

2021 Annual Report Coordinating and Advisory

The Coordinating and Advisory Committee holds close to our collective heart(s) the condition of the whole body of Friends in New England. Made up (ex-officio) of various leadership positions, we at once have no authority to make important decisions or policy changes on our own, but may take on work as requested by PB or Sessions and may, based on our own discernment, bring concerns or proposals to PB. We also serve each other, providing an opportunity for each to share their work and their concerns, giving feedback and encouragement.

Some of the work we engaged with this year:

Budget priorities: this is a standing responsibility – gathering input on what Friends consider to be priorities with potential impact on the budget, considering the various options and making recommendations to PB which in turn makes recommendations to the finance committee as they consider the next year's budget.

Purpose and procedures: Another standing responsibility is triennial review of the purpose, procedures and composition documents of each of the standing committees of the YM. This was on our schedule for last year, but pandemic concerns pushed it to the side. In our considerations we took seriously our charge detailed in Sessions minute 2019-46

During the triennial review of committee purposes and procedures, Coordinating and Advisory shall pay careful attention to how committee structures can best facilitate effectiveness in the work of our Yearly Meeting. In our current organizational culture it is often very hard for us to lay things down, and much easier to say “yes” to new things. We therefore end up with more structures and projects that we can responsibly maintain. We need to learn to let things go.

Many of the committees whose P&P we reviewed, seemed to fit well with the current needs of the YM and the P&P needed only minor adjustments. A few others we took more time in studying and considering.

Nominating: In addition to the above quote from 2019-46, we considered the report from the Clerking Structures Working Group, in particular “*Redesign nominating processes in a cohesive, consolidated manner.*” C&A shepherded a process of consideration of our nominating process this year, with input from YM Nominating, Internal Nominating, and Clerk's Nominating. Thanks to Nia Thomas, the Quaker Practice and Leadership facilitator for keeping this process moving. A proposal to merge these three committees is on the Sessions Business agenda. At a later date we will begin consideration of how the process of nominations for Friends Camp Committee, and for Moses Brown Board and Moses Brown Committee for Nurturing Friends Education relate to this merged nominating function

Sessions planning: There have been some thoughts, for a few years, that the stated model for Sessions planning does not adequately support the way Sessions planning has evolved. The

pandemic both confirmed this thinking and gave us an opportunity to experiment with new forms. With approval from Permanent Board, we are refining a model based on our “Pivot Team” which oversaw sessions planning in 2020. The model acknowledges that, after initial discernment about the condition of the larger body, and a naming of theme and speakers, much of the planning work revolves around permanent staff and temporary stipended staff. A more detailed proposal is in the works, but may not be completed in time for Sessions approval.

Witness committees: We have had a number of conversations about how witness is (and sometimes is not) supported around the YM. Excited by much of what we hear, and informed by developing practices within NEYM, we are wondering whether the traditional committee format is the best way to support current and emerging forms of witness. We expect to have something to report on this next year after consultation with Earthcare ministries and some further discernment.

Less specific in terms of agenda, but important for the Friends serving on C&A, is the listening and support we provide each other. Topics this year included supporting Jeremiah Dickinson as he moved into the role of Interim Clerk of Ministry and Counsel, providing ears and encouragement for Noah as he contemplates the timing of a sabbatical, and giving feedback to the Presiding Clerk about his approach to the Sessions Business agenda.