

Shout it aloud, do not hold back.
Raise your voice like a trumpet.
Declare to my people their rebellion
and to the descendants of Jacob their sins.
For day after day they seek me out;
they seem eager to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that does what is right
and has not forsaken the commands of its God.
They ask me for just decisions
and seem eager for God to come near them.
“Why have we fasted,” they say,
“and you have not seen it?
Why have we humbled ourselves,
and you have not noticed?”

Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please
and exploit all your workers.
Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife,
and in striking each other with wicked fists.
You cannot fast as you do today
and expect your voice to be heard on high.
Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,
only a day for people to humble themselves?
Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed
and for lying in sackcloth and ashes?
Is that what you call a fast,
a day acceptable to the Lord?

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

If you do away with the yoke of oppression,
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like the noonday.

The Lord will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.

You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.

Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins
and will raise up the age-old foundations;
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

Isaiah Chapter 58 N.I.V.

The Permanent Board, appointed by all of us at Sessions, is asked to do the work of the Yearly Meeting between our annual gatherings. In addition, we also take up and prepare issues to come before you, based on the recommendations of our standing committees and working groups. This year has been like no other and the variety of the board's work and the results of our discernment are now before you for your own discernment and decisions. We strive to find unity with one another and with Divine Will and spend our time together in listening, challenging, questioning and seeking the best way forward.

We are blessed with gifted volunteers and dedicated staff who want the best for our beloved community and work to create it. We have a sound financial base and practice effective stewardship; we are seeking to practice inclusive leadership development and continue to be open to our own shortcomings and missteps with love, humor and forbearance.

We try to practice grace, giving and receiving, whether it is in budget discussions, confirming nominations or in workgroups concerned with the issues that we have, as a body, discerned require our prayerful attention.

I want to thank all of the members of our community who show up, offer service, accept responsibility and seek to hear the voice of the Divine in our daily lives and witness.

And, to acknowledge that we have a ways to go, to be where we want to be as a faith community whose waters never fail, and whose healing does appear.

Some of our work this year included taking the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group under our care and inviting them into our regular meetings, where we are all invited to notice.

Accepting and implementing the recommendations of the Ministry and Spiritual Life Working Group to set aside Yearly Meeting Ministry and Counsel and begin a series of seasonal gatherings on Spiritual Life and Ministry which began this spring and will continue into August, 2022. This experiment will be reviewed at next year's annual sessions.

Creating the Ministry Transition Team (and laying down Ministry and Spiritual Life) to support the Interim Clerk of Ministry and Counsel in care of the needs of the Yearly Meeting. This team consists of the General Secretary, the former clerk of Ministry and Spiritual Life, the clerk of the Permanent Board and the Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator.

Creating and supporting the Right Relationship Working Group, the Israel/Palestine Working Group, the Call to Action Working Group and working with the Challenging White Supremacy ad hoc group in preparation for the work we will be doing here at Sessions.

Providing financial support through the Funds for Sufferings (<https://neym.org/fund-sufferings>); this past year we awarded \$2,500 to Friends Ugandan Safe Transport in support of their life-saving work. (See Minute 2016-62.)

All of our meetings are open and listed on the Yearly Meeting calendar. Please hold us in care and prayer and join us, as led. Please contact me at pbclerk@neym.org with any questions or concerns.

with hope,
Leslie Manning, clerk

Final Report to NEYM Permanent Board

From Call to Action working group

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

June 15, 2021

At New England Friends' Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions in 2020, Friends affirmed the *Call to Urgent, Loving Action for The Earth and Her Inhabitants*. The Call invited Friends into a year of intellectual and spiritual discernment regarding social injustice, including racism and the plight of Mother Earth, to discern actions that can address these systemic and interconnected challenges. A working group consisting of the Clerks of Earthcare Ministry (EMC) and Racial, Social, & Economic Justice (RSEJ) was convened to provide Monthly Meetings with the assistance and support they may need as they answered this call. Friends from the wider Quaker community enriched the Call by adding their thoughts and voices.

In the past year, we have undertaken a number of actions. We have contacted each Quarter and offered an opportunity for us to conduct a presentation on the Call to Action. To this date we have presented at 5 of the 8 Quarters. In October, FWCC also invited us to conduct a presentation on the Call to its northeastern regional meeting. Members of our committees have also taken part in supporting and heralding the call in their meeting communities.. Many participants have expressed a good deal of excitement and energy about the Call and some have articulated a great desire to meet and collaborate with others.

We have also created a set of resources on the NEYM web site for the Call, including the video and text versions of the Call, a number of queries for use in worship-sharing, and related reading materials. We led a worship-sharing at East Sandwich Preparative meeting, and are preparing a template for worship-sharing that can be used by other meetings. This template will also appear on the NEYM site.

There have been others in the Yearly Meeting who have taken up the Calls from Sessions. We particularly note the efforts of Beacon Hill Friends House to address these Calls. We also have heard of Monthly Meetings that have independently engaged in the work of the Call.

We have also made an attempt contact monthly meetings individually, offering our assistance, if needed, and ask meetings to share with us what they have done as individuals and corporately on racial and climate justice. That effort, however, led to only 2 responses to 15 letters sent to individual meetings. We await further opportunities to see how Spirit is moving in the monthly meetings on this critical set of issues.

Several things have given us great joy as we do this work. First, we have been uplifted by seeing how the Call has been received, both at Sessions and at individual quarterly and monthly meetings. Second, we have been inspired by the opportunity to help L.J. Boswell prototype their anti-racism workshop. Third, we appreciate the support of Bruce Neumann, Noah Merrill, and NiaDwynwen Thomas, who met

with us regularly to help provide guidance, particularly on issues of communication. And we gained real energy from the opportunity of having the Earthcare Ministry and the Racial, Social & Economic Committees work together in crafting and supporting the Call.

At this point we ask that the working group be laid down, not because the work is done, but because the remaining work needs to be done at the monthly meetings.