

# **Progress Report on NEYM's Commitments to Inclusive Leadership Development**

## **Inclusive Leadership Development**

### **Progress Report**

**July 2020**

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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 [here](#)). 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 & Advisory has established a working group to explore how NEYM supports ministry & spiritual life, including a

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re-examination of the leadership roles in this area. This working group, under the care of Permanent Board and clerked by Sarah Gant, have been meeting since January. This working group was consulted in the revision of the position description for the role of Ministry & Counsel clerk and expects to bring recommendations to Permanent Board this fall for how NEYM can best support ministry & spiritual life (see their recent report [here](#)).

- Coming out of extended conversation with Coordinating and Advisory, the Presiding Clerk has revised the written materials for shepherds of the Purposes & Procedures review process to clarify C&A's role in that process and the role of NEYM committees in supporting the priorities of NEYM.
- 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 Clerk's 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 NEYM's nominating work and how that work can be better aligned with our vision of inclusive leadership development and how that work can be better coordinated within a single nominating stream in order to best foster leadership development. Coordinating and Advisory has affirmed it's commitment of 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.
- Over twenty Friends participating in a NEYM-sponsored clerks' training in the fall. A spring clerk's and recording clerks training 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.

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- 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.
- Over 30 Friends from 18 meetings participated in the “Best Practices in Nominating” workshop which was held as part of Meeting Care Day on February 29th at Mt 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 myself 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 (who is working via contract), and I have created resources to support more Friends in contributing effectively to NEYM's communication channels. (For example: a guide on writing for the NEYM 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 Committee have been engaging in on-going 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 NEYM might more robustly reduce financial barriers to service for our key leadership roles, including considering the use of stipends.

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## **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 is 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 neverending. 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?*

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- *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?*