terms
@ clerk

Sub Committee	2021	2022	2023
Permanent Board Clerk		Leslie Manning	
Clerks Table Nominating	Travis Belcher *+Fritz Weiss *+Judy Goldberger	+Katherine Fisher Anna Radocchia	#Edward Mair +Karen Sanchez-Eppler
Personnel Resources Working Group			+Nat Shed Elizabeth Szatkowski
Internal Nominating	+ LVM Shelton @Will Taber	+Sarah Gant +Janet Hough	
YM Nominating at Large	+Conor Weiss	+Kristna Evans	+#LouAnne McDonald +#Karen Sargent +Cat Chapin-Bishop +Dawn Tripp
YM Nominating Clerk	+Jackie Stillwell		
Friends Camp Nominating (2 yr terms)		+Nat Shed +Hilary Burgin	
NEYM Secretary Supervisor			+Elizabeth Reuthe

Faith and Practice Revision (Open ended terms)	+RachelWalker Cogbill +Carolyn Hilles- Pilant	@+Phebe McCosker	+Maggie Edmondson +Susan Reilly	+Douglas Armstrong +Eric Edwards +Marion Athearn +Eleanor Godway
---	--	---------------------	---------------------------------------	---

Bold = Submitted for Permanent Board Approval + = not on Permanent Board # = in second term
@ clerk % = appointed by Friends Camp clerk * = filling out term can be reappointed 2 full terms

NEYM Nominating Committee report to Permanent Board
31 October 2020

Nominating Committee recommends the following appointments:

Permanent Board

Kathleen Wooten (Fresh Pond?) class of 2025

Frances Lightsom (West Falmouth Preparative) class of 2025

Friends General Conference

Michelle Riendeau (Wellesley) class of 2021

FCNL

Holly Weidner (Vassalboro) class of 2023

Robert Scott Drysdale (Hanover) class of 2023

Resignations:

Frances Lightsom from Earthcare Ministry

With gratitude,
Jacqueline Stillwell
Clerk

Appointments to Resource and Working Groups

To Right Relationship Resource Group:

Kim West, Friends Meeting at Cambridge

To Israel/Palestine Working Group,
Under the care of the Permanent Board:

Molly Cornell, West Falmouth Preparative
Skip Schiel, Friends Meeting at Cambridge

(The Right Relationship Resource Group has been formed to support Monthly and Quarterly Meetings as they engage with the proposed Apology and Recommendations coming out of 2020 Annual Sessions of NEYM.

<https://neym.org/right-relationship-indigenous-peoples-resources-engagement>

They are under the care of the Permanent Board, and shall report to them at least once before Sessions, 2021.

The members will be named by the PB Clerk and shall serve for one year.

Current members are Suzanna Schell (BHFM), Andy Grant, Don Campbell (Mt. Toby), and Sara Smith (Concord). Staff support and communications coordination will be provided by Nia Thomas and Noah Merrill, and the clerk of the PB will serve ex officio.)

**Approved as a Minute at Sandwich Monthly Meeting for Business on July 12,
2020 Approved at Sandwich Quarterly Meeting for Business on July 25, 2020**

AN OPEN-HEARTED PLEA CONCERNING NATIVE PEOPLES AND MASHPEE IN PARTICULAR

Sandwich Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, known as Quakers, does not, as an organization, weigh in on political sides. Friends vary in their political affiliations. However, Friends have always had a strong moral interest in the society at large. This sensitivity almost always has political consequences, that we have accepted without endorsing. This letter is a case in point.

Our plea is a moral one. The Federal government has removed its protection of lands in trust for the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe, in spite of their previous decisions given the tribe's recognition as a sovereign entity. In plain terms this is yet another case of the Federal government voiding a treaty obligation arbitrarily, deliberately, and destructively for its own political ends. The decision appears to us morally bankrupt and oppressive. Of course, this matter is presently before the courts. We are painfully aware of the often destructive history of the Federal government with regard to native peoples. Friends in general and individually encourage any action by the government that repairs historical injustice or enables native tribes to pursue their own destinies in a positive relationship with the Federal government. Therefore, it is doubly painful to see past evil revisited yet again upon human beings who have already had to contend with the various prejudices of being the first human occupants of the land.

Sandwich Monthly Meeting has a suggestion for individuals who own land, to orient their thinking and relationship to native peoples in a positive moral and reparative manner. To wit, when land is sold by someone, one percent of the profit can be designated by the seller to go to a local tribe. This kind of relationship honors the present sense of law and ownership, while acknowledging the moral debt landowners have by virtue of an often bad history not of their own making. We are particularly interested in the concept of a relationship with the land itself, and native peoples, that is morally positive and aids in repairing past action. We are particularly interested in a relationship that is contemporary, healing, and not based upon returning to some ideal past. We are particularly interested in the Federal government being a moral and healing partner with native peoples rather than a destructive power that repeats old mistakes regarding human beings. Although we are unable to alter the past, we can see it for what it was and not behave in the same old way when we know better.

The website for the Peace Abbey (peaceabbey.org), specifically the Native Land Preservation Action page, provides further explanation for this movement, as well as a form for those who own land and wish to commit themselves to being some of the solution. This step by landowners reconnects us, wherever we are

in this country, to native peoples, the land itself which has become our land as well, and to a vision of a moral government that regards human beings as intrinsically valuable.

Report to Permanent Board

From the Presiding Clerk

October 31, 2020

Sessions planning: Planning for 2021 Sessions has begun. Myself, Noah, Rebecca, and Elizabeth have met to consider how we might approach planning this year (see “Update to PB on Sessions”), and Rebecca called a first meeting of the full Sessions committee, which included beginning discernment of a theme. At this point it is unclear what form Sessions will take. A number of voices are already suggesting that it will be inadvisable to meet in large groups. And having seen the benefits of on-line sessions, it’s clear that even if we are able to meet in some way, we will need to include a virtual component. So Elizabeth’s plan includes a timetable of when various decisions need to be made, about in person or not.

Support for Call and Apology: Sessions approved forwarding two concerns to monthly meetings. Regarding the Letter of Apology to Native Americans, the related “Call to Action” has been revised with input from discussion at sessions, and by sessions approval. The revised document, renamed “Recommendations for MM to engage with the Letter of Apology,” along with the Letter of Apology, and some resources, have been posted on the website. A working group has formed to support this on-going work. Similarly, a group has been formed to support the “Call to Urgent, Loving, Action.” That document, along with resources for that work, has also been posted on the website. In both cases, the support group will foster communication with monthly meetings, provide resources for their engagement, and report back to PB.

Purpose and Procedure Documents: Coordinating and Advisory has begun to take this work up again, and we expect to bring a number of these documents to PB over the year, for approval.

Exit Interviews: Last year, in response to one of the recommendations in the clerking structures report, C&A with assistance from Nia Thomas, created a draft plan for doing exit interviews for those “retiring” from leadership positions. Several interviews took place. C&A has reviewed the procedure, and expect to make a few changes, do interviews again this year, and hopefully establish an on-going process which would ensure that interviews are held in a more timely fashion.

Approve written reports: In “Normal” years, the agenda for Business Sessions includes something we call the “Unity Agenda,” with some number of things that are unlikely to need presentation or discussion. These include such things as approving Bank Resolutions, and approving Purpose and Procedure documents for committees. This year these were broken up, with a few things being done in virtual sessions, and others here at Permanent Board. We realized recently that two things had fallen through the cracks, and we are asking Friends today to accept (not approve) these reports which were in the advance documents:

- Staff reports
- Board, Committee, and Representative Reports

Election Worship: Recognizing that concerns about election unrest, on top of pandemic fatigue, are deeply unsettling to many, Noah Leslie, Jeremiah and I met to consider what the YM might do to support

Friends. What emerged from our conversation, in addition to an expectation of communication about election-related activities of Friends in NE, was a plan for an election night worship-vigil. At this writing, we are still planning, but we expect to host an on-line worship room, anchored in one-hour increments by Friends with gifts of grounding and eldership. Expect some communication a few days before November 3.

To: The Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends
From: Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary
Re: Report in preparation for PB meeting on October 31, 2020

Dear Friends,

As we prepare to gather just days from the coming election, in this time of continuing pandemic, injustice, and suffering, I know many of our hearts are rightly heavy with anxiety, grief, and anger. My prayer is that even in the midst of these storms, we will each be given the renewed assurance that we are held in the unshakeable shelter of Grace, knowing we are never alone.

Aware of the amount of advance reading for this meeting, I've tried to be brief in this written report, framing my updates according to my overall areas of focus for this year (as shared, in substance, in the advance documents for our last meeting in September).

With so much in flux as of this writing, I hope to offer a summary of activities surrounding the election as part of my oral report when we gather, but I want to share that I am in ongoing communication both with many of our ecumenical partners in New England and with yearly meetings and Friends organizations nationally as we seek to be prepared and available to respond to the needs of meetings and communities as they arise. These encounters are important reminders to me—both that we are held in a much wider web of care and support by our wider family of faith, and that we have a vital part to play in the witness of our faith in these times.

As always, I welcome your questions, comments, or guidance, either during our meeting or otherwise at noah@neym.org.

Encourage and Liberate Ministry

The primary update I would offer on work supporting this priority is the report and recommendations from the Ministry & Spiritual Life working group. I hope Friends will prayerfully engage with the advance materials and the presentation, and consider how we are led to respond.

Beyond my role in supporting the working group, Ministry & Counsel, and the wider process, I continue to meet regularly with Friends active in public ministry, both with those with established calls and those newly exploring service. In recent weeks, I have worked with partners to support the establishment or strengthening of ministry oversight groups for several Friends. I have helped make connections between local meetings and several Friends active in public ministry, in response to requests from local meeting leadership.

Because of other commitments, I have not made substantial progress on two current writing projects.

Nurture Servant Leadership

Several of the aspects of the recommendation from the Ministry & Spiritual Life Working Group respond to this area of focus. I have supported the Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator and Clerk of Nominating Committee in exploring both new ways of integrating the work of nominating groups within our Yearly Meeting, and more robustly supporting their function. Work to update our [policies and procedures on neym.org](#) continues.

A recent addition to resources supporting servant leadership this fall is a [video orientation to support and collaboration with the Yearly Meeting staff](#), “Partnering in service”, which was shared this fall as an orientation for committee clerks.

Biweekly Zoom calls for Friends serving in leadership roles in their local meetings, which Nia Thomas and I host, continue as they have since March, with roughly 25-35 connections for each call. Recent themes have included how to set boundaries and discern what work is enough, and how to support our local meetings in responding to the coming election. Feedback on these gatherings continues to be strongly positive, and we are seeing the fruits of this engagement in much more active sharing of resources, requests for specific support, and strengthening of initiative and resilience in those serving their meetings. Interested in participating, or encouraging someone from your local meeting? **Email Sara Hubner at office@neym.org to be added to the contact list for future calls.**

Young adult Friends Brynn Keevil and Emi Link, supported by staff, are hosting opportunities for connection, spiritual formation, and leadership development for young adults this fall, including a successful recent in-person, socially distanced gathering hosted by Woolman Hill. At a time when isolation and disruptions caused by the pandemic are affecting Friends aged 18-25 especially dramatically, I’m grateful to Brynn and Emi for sharing their gifts to set a welcoming table for others, learning and discovering as they go.

Foster Religious Education

I’ve been encouraged by recent efforts by Gretchen Baker-Smith and Nia Thomas to offer monthly gatherings for families and youth ministers, hosted by youth ministers from a different monthly meeting each time. This month, Friends from Friends Meeting at Cambridge set a wonderful table to families, and active conversations are ongoing with another meeting in another state about hosting the next one. I’m encouraged by the way these opportunities are drawing on the strengths of local meetings, and connecting Friends in worship and connection in youth ministry across the distances that separate us.

Friends Janet Dawson and Fritz Weiss from the Youth Ministries Committee also recently joined Nia Thomas to host a conversation about youth ministers in local meetings about their challenges and what they are learning in this time of coronavirus. Further conversations to network and nurture local youth ministers are planned for the coming months.

Friends who have been active in recent offerings of the Nurturing Faithfulness program, with staff support, are exploring ways to host information and practice sessions for Friends interested

in bringing the practice of faithfulness groups (small-group spiritual formation and spiritual accountability) to their local meetings, based on the success of their previous efforts to seed such groups in their own local meetings. Stay tuned for news about upcoming opportunities.

The recommendations from the working group on Ministry & Spiritual Life also specifically note the need to offer opportunities for networking and nurture for Friends engaged in the ministries of spiritual formation and religious education.

Lead Development Program

While a fuller report on the financial condition of the Yearly Meeting will be offered by the Treasurer at our meeting in December, I can with deep gratitude confirm that the Yearly Meeting ran a modest but substantial surplus in fiscal year 2020.

This positive result, which places us on a firm footing to respond to the ongoing turbulence of this time, was made possible due to the generosity and devotion of countless Friends, the sustaining commitment of local meetings, and effective management of expenses, even in this time of great uncertainty and unexpected costs and necessities, and with Sessions having approved a budget deficit of \$8637. The models we developed for financially supporting Sessions were borne out; monthly meeting giving was actually slightly higher than last year. More on the details in December.

In recent months, Friends have consistently shared with me the sense that they have felt the relevance and presence of the Yearly Meeting *increased* during these months of pandemic. I'm grateful for this evidence of the fruits of faithfulness on the part of so many.

Last year, prior to the pandemic, I had planned to convene Friends in relevant roles to begin an exploration of how more attention to gifts to the Yearly Meeting's endowments—including encouraging Friends to consider planned giving and bequests—could powerfully support Friends' vision for the present and future of our faith community in New England. Though the immediate needs of the pandemic superseded this focus, I am hopeful that there may be more space for these meaningful conversations in the coming months.

I'm also looking forward to working this year with the clerk of the Permanent Board, Coordinating & Advisory, and others to examine how the ministry of development and stewardship in our Yearly Meeting might be more widely shared and encouraged, how our development program might "grow up" further, and what additional resources might be needed to make that possible.

Focus and Integrate Communications

In partnership with Coordinating & Advisory, staff, and Friends serving in relevant roles, this fall I have developed a new process for planning integrated and strategic communications efforts in support of the work of the Yearly Meeting.

This fall, this has taken the form of a series of meetings guided by a new [communications planning guide](#), resulting in a shared plan for how various folks involved in particular efforts will coordinate our work. So far, we have used this approach with the working group supporting the response to the Call to Urgent and Loving Action responding to racial injustice and the climate crisis, and the Right Relationship Resource Group, supporting local meetings in engaging with the draft Letter of Apology to Indigenous Peoples.

A “Communications and Program Team” consisting of the Office Manager, the Events Coordinator, the Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator, and myself is meeting monthly to review a new integrated communications calendar for the Yearly Meeting, and to consider together how to best support the various communications efforts of the Yearly Meeting. We are already seeing the fruits of this collaboration in improving the Yearly Meeting’s ability to plan and integrate our communications efforts to better serve local meetings, and to help those who would most benefit from particular programming and resources to connect with them.

In September, after a hiatus of five months during which we were instead sending more frequent mass emails related to the pandemic, we resumed publication of the monthly email newsletter.

In part because of these efforts—and, we believe, helped by the bi-weekly meeting leadership calls and other ongoing circles of connection—newsletters and other content are being more widely and frequently shared to local meeting listservs, and—more importantly—local meetings have reported being able to access and make use of relevant resources, events, and relationships supporting the thriving of their meetings in this challenging time.

Other Updates

- **Sabbatical Planning**

As Friends may be aware, when the coronavirus pandemic began, it became clear that the conditions were not right for me to go on sabbatical, as originally planned to begin in October 2020, after approximately eight years of service. As we come to the end of this month when my sabbatical would have begun, conditions are such that it is still difficult to contemplate taking extended time away. Still, I am committed to consulting with staff and Coordinating & Advisory in the coming months to resume planning for a sabbatical, as way opens.

- **Public Statements**

The Presiding Clerk and I have signed two statements on behalf of New England Friends, the first a letter from Maine faith leaders on “[Defending Democracy Faithfully](#)”, and a letter from the Massachusetts Council of Churches called “[Lament and Live Together](#)”, a call to lamentation, to prayer, and to resetting expectations for local congregations—to make space for rest and acknowledging the challenges of these times.

- **Sessions 2021 Planning**

The Presiding Clerk has offered an update on planning for how preparations for Sessions will proceed this year. I won't offer more, other than to affirm that these considerations, and the potential implications of our decisions, are and will be a major part of my work and the work of the relevant staff and volunteer leadership now and in the coming months. I'm deeply grateful for the partnership, diligence, and foresight all involved are showing as we seek to prepare to set the spiritual table for Friends as best we can, in a time of such uncertainty and turmoil. We've learned a lot, and we are learning more each day.

- **Support for Friends Camp**

Director Anna Hopkins' report speaks in much greater detail, but again to affirm the major dimension of work that supporting Friends Camp involved this past year, and the significant investment of time, energy, and financial resources that it will continue to require in the coming year. I want to celebrate the partnership and integration among staff and volunteers that is only growing as we work together to support this vital ministry of New England Friends alongside our other essential work.

- **Pastoral care needs**

I continue to respond on a regular basis to significant needs for pastoral care support, both from individuals and Friends serving in local meetings. I'm grateful to the Friends serving as pastoral care resource people who have been willing to respond and accompany Friends in need, and for the many ways we are sacrificing to stay connecting and to nurture one another's faith and hope in these challenging days.

- **Request: Formal approval for grant proposal**

As part of an ongoing partnership with Woolman Hill and Quaker teachers Marcelle Martin and Hilary Burgin, we recently submitted a letter of interest to the Shoemaker Fund in Philadelphia for up to \$250,000 (over three years) to support a third offering of the successful Nurturing Faithfulness program in New England. As Friends are aware, this extended spiritual formation program, shaped by in-person residencies and online programming, readings, and local practice in between, has been supported by many Friends from across our Yearly Meeting, including Friends participating, teaching, serving as elders, involved in "[faithfulness groups](#)" in local meetings, and more.

Here's the statement from the letter of inquiry:

The Nurturing Faithfulness program (offered twice by Woolman Hill and New England Yearly Meeting) has been a vital source of renewal for Friends in New England. The nine-month faith formation program, for adults in a variety of life stages, is grounded in Quaker tradition and based in experiential learning. Alumni and local Meetings testify to the way this program develops individual gifts and leadership, strengthens the practice of faithfulness in local Friends meetings, and leads to powerful witness in the world.

In order to share the program's much-needed gifts more broadly, we plan to pilot a new version: Nurturing Faithfulness: Coast to Coast. This new program, which will bring together two cohorts, expand leadership of the program, and increase connection of Friends cross-country, will impact the Religious Society of Friends for years to

come—strengthening individuals' relationship to Friends as well as growing local Meetings' abilities to welcome and support all spiritual journeys. A shared teaching team and expanded online learning will supplement in-person residencies for two regions: 1. Friends in the Northeast through Woolman Hill, and 2. Friends on the West Coast through Ben Lomond Quaker Center. Subsequent offerings might expand to additional locations.

Funds would be used to prepare for and deliver two cycles of the nine-month program at a baseline affordable cost with additional scholarship available. We have demonstrated that by offsetting the cost to the individual participants, we can provide a truly accessible program, especially to young adults. Funds will also be used to release Friends with gifts of teaching, mentoring, eldership, outreach, and administration to recruit for and provide a high-quality program in each region. The requested funds would enable a wider diversity of Friends, including those with emerging gifts, to minister to the condition of Quakers across the country.

While we do not yet know whether the Shoemaker Fund will respond affirmatively to our letter of inquiry (submitted October 15), consistent with the grants policy of the Yearly Meeting (and to allow for flexibility in subsequent planning), I am **requesting that the Permanent Board approve a full grant proposal from New England Yearly Meeting to the Shoemaker Fund of up to \$300,000** in support of this expansion and continuation of our spiritual formation programming in the coming years. This application responds to our affirmed commitment, in the FY2021 budget, to make possible a new offering of the Nurturing Faithfulness program, supporting this locally rooted spiritual formation and religious education opportunity both in New England and beyond.

###

Update for Permanent Board on Sessions Planning
October 31, 2020
From the Presiding Clerk

Background:

Coordinating and Advisory Committee had expected to take on a more thorough review of the structure and function of Sessions committee as part of our triennial review of Purpose and Procedures of the various committees, during 2019-2020. Is the current model serving us well, or are there some changes to how we think about this work? COVID-19 both re-prioritized much of C&A's work, and prompted the appointment of a small and "agile" pivot/planning team to figure out how to do our first on-line Sessions. While we note various elements which would have benefitted from more planning and experience, those of us involved in organizing felt pretty good about it for a first attempt.

What now?

It being time to begin planning for 2021 Sessions, albeit with the uncertainty of whether we will be able to meet in person, Noah, Bruce, Elizabeth and Rebecca met to consider how to move forward, noting the complexity of planning for the unknown, our experience in planning on-line sessions, and the fact that no new Friends were appointed to Sessions committee.

Elizabeth brought to this meeting a well-thought out platform for our consideration, based both on emerging practice from recent years and on specific learnings from this past Sessions planning. We present this synopsis to keep you up to date, and to name that, while it departs somewhat from the current Purpose and Procedure, it is not much different from recent years' practice.

The Plan

- Program (Sessions) committee. This larger group, consists of both people who are involved because of a specific role (e.g. JYM Coordinator, Events Coordinator), and a few Friends with a more general concern for Sessions. This group would meet twice in the fall, and the primary role would be to discern theme and speakers. The group could also consider any larger questions about the function or role of Sessions. After this initial work is done, we have seen in recent years that most of the on-going work happens in consultation of those with specific roles as noted above
- Coordination Team This group includes the members of three smaller working groups or teams, and would meet regularly to review plans and decisions made by the smaller groups. This body would consider how Adult and Youth Programs relate and interact. The coordination team would be clerked by the events coordinator.
 - Adult Program Team: Consisting of the Presiding Clerk, The Sessions Committee Clerk, the Yearly Meeting Secretary, the Events Coordinator, Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator, the Home Groups Coordinator, and the clerk of Ministry and Counsel. This team would consider all programming for adults, including Business (not specific agenda items), Worship, Home groups, workshops, etc.

- Youth Programs Team: Consisting of the Events Coordinator, the Yearly Meeting Secretary, the JYM/JHYM Coordinator, and the Young Friends Coordinator, and the Quaker Practice and Leadership facilitator. This team would plan all youth and family programming.
- Logistics Team: Consisting of The Yearly Meeting Secretary, The Events Coordinator, The clerk of Sessions Committee, The Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator, The Office Manager and a tech lead. This group would focus on logistics and the infrastructure needed to hold a successful Sessions including technology, staffing needs, tool selection (registration, video hosting, etc).

Other individuals serving roles such as registrar and access coordination would be invited to team meetings as needed and useful.