

**Permanent Board Meeting  
Held over Zoom Video Conference  
July 17, 2021**

**21-64: Opening Worship**

Friends opened with a period of worship.

**21-65: Roll Call**

The recording clerk called the roll:

Present: Leslie Manning, Clerk; Hannah Zwirner Forsythe, Recording Clerk; Peter Bishop, Deana Chase, Chris Gant, Beth Hansen, Ian Harrington, Rebecca Leuchak, Fran Lightsom, Ed Mair, Bob O'Connor, Carole Rein, John Reuthe, Martha Schwope, Sara Smith, Will Taber, Bill Walkauskas, Diane Weinholtz, Donn Weinholtz, Morgan Wilson, Kathleen Wooten, Tom Vargo, Mary Zwirner

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

Visitors: Polly Attwood, Marian Dalton, Susan Davies, Sarah Gant, Elizabeth Hacala, Mey Hasbrook, Janet Hough, Aaron Sakulich, LVM Shelton, Jackie Stillwell, Nia Thomas, Diana White, Honor Woodrow

Regrets: Kim Allen, Travis Belcher, Darcy Drayton, Martin Zwirner Forsythe, Christopher McCandless, Jean McCandless, Bob Murray, Gina Nortonsmith, Anna Raddochia, Elizabeth Szatkowski

**21-66: Secretary's Update on Cuba**

Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, updated Friends briefly on the current conditions in Cuba. A surge in the Delta variant of Covid-19 and a rise in political violence in the country has led to a dangerous and chaotic situation throughout Cuba. Cuban Friends ask for our prayers and ask for us to contact our political representatives to encourage them to waive restrictions to aid being sent to Cuba.

**21-67: Approval of June Minutes**

The minutes from the June meeting were distributed for review. Friends approved the minutes.

## **21-68: Secretary's Report**

Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, reported on his view of the vast scope of work that the Yearly Meeting (YM) is undertaking in the coming year. All of the work--ministerial work, financial work, youth work, logistical work--is part of the vision and direction that we have discerned for the YM. We take this vision into Sessions with us knowing that we have much work to do in many vital areas of faithfully stewarding the kingdom of God on earth. There is a lot of work. What is most ours to do now?

## **21-69: Sabbatical Planning**

Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, presented a plan for the coverage of his proposed sabbatical to be taken between October 2021 and February 2022. More details are in the appended document.

Friends were asked to consider and approve the following plan for coverage of the Secretary's role during his sabbatical:

*The Permanent Board appoints Nia Thomas (Northampton, MA, Friends Meeting) and Sarah Gant (Beacon Hill, MA, Friends Meeting) to temporarily assume and share the responsibilities of the Secretary during his coming sabbatical.*

*Nia Thomas will serve with the temporary title of Acting Secretary for Programs, with primary responsibility and oversight for program and staff supervision, communications, finances, and development. Sarah Gant will serve as Acting Secretary for Pastoral Care and Governance, with primary responsibility and oversight for care for local meetings and the pastoral needs of Friends, legal matters, policy, and institutional governance. Both Nia and Sarah will serve as members of Coordinating & Advisory Committee during this period, will meet regularly together for mutual support and coordination, and will participate in meetings of the Permanent Board.*

*In support of this work, Nia Thomas and Sarah Gant are authorized to be added as additional signers, if needed, for bank accounts of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, effective immediately. To this end, their names should also be added to the bank resolutions minute for fiscal year 2022.*

*Further details, priorities, and plans will be clarified in the coming months, in consultation with the Yearly Meeting Secretary, Coordinating & Advisory Committee, the Yearly Meeting staff, and other partners as needed.*

Friends gratefully approved the names of Sarah Gant and Nia Thomas to serve together in the Secretary's role during his absence.

## **21-70: PPC for Finance Committee and Sessions Committee**

Bruce Neumann, Presiding Clerk, shared revised Purposes, Procedures, and Composition (PPC) documents for the Finance Committee and the Sessions Committee. These documents are appended.

Friends approved the PPC for the Finance Committee.

The changes to the Sessions Committee (SC) PPC include naming the intention of the committee to reduce barriers to access, emphasizing the role of volunteers in discerning the condition of the body and setting the tone for the next year's gathering, and naming the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group as a part of the planning process.

As we consider the revised PPC for SC, a year and a half into the Covid-19 pandemic, it is clear that we are hungry for more connection and for a way to share our gifts. Friends' concerns about volunteer involvement in the planning for Sessions speaks to our longing to be together in community and to feel that our condition is heard by the wider body of Friends. Those needs must work in tandem with the temporal constraints of planning a gathering for hundreds of Friends. The revised PPC for SC aims to outline ways for Friends to be heard and to make the logistics of planning more feasible for staff and volunteers.

Friends approved forwarding the PPC document for SC to Sessions, understanding the need to continue creating space in event planning for Friends to share their bounty of gifts.

## **21-71: Challenging White Supremacy Working Group Report**

Susan Davies, clerk of the Challenging White Supremacy Working Group (CWS) and the interim Anti-Racism Working Group, reported for the interim group. Their written report is appended. Included in the report is the following recommendation:

*We recommend that the NEYM Permanent Board invite and support a consultation in the fall of 2021, to include a wide range of voices and experiences that have not yet been heard, particularly youth, more BIPOC Friends, and Friends working on anti-racism at the Monthly Meeting level. The fullest range of voices is needed to develop a vision and next steps for anti-racism work in NEYM. This further consultation is a logical outgrowth of our previously stated commitments as a Yearly Meeting (2003, 2016, 2020), our history of past beneficial consultations, and the learning achieved as part of our initial living into those commitments. We envision the consultation would lead to a plan that would come back to Sessions in 2022 for approval by the body. We recommend that this consultation happen via Zoom over two weekends to make it accessible to as many Friends as possible (and to minimize Zoom fatigue).*

Friends had the opportunity to share comments and questions.

Friends emphasized the importance of the consultation being a vehicle for enlarging and deepening our antiracism work--it is not an end goal, rather a step in the process. The consultation should be about listening, not necessarily for solution finding, but with spirit open to a path forward if there is a faithful direction that appears.

Many Friends raised concerns about the current framework for antiracism work in the Yearly Meeting. CWS still wants to be laid down, though many members of that group and the interim group anticipate participating in the next steps. The Nominating Committee will take on the shepherding of this work in their role of naming the Friends who do the work of the YM.

Friends approved the proposal for a consultation with a more clear proposal expected in September.

Friends approved laying down CWS with gratitude for their faithful work.

### **21-72: Nominations**

Clerks' Table Nominating brought one nomination to the Permanent Board (PB):

Peter Bishop to serve an additional year as recording clerk, now Class of 2022

Internal Nominating brought one nomination to the PB:

Leslie Manning to serve an additional year as clerk of the PB, now class of 2023

Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee (NC) brought two nominations to the PB:

Susan Vargo to the NC as an at-large member for one year, class of 2022

Honor Woodrow to the NC for a three year term, class of 2024

All four nominations were approved.

### **21-73: Upcoming Meetings**

The Permanent Board will meet on September 25th, November 6th, and December 11th. The Clerk and staff are continually assessing the safety of meeting in person and hope that the November meeting could be a hybrid meeting consisting of some Friends meeting in person with others connecting via Zoom. More information will be available as the calendar progresses and we have a better sense of necessary safety precautions for the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **21-74: Closing Worship**

Friends closed with a period of worship.

*Leslie Manning*  
Leslie Manning (Mar 25, 2022 17:41 EDT)

Leslie Manning, Clerk

## Proposal: Next Steps in Sabbatical Planning

At its meeting on June 26, 2021, the Permanent Board approved that the Yearly Meeting Secretary, Noah Merrill, would take a sabbatical from his service for four months, within the timeframe of October 2020 to February 2021. Since that time, further planning has proceeded, and we are now ready to bring forward a recommendation regarding **continuity of service** while the Secretary is away.

With the support of Coordinating & Advisory Committee, the Secretary recommends that the responsibilities of the Secretary role be divided between two Friends with complementary gifts, experience, skills, and positions within the Yearly Meeting: Sarah Gant (Beacon Hill, MA, Friends Meeting) and Nia Thomas (Northampton, MA, Friends Meeting).

Sarah is the immediate past clerk of the Permanent Board, bringing more than 12 years' experience as a member of the Board. She has served in a variety of governance, pastoral care, and oversight roles among New England Friends, both locally and regionally, for more than 30 years. Most recently, Sarah clerked the Ad Hoc Working Group on Ministry & Spiritual Life, and serves as part of the Ministry Transition Team.

Nia currently serves as part of the Yearly Meeting staff in the role of Quaker Practice & Leadership Facilitator. She previously served as Young Friends and Young Adult Friends Coordinator, and clerked the Clerking Practices & Structures Working Group (2019). She serves in a variety of leadership roles in her local meeting, and is the parent of a young child. In her current role, she works actively in our youth ministries, nominating, spiritual formation, and training work. Nia has been charged with playing a key role in the Yearly Meeting's work developing inclusive leadership. Since March 2020, Nia has co-hosted frequent calls for local meeting leaders, and provides support for local meetings in a wide variety of ways.

While many details remain to be discerned and worked out, the substance of the recommendation is reflected in the proposed text below.

### Draft text for consideration:

The Permanent Board appoints Nia Thomas (Northampton, MA, Friends Meeting) and Sarah Gant (Beacon Hill, MA, Friends Meeting) to temporarily assume and share the responsibilities of the Secretary during his coming sabbatical.

Nia Thomas will serve with the temporary title of *Acting Secretary for Programs*, with primary responsibility and oversight for program and staff supervision, communications, finances, and development. Sarah Gant will serve as *Acting Secretary for Pastoral Care and Governance*, with primary responsibility and oversight for care for local meetings and the pastoral needs of Friends, legal matters, policy, and institutional governance. Both Nia and Sarah will serve as members of Coordinating & Advisory Committee during this period, will meet regularly

together for mutual support and coordination, and will participate in meetings of the Permanent Board.

In support of this work, Nia Thomas and Sarah Gant are authorized to be added as additional signers, if needed, for bank accounts of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, effective immediately. To this end, their names should also be added to the bank resolutions minute for fiscal year 2022.

Further details, priorities, and plans will be clarified in the coming months, in consultation with the Yearly Meeting Secretary, Coordinating & Advisory Committee, the Yearly Meeting staff, and other partners as needed.

**Report to Permanent Board  
From the Presiding Clerk  
July 17, 2021**

**Sessions planning continues** - A Worship Coordinator has been appointed to have care of how various worship opportunities are supported, and a Black, Indigenous, People Of Color Coordinator has been appointed to have care of BIPOC spaces. We are in the midst of planning the opening (and considering the closing) celebrations; and are hoping soon to finalize what worship on Sunday morning will look like. Stay-tuned!

**Purpose, Procedure, and Composition documents:**

C&A has just considered, and is presenting a **P,P,&C for Finance committee**. If approved here, it will be part of the unity agenda at sessions, along with other such docs we have approved.

The small group which worked on drafting a new **Purpose, Procedure, and Composition for Sessions Planning**, met again and considered some of the feedback from the last Permanent Board meeting, after which, Coordinating and Advisory considered it again and made a few more edits. Note that if approved here, this document will be brought to Sessions, but not as part of the Unity agenda, it will be part of a PB presentation.

I want to reflect on why we are presenting a thorough re-design of the process. The Clerking Structures and Practices working group report to Sessions 2019 asked C&A to *“pay attention to how committee structures can best facilitate effectiveness in the work of our Yearly Meeting”* so, in our regular review of P,P,&C documents, particularly given the changes in actual practice wrought by the pandemic, it seemed a good time for a deeper look at how we want to go about this work.

In our consideration we noted that the old model of a large volunteer-based committee pre-dates staff positions of not just Events Coordinator and Quaker Leadership and Practice facilitator, but goes back to before the position of YM secretary was established. (remember, Jonathan Vogel-Borne was Field Secretary during most of his tenure). Christopher McCandless has pointed out time and again, that the long shift in family working dynamics has increasingly had an influence in our ability to run things entirely on volunteer labor.

But we also recognized that planning sessions is a dance between consideration of what Friends need and want from a spiritual and community perspective; and the myriad details of what structures and supports to put in place to accomplish those goals. Sessions planning, then, needs both reflection and execution. And we note that the reflection part is weighted towards the beginning of the process, increasingly moving into details as we get closer to the event. And execution of details are the things that we have seen that staff are more consistent at following through on.

Based on input from PB, we have added a Worship Coordinator position to the Program team, and a Noticing Patterns person to the Coordination team. We believe that each of these perspectives will add an important viewpoint to the on-going work. We are also sharing a graphic which hints at the wide

range of other participation in Sessions planning, both volunteers and stipended non-staff positions. Many hands and hearts are involved!

And I'll note that while it seems like there's a lot of detail here, much of the document is concerned with how we reflect on what's important, both in considering the spiritual condition of the body, and how we embrace the concern of being welcoming to all.

Bruce Neumann



# **Purpose, Procedure, and Composition of Finance Committee** *Revised 2021*

## **Purpose**

The Yearly Meeting Finance Committee stewards the financial resources at all levels of the Yearly Meeting (YM). This involves care for the intake and expenditure of money through the development of an annual budget, the establishment of policies for the faithful and transparent carrying out of that care, and the communication of this to the wider body of New England Yearly Meeting. The Finance Committee serves as a resource on good practice in financial management for monthly and quarterly meetings and other groups under the care of NEYM. By providing consultation, education, and resources to treasurers and others, the committee seeks to assist in the effective stewardship of monthly, quarterly, and Yearly Meeting financial and property resources.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.  
Matthew 6:21

## **Procedures**

- The Committee provides oversight, advice, and support to the Treasurer as well as any others who may be responsible for sub-accounts within the YM operating funds.
- The Committee reviews and recommends updates to the job descriptions of the YM Treasurer.
- The Committee consults with Nominating Committee about that committee's nomination for Treasurer.
- The Committee generally meets every few months, including meeting at Annual Sessions. Meeting times and places are determined by the Clerk in consultation with the Committee.
- The Committee may designate sub-committees to organize and perform certain tasks, the results to be brought before the full committee for action. Budget is the only sub-committee that currently exists.

- Early in the calendar year, the Committee begins the development of a draft budget for the ensuing fiscal year. This is done in consultation with the Treasurer, YM Secretary, and others. The YM Secretary is responsible for estimating expenses for the YM staff and office, Youth Retreat Programs, and Annual Sessions. The Committee takes into account the financial priorities recommended by the Permanent Board.
  
- The Committee solicits specific input from the YM Secretary and others regarding the estimated capacity within the YM community for contributions and from the YM Secretary regarding estimated expenses and revenue for Annual Sessions in developing the draft budget.
  
- The Committee solicits budget requests from all YM committees to support the work of those committees.
  
- The Committee presents the YM budget to the Permanent Board at its May meeting for information and feedback.
  
- The Committee presents the final YM budget to Annual Sessions for final approval. Between Annual Sessions, budget updates and any necessary requests for action are presented to the Permanent Board.
  
- The Committee annually prepares a minute authorizing designated individuals to sign checks, open and close accounts, and otherwise manage the financial “housekeeping” of the YM. Sessions approves this minute.
  
- The Committee conducts workshops on various financial topics and fields specific questions from monthly meeting officers on managing monthly meeting finances.
  
- The Committee will from time to time review YM policies in financial matters and make recommendations to the Permanent Board for continuation, discontinuation, or adjustment of those policies.

The Committee maintains a handbook documenting the policies and procedures of YM financial matters, regularly reviewing and updating it as needed. A detailed description of how the Friends Camp budget is handled appears in the Friends Camp Good governance document.

## **Composition**

Finance Committee composition is as follows:

- Up to 10 members are appointed by the Yearly Meeting for terms of up to five years. In consultation with the Nominating Committee, members may be re-appointed for a second consecutive 5-year term. While not required for Friends to make a significant contribution to this work, longer terms of service recognize the detailed context of this work, and support greater continuity and institutional memory on the committee.
- The Treasurer, Accounts Manager, and Yearly Meeting Secretary are ex-officio members.

Committee members do not necessarily need any prior experience with accounting or financial management, but should be comfortable (or interested in learning how to become comfortable) looking at, talking about, and praying over both specific numbers as well as broader policy matters concerning the finances of the Yearly Meeting. Committee members should be able to notice and be willing to ask tough questions when numbers don't seem to make sense or add up. All members are expected to relate financial matters to Divine guidance and Quaker principles.

Additionally, while no single member is expected to bring all of the following to the Committee's work, the Committee as a whole will, ideally, possess at least two informed perspectives on the following topic areas: (a) each area of work done by the Yearly Meeting as an organization; (b) Yearly Meeting governance procedures, and (c) common principles of financial management. The Committee also needs one or more members possessing the necessary skill and energy to (a) use charts, spreadsheets, and financial management software; and (b) draft policy proposals when it becomes clear our policies or procedures should be changed.

In order to fulfill God's will for the Yearly Meeting in financial matters, the Finance Committee aims to be representative of the wide range of Friends that make up NEYM. Recognizing the importance of sharing power in financial decisions with those whose voices are often marginalized, the Finance Committee aims to be diverse in age, gender, race, sexual orientation, class, and any other identities that are less privileged.

The Clerk of Finance Committee serves ex-officio on the Coordinating and Advisory Committee, on Permanent Board, and on the Board of Managers.

# Purpose, Procedure, and Composition of Sessions Planning

## Purpose:

The Sessions planning team exists to plan the schedule and events that make up the annual gathering of Friends in New England. The various events which comprise our annual sessions should reflect a careful consideration of the spiritual condition of the wider body, considering where there is life, where there is not, where there are breakthroughs, patterns and examples of the Spirit; what needs careful attention and care, and what needs lifting up and celebrating.

The purpose of Annual Sessions is understood to be the following:

*Friends gather at Annual Sessions to encourage the ministry and spiritual life of the Religious Society of Friends in New England. We seek to gather in ways that are intergenerational, welcoming, and inclusive. We seek to share our experience of how the Spirit is moving, and the ways it is impeded, to learn from each other, to discern how God is leading us as a People, and to experience Divine Love as it appears in our midst and is revealed in our relationships.*

We respond to this purpose through: worship, meetings for corporate discernment, workshops, and opportunities for connection, training, fellowship, play, and celebration. At the heart of these events are the meetings for worship with attention to business where we discern how God is leading us as a people.

We seek to plan Sessions in alignment with NEYM's discerned and minuted commitments, including those to anti-racism (2003), challenging white supremacy (2016), and addressing climate change (2018, 2020).

*Note: The graphic below, prepared by Elizabeth Hacala is to help in visualizing how the many pieces of Sessions planning will work together. While quite complete, for this year, it is not intended to be authoritative or to be used as a guide for what roles are needed each year. It will not be part of the "permanent" Purpose, Procedure, and Composition document, if approved.*



## Procedures:

- Throughout the planning, Friends are charged with removing barriers to participation and increasing accessibility for all Friends, paying attention to race, gender, sexual orientation, age, class, ability and care-taking responsibilities (i.e. those parenting or doing elder or personal care). Planning teams are asked to be mindful, regularly using the following queries in their planning:

How is this program/event/communication accessible? To whom? How is this program/event/communication inaccessible? To whom? How can we make this program/event/communication more accessible? What identities are being centered in how we have planned this program/event/communication? What identities are not centered in how we have planned this program/event/communication? How do we know?

- Sessions planning will occur by designated groups with differing primary functions, which work will be overseen and coordinated by the Sessions Coordination Team. In addition to more general oversight and coordination, the Sessions Coordination Team will draft an overall Sessions schedule for input by the other functional groups. The Coordination Team also gives final approval to the overall Sessions schedule, and to any needed changes. The coordination team holds the concern for bringing an intergenerational

focus to Sessions planning.

- Theme and Speakers Team: This group discerns the theme for the following year's Sessions, and Speakers. It is clerked by the Sessions Clerk.
  - Program Team: Focuses on Adult programming, typically including Business meetings, Plenary, Worship, Bible half-hours, small group opportunities, workshops, etc. Clerked by Sessions Clerk.
  - Logistics Team: The Logistics Team will translate specific needs of Adult and Youth programs into physical (room size and numbers), communication (including advance docs, newsletters), and administrative (registration and housing) needs. Clerked by Events Coordinator.
  - Youth Programs Team: Focuses on the programming that will be offered for youth at Sessions, including needs of families and youth, and recruitment of staff. This group will be convened by the Events Coordinator.
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- In September of each year, the Coordination Team, the Theme and Speakers Team, and any others they choose to invite will meet to consider the Sessions which just happened. They will consider sessions evaluation forms as well as personal experience, to learn from the recent event. What went well, what challenges were there? What changes might be useful or necessary? How was the spiritual life of Friends in New England nourished and encouraged? How was the life and experience of monthly meetings considered and supported? What work and learning is not yet finished that should be carried over into next year's Sessions? The conclusions from this gathering should be the foundation and touchstone for all aspects of planning for the coming year. This meeting will be convened and clerked by the Sessions Clerk. The meeting should include those involved in the previous year's planning who are not otherwise continuing in service.
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- Following this meeting, the Theme & Speakers team should meet to consider: their sense of the spiritual condition of the body of Friends who attended (informed by the meeting described above); their sense of how Spirit is moving (or impeded) in the wider body; and wider input, on both potential theme and suggested speakers. This team should distill that sense to a few words or a phrase for the theme, which will be a simple reflection of the work they believe the body needs.
    - This team will then consider what guests should be invited to speak to the gathered body. While most often over the years we have had a plenary speaker on Sunday, and a Bible Half-hour presenter, this group may be led to suggest a different configuration.
    - This team should present the suggested theme and proposed speakers to the Coordination team for approval. The Sessions Clerk should report these to PB for their awareness. Approval by PB is not necessary
    - Upon approval by the Coordination Team, the Presiding Clerk, with support as needed from the Events Coordinator, will contact proposed speakers to formally invite them. Upon their acceptance, the Presiding Clerk will hand off

responsibility to the Events Coordinator, who will ensure appropriate follow up and connections with Friends as needed in order to confirm elders and make all other arrangements for their service

- Once the theme, speakers, and elders are confirmed, this team (excepting the Presiding Clerk and the Sessions Clerk) can consider that their work is done for the year

- The Coordination Team may meet occasionally, as needed, through the fall and winter months.

- Beginning in earnest by March, the functional teams and the Coordination team should begin to meet regularly to translate the perceived needs into specific events and fit those events into a schedule. Events should include:

- Opportunities to gather in worship

- Business meetings

- Opportunities for learning

- Opportunities for sharing and relationship-building

- Opportunities for performance, celebrations, special events, and play

- In consultation with the Coordination Team and with approval of the YM Secretary, a variety of stipended positions may be established to hold a particular piece of work, (e.g. registrar, housing coordinator, worship coordinator, tech team lead, BIPOC Opportunities Coordinator). Stipended positions will participate in the appropriate functional team, and will be supported by the appropriate staff person, as identified in their role description.

- The NEYM Office Manager will set the schedule for required submissions, including invitation to sessions, program schedule for publication, advance documents, etc. • The YM Secretary has ultimate responsibility for and oversight of implementation, logistics, financial management, liability, pastoral care, legal, and safety concerns for Annual Sessions.

## **Composition:**

**A Sessions Clerk** will be nominated by the Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee. This individual will clerk the Coordination team, the Program Team, and the Theme and Speakers Team. This person will work closely with the Events Coordinator, creating the planning schedule and the agendas for planning meetings in consultation with the coordination team. This person will hold an overview of the planning process and will facilitate significant decisions, where the Events Coordinator will be more involved in the implementation of those decisions.

Regular participants in each of the following groups will likely include the roles below, but may change based on experience and needs, and will often include the invited participation of other Friends depending on needs for consultation, discernment, and implementation. The Session Clerk, the Presiding Clerk, the Events Coordinator, and the YM Secretary will consult on changes in composition or process that may be needed.

**The Program Team** consists of the Yearly Meeting Secretary, the Presiding Clerk, the Sessions Clerk, the Worship Coordinator, the Events Coordinator, the Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator, and a member of the youth ministries staff.

**The Logistics Team** consists of The Events Coordinator, the Office Manager, and the Tech Team Lead, and the Sessions Clerk

**The Youth Programs Team** consists of the Events Coordinator, the Junior Yearly Meeting/Junior High Yearly Meeting Coordinator, the Young Friends Event Organizer, and the Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator.

**The Theme and Speakers Team** consists of the Presiding Clerk, the Sessions Clerk and 4-6 other Friends chosen by the Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee, both for their connectedness to the wider body of Friends, and their ability to prayerfully listen to those Friends' condition.

**The Coordination Team** consists of representatives from each of the other teams, plus a consistent representative from the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness working Group.



**Report to Permanent Board from the *Ad-hoc* anti-racism workgroup,  
(members of Challenging White Supremacy, Noticing Patterns and Permanent Board)  
July 17, 2021**

**Purpose, Background and Policy:**

At its March 20, 2021 meeting the Permanent Board requested that an *ad-hoc* workgroup comprised of members of Challenging White Supremacy wg (CWS), Permanent Board (PB), and Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness wg (NP wg) meet to explore how to proceed with the recommendation brought by CWS to the March 20<sup>th</sup> meeting: In short, that recommendation was that NEYM affirm (in a minute or some different process) *“that Friends in NEYM intend and aspire for our Yearly Meeting to become an Anti-Racist Faith Community.”* This report shares some of the diverse ways we each have tried to faithfully hold this concern and brings recommendations for how the Yearly Meeting might continue to live into this aspiration.

We note that NEYM *has already made a clear commitment to anti-racism* – Sessions approved the following minute in 2003.

*New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends affirms its commitment to becoming an open, affirming, anti-racist Religious Society. Our understanding of racism is that it is a system that accords advantage or disadvantage based on racial identity. Racism is fundamentally inconsistent with the divine guidance that has led our Religious Society to testimonies such as Equality, Peace and Community. We seek divine assistance and the help of other friends of Truth to examine our individual and corporate complicity in racism. We aspire to a more perfect union with the Author of all, who shows no partiality in the diversity of creation.*  
(second paragraph is not included here)

Review of workgroup activities:

1. In preparation for convening the larger group meeting, CWS met on April 19<sup>th</sup> with four members of NP wg who had all attended the 3/20/21 PB meeting.
2. The full workgroup has met 3 times since then, with Friends from CWS, PB and NP wg.
3. Because CWS initiated this concern, the Clerk of CWS, Susan Davies, has been serving as acting clerk of this *ad hoc* working group. The *ad hoc* working group has received, from some seasoned members, the sense that we can best serve the work by shepherding it to its next phase. Our group did not include all the voices that should be present when discerning the next significant steps for NEYM, and only a few of us have participated or coordinated deep anti-oppression change plans before. We heard that the change work we need to engage in is iterative and adaptive, and is not something we can fully map out or predict in advance.
4. Because NEYM affirmed its intention in 2003 to become an antiracist faith organization the PB antiracism wg does not see the need for another minute stating that we wish to “be anti-racist”.
5. Our June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021 report to PB records the diverse insights, noticings and perspectives shared within the workgroup and reflects the current status of our discernment  
(*Excerpt appended to the end of this report; see PB minutes of June 26 for the full report*).

**Going Forward:**

Important work has been in evidence in NEYM in recent years from various working groups and committees. For example, a partial list: *Racial, Social and Economic Justice Committee, Earthcare Ministry, Resource Group on Right Relationship with Indigenous Peoples and the Letter of Apology to Native Peoples, Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness, Israel-Palestine wg, Decolonizing Quakers, Challenging White Supremacy wg, Youth-led programs emphasis on racial justice and healing, monthly meeting initiatives, eg, at Beacon Hill Friends House, Mount Toby, Hartford, among many others.*

NEYM has a fruitful history of cross-committee gatherings, or consultations, among some, but not all, of the various anti-oppression groups. These consultations have resulted in improved communications, understanding, and coordination of priorities and initiatives, and an enlarged sense of the concerns that must be held.

**Recommendation:**

We recommend that the NEYM Permanent Board invite and support a consultation in the fall of 2021, to include a wide range of voices and experiences that have not yet been heard, particularly youth, more BIPOC Friends, and Friends working on anti-racism at the MM level. The fullest range of voices is needed to develop a vision and next steps for anti-racism work in NEYM. This further consultation is a logical outgrowth of our previously stated commitments as a Yearly Meeting (2003, 2016, 2020), our history of past beneficial consultations, and the learning achieved as part of our initial living into those commitments. We envision the consultation would lead to a plan that would come back to Sessions in 2022 for approval by the body. We recommend that this consultation happen via Zoom over two weekends to make it accessible to as many Friends as possible (and to minimize Zoom fatigue).

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APPENDED: EXCERPT OF ANTI-RACISM WG REPORT TO JUNE 26<sup>TH</sup>, 2021 PB MEETING

**Report to Permanent Board from the Ad-hoc anti-racism workgroup,  
(members of Challenging White Supremacy, Noticing Patterns and Permanent Board)  
June 26, 2021**

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After our June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 meeting one Friend offered the following observations of patterns and possible responses that might help. We encourage those reading this list to hear this as a dialogue among patterns, not separating each one out, but working across them, to see a larger context:

**Pattern:** People experience harm and, depending on who they are, they do, or don't, get support in the repair work needed.

**Possible action:** We identify a process for holding space for and healing harm when it is done that supports those harmed (and doesn't expect them to do all the emotional labor of teaching & managing the process while they are also trying to process their pain from the harm done). We will need this if we are truly to address white supremacy and racism among us

**Pattern:** When there is a working group or a committee holding the work, some things happen, when the working group or committee is no longer holding the work, it dwindles (for example,

the Working Group on Racism, under care of M&C, wrote and worked on the 2003 minute and was laid down a few years later).

**Possible action:** There needs to be a group charged with helping us all live into the 2003 minute

**Pattern:** Minutes that we get excited about at Sessions and come to unity to approve don't always have legs beyond Sessions (2003 antiracism minute, 2013 Repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery, 2019 minute on Climate Change, etc.) \*

**Possible action:** We need a way keep these minutes alive in both our work between Sessions and in anchoring our work during Sessions (vertical and horizontal integration)

*\* One Friend responded to this noticing of a pattern in this way: "This does not match my perception when we have passed minutes at Sessions. My take on the 2013 minute of Repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery is that it has had legs. There may have been no immediate actions but it seems to me that it was like a seed that was planted and it was growing out of our sight. It has been mentioned in our work on the Letter of Apology. It was a seed of awareness that was planted and when we came back to working on our relationship with Native Americans, the awareness of the history of the Doctrine of Discover was already present among us so that we have been able to proceed with a greater understanding of the larger historical context. Are we too impatient for immediate results that we do not appreciate the value of slow growing seeds?"*

**Pattern:** We don't quite know what to do and are also not in unity to ask for outside/expert guidance or help.

**Possible action:** Find and use internal expertise OR seek consultation from outside expertise around developing a process for moving forward

**Pattern:** The process needed to delve into deeper anti-racism work is not linear nor prescriptive so it is hard to envision or plan at this stage.

**Possible action:** Develop some shared vision and find Friends who have experience with iterative/adaptive change processes to support this work (for example, *Emergent Strategy* by adrienne maree brown provides an intro to this kind of process work)

The current group cares about this issue deeply, but is not the full group to carry this work forward (young people are missing, composition is mostly voluntary, etc.)

**Possible action:** Take some time to think about the composition needed to carry this work forward, and then form a new committee/working group

**Pattern:** We haven't done much and feel crummy about it.

**Possible action:** Concretely identify what has happened on the YM level, as well as the work around the MMs, and then look at how we build on our strengths and identify the areas we need to address.

**Pattern:** We talk a lot, write some minutes, and then . . . .

**Possible action:** Using the list from the point above identify action steps that have worked well recently and replicate/build on them

Another Friend observed:

*"Racism is the greatest of our oppressions, but it is only one. I would like us to become an anti-oppression yearly meeting. The definition of anti-racism is not as important as living into*

*practices that will build the Realm of God, the beloved community. It is both interior and exterior work. That means that I need to transform myself, to be more humble, to see clearly the harm being done, and to listen more deeply. We do not need to look at things as all good or bad, or to beat ourselves up. For me, I need to see the nuances and complexities. I need to see where my work, in my little areas of influence, can make the world a better place, especially for people who have traditionally been oppressed."*

And another Friends observed:

*"...from Lao Tzu, "Have faith in those who are faithful. Have faith in those who are unfaithful, because faith is a virtue." I realized that I have been judging myself because there is no star of Bethlehem over my head. This does not mean that I am unfaithful, or that I am faithful. I just do the best I can and take the next step. I am learning to let go of setting goals and I focus on what needs to be changed right here, at this current moment. What does this moment need? Most of my learning is unlearning. I get in trouble when I make assumptions. Be as a child. Let your faith be as a child. To do the right thing is not to do something wise or well-reasoned or clever. What matters is that I listen, then listen some more, and do what seems right in that moment, not what seems right in the final plan. I am grateful for this opportunity to work with the Noticing Patterns group, and the current clerks table which is willing to work in uncertainty and learning all that will have to be let go."*

Another Friend observed:

*I feel like a beginner but, or so, I keep seeking experiences to stretch me. I have had plenty of opportunities to role model making mistakes and owning them without defensiveness. This keeps me coming back. I don't want to not do things because I am afraid. Being part of a group helps me. Seeing the YM engage in this work encourages me.*

The meager evidence of action disappoints and discourages some: why does NEYM seem incapable of taking any big, bold action? Other Friends lift up the need for humility, stamina and persistence, and striving to cooperate faithfully in the slow work of Grace. It is not about doing something different but being something different. Out of this will come a different thing. The structures are impenetrable until we have become something else, and then they will change because we have changed.

A Friend offered that a piece of the work is about framing the work that needs to be done, understanding that the YM has needs at different levels. Some of the work is urgent, some is intangible and we do not know when the seeds will sprout. Can we find a framework that has openings at the various levels of need in the yearly meeting? How can we call each other to be committed?






# FINAL 2021-7-17 PB Minutes

Final Audit Report

2022-03-25

Created:	2022-03-25
By:	Office Manager (office@neym.org)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAxfzfs9MCJ5bAYs712E_ToNoLLaAS8zSt

## "FINAL 2021-7-17 PB Minutes" History

-  Document created by Office Manager (office@neym.org)  
2022-03-25 - 7:51:42 PM GMT- IP address: 73.61.87.2
-  Document emailed to Leslie Manning (pbclerk@neym.org) for signature  
2022-03-25 - 7:52:38 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Leslie Manning (pbclerk@neym.org)  
2022-03-25 - 9:40:21 PM GMT- IP address: 74.125.210.63
-  Document e-signed by Leslie Manning (pbclerk@neym.org)  
Signature Date: 2022-03-25 - 9:41:50 PM GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 73.234.252.10
-  Agreement completed.  
2022-03-25 - 9:41:50 PM GMT