Connecticut Valley Quarter
HMM State of Society Report  
Approved March 20, 2022

On Sunday, January 30, twenty-one Hartford Monthly Meeting Friends gathered on Zoom to respond to a set of questions developed by the Worship and Ministry Committee to gather data for this State of Society report to New England Yearly Meeting. Individual responses to each question were shared by the Friends on the Zoom chat, and were read aloud to all by a Meeting member. The responses were then discussed within the large group, before moving to the next question. The discussion questions were:

1) What is your sense of the quality of worship within our Meeting? How can we deepen our connection to the Spirit?

2) What do you most love about our Meeting? What additional thoughts would you like to share?

3) How has the Meeting been supportive of people over the last year? How can our support be strengthened?

4) What has been your sense of fellowship within the Meeting? How can we increase fellowship among members and attenders?

Friends’ responses to these questions constitute this report. The responses are summarized below, illustrated by a few representative quotations. (A complete set of quotations from the Jan. 30th meeting is included as an Appendix). Drafts of the report were reviewed and edited by the Worship and Ministry Committee and approved by the March 20, 2022 Meeting for Business.

1) What is your sense of the quality of worship within our Meeting?

Friends reported being highly satisfied with the quality of worship, in spite of the occasional technical problems caused by Zoom and the creation of our hybrid meeting. A few Friends are “unsettled” by Zoom, even though they accept that the hybrid meeting is here to stay. Nevertheless, others have been surprised how well they have adapted to worshipping on Zoom, and greatly appreciate how it has made Meeting accessible to Friends who otherwise would not be able to attend. Virtually all report that silence is often deep and gratifying. Appreciation was expressed for worship that is guided, once-a-month, by the reading of a query at the start of worship.

*For me the quality of worship within our meeting is good and often deep. Even on Zoom, I find the personal greetings on Zoom to deepen the connections which in turn deepens our connection to Spirit. Still looking forward to the time when more of us can and will gather in the Meetinghouse without masks.*

*I have been amazed and gratified how well online worship has worked. There has been depth of worship on Zoom that has rivaled being in the Meetinghouse. I am grateful for*
the enormous amount of work everyone has put in to make it a success. Having attenders who are at a distance has also added to the richness.

How can we deepen our connection to the Spirit?

Some Friends acknowledged the benefits from Faithfulness Groups, outside of regular worship, which help them deepen their spiritual connection. Some Friends suggested that we might benefit from some sort of discussion, perhaps during one or more 11th Hours, on what it means to be “moved by the Spirit.” Adult education programs were also suggested.

We could probably benefit from a discussion on what it means to be moved by the spirit to speak at meeting. For example, if someone comes with a prepared poem to read during the meeting, is that being moved by the spirit at the meeting, or moved by yourself before the meeting?

2) What do you most love about our Meeting?

Friends uniformly expressed their love of the Meeting’s strong sense of community and of the caring attention that we show for each other, although sometimes falling short of our high aspirations. Some Friends spoke about the Meeting’s shared values, activism, and the manner in which the testimonies are manifested. Others spoke to the special nature of our corporate, silent worship.

I love our Meeting community, a gathering of people with similar values and a commitment to enacting our concerns for equality and justice for all in our society.

The strong sense of community; the care and support given to each other. The commitment to anti-racism work and right relationship with Native Americans. The strength and flexibility in dealing with the pandemic. The care given to handling our formerly incarcerated attender’s return.

I have found over many years that I treasure the chance to step away from the turmoil of day to day living. Always, the calm sense of the rising spirit from others and the messages bolster me as I move forward into the week. The gentleness and care for others is so clear.

I love that even when we face challenges to agreeing or understanding each other that we continue to try to see what love can do.

What additional thoughts would you like to share?

Friends raised a variety of matters, when asked for their additional thoughts. Concerns about the Meeting being overly homogenous according to race and age were cited, and it was emphasized that we often talk about these matters, but do not seriously address the challenge. A Friend noted that we sometimes fall short of our high aspirations, but that we should not be
overly hard on ourselves. Pastoral Care’s work welcoming new attenders was noted and appreciated. Friends expressed concern that we do not have a sufficient visible presence in the community, where people probably don’t even know what is meant by the terms “The Religious Society of Friends” or by “Quakers.” Additional discussion focused on the developing of a new flyer for the Meeting, and the Meeting’s visible participation in a variety of public peace and social concerns activities.

We have always been a pretty homogenous Meeting; white, upper middle class, professional etc. It would be great if we could increase our diversity. I know this has been said many times before, but I don’t believe that we have ever seriously pursued the challenge, at least recently.

I guess the one thought I had was tying in with that is not only diversity racially but we need to really think about diversity and age. I’m very concerned about attracting younger people to our meeting. And that’s something that would be another kind of diversity.

...And we need more families, young families, which makes a Meeting very vibrant.

One of the things I noticed that’s missing for us is a visible presence out in the community in terms of publications. The name or our meeting is not put out there in the same way as you often see other churches doing. (Note: discussion followed development of a new flyer, and visible involvement in upcoming peace and social concerns activities.)

3) How has the Meeting been supportive of people over the last year?

Friends cited a range of ways that the Meeting provided much needed support to people over the year, including: providing meals and rides; the substantial - and too often unrecognized - outreach by the Pastoral Care Committee; offering Faithfulness and Creative Listening Groups; helping with technology support; making Zoom available to all who would not otherwise be able to attend; instituting safety measures for those who attend in-person Meeting; and providing the listserv, website and Facebook page to ensure effective communication. We are grateful to our Religious Education Committee for their hard work and creativity in providing COVID-safe, engaging children’s and intergenerational programs during the year. Friends also appreciated the manner in which our community has lovingly made space for, and invested so much time and support for, the difficult conversations that we have been having around the issue of our formerly incarcerated attender’s return to Meeting.

Pastoral Care does a lot of this but also, individuals are doing good works on their own, within their network of immediate Friends. The listserv has been an enormous help in putting requests for various needs out there to the community and Friends have stepped forward.

Speaking personally, I have found the support of the Meeting as I have become more and more a caretaker to be very helpful. The sense that my husband is also on others’ minds
and hearts strengthens me. The work put into our hybrid meeting and into safety measures for Meeting for Worship is a great example of care for our most vulnerable members and the ability to include all Friends as much as possible in Meeting gatherings.

The meeting has been supportive in obvious ways such as help for the Afghan family, monetary donations to charities, working on the formerly incarcerated attender issue. However, the Meeting (in particular Pastoral Care) is helping people in private ways that we don’t all know about.

This is a tough question since recent issues have led to some difficult dynamics. The loss of some participants on both sides of a difficult issue has been painful. I don’t know the answer but keep hoping love can prevail.

How can our support be strengthened?

When specifically asked how our support of individuals might be strengthened, Friends had a variety of reactions, noting that some Friends with needs fall through the cracks, and that we all could do more to simply reach out and contact others to see how they are doing. The delicateness of interacting with the Pastoral Care Committee was emphasized. And the possibility of assigning each member of Pastoral Care a group of Friends that they are responsible for regularly contacting. The importance of welcoming newcomers was stressed; perhaps doing so less superficially. The hiring of a part-time person to co-ordinate the Meeting’s First Day School program was suggested. Finally, it was recommended that - as our recent challenges involving COVID, as well as the return of an incarcerated individual to Meeting have indicated - our Meeting might benefit greatly from becoming a “trauma informed community.” This would entail reaching out and obtaining skills, via consultants and educational programs, that we currently do not possess.

I think we hear less than we might about Friends who need help or support, though I don't know what the solution would be.

In Pastoral Care meetings, we talk about this, and it's a very tricky thing... We do say, “If you have a need let Pastoral Care know, but very seldom does that move someone to pick up the phone and say, “I have a need.” We mainly hear about it by word of mouth... Maybe those of us in our meeting community might be encouraged to communicate more to someone on Pastoral Care, and then Pastoral Care could reach out and find out if that individual in fact would like some assistance, because not everybody wants assistance and not everybody wants everybody to know...

We haven't visited this in a long time, but it may be time again. Perhaps we should hire a paid, part-time Religious Education Coordinator, rather than throw that burden on parents and burning them out over and over again.

...(It’s been suggested that we)... be informed as a community about trauma informed care, knowing that the people who left recently, left because of trauma-related reasons.
We don't really know how to do trauma…. I don't have the skill sets or capacities myself, but I do know that we have to learn to walk with people, not work for them, or do for them...I feel like we need (to do this) as a community to help us heal ourselves, and also to help us in reaching out to those who have left Meeting...

4) What has been your sense of fellowship within the Meeting?

Friends, again, expressed their appreciation of Faithfulness Groups and Creative Listening Groups. The desire for and need to prepare for the return to monthly Pot Luck luncheons and renewing something akin to Friendly Eights groups was emphasized. Following up with those at a distance was suggested. Committee work as a vehicle for fellowship was emphasized, and the need to get involved in other Meeting activities was addressed. The loss of fellowship among our children, as a result of the pandemic, was sadly lamented. We recognize that further steps must be taken to address this heart-wrenching problem. The difficulty of individuals reaching out for support was shared. Zoom dinners and other sorts of new activities (e.g. sledding parties or hikes) were suggested. The fall retreat at Woolman Hill was viewed as a great fellowship experience, and Friends were reminded that another in-person retreat is currently scheduled for Powell House in September.

The Faithfulness groups and Creative Listening groups are really great in this regard.

Reset expectations. Is it reasonable to expect fellowship during an hour of silence? Not really. It is more reasonable to expect fellowship when one actively engages with others; for example, by volunteering to work on a committee, by volunteering to rake leaves, by attending 11th Hours, by attending book studies, by creating events that you invite others to join you in. The list goes on.

On the whole, fellowship has remained reasonably strong despite the restrictions of Covid. For me that has come through small groups and get togethers - often over Zoom, and phone calls. One thing we might try would be very small gatherings via Zoom over a shared meal...

I've been really disheartened by the loss of fellowship and connection with our kids during the pandemic - first with the older kids as virtual connections proved insufficient, and then among all our kids as the continued stresses of the pandemic limited our options for gathering and placed tremendous stress on families. I am encouraged by the First Day gatherings we held this past fall, which although small were joyful and connecting.

How can we increase fellowship among members and attenders?

Friends expressed the realization that too much burden is placed on a single committee, Pastoral Care, to actively promote fellowship, and that more of us must step up to provide support in this regard.
We have to all realize that, yes, we have a Pastoral Care Committee, but we're all responsible for pastoral care... And so, if people think of ideas regarding things that could be done to enhance fellowship, they could share them with Pastoral Care, but maybe also step up to help make that happen because we have a relatively small Pastoral Care Committee and they can't do everything.

Conclusion

In spite of the ongoing pandemic and the challenges of readmitting a formerly incarcerated attender, who is a registered sex offender, Hartford Monthly Meeting remains a strong, faithful and loving Friends’ community. While satisfaction varies somewhat according to individual preferences and needs, silent worship within the hybrid meeting is perceived as deep and gratifying. As Friends have noted, there will always be more that we can do to provide further support for individuals in need and to promote greater fellowship, but the Meeting is dedicated to doing so. We recognize that this work cannot just be delegated to our Pastoral Care Committee, but must be embraced by all. Similarly, we appreciate the fine work of our Religious Education Committee, and are committed to supporting its efforts throughout the remainder of the pandemic and beyond. Finally, we are encouraged by the fact that the Meeting is experiencing a revitalization of its peace and social concerns witness, which not only speaks to our testimonies, but also enhances the quality of our interactions within the Meeting and the wider community.

We look forward to the day when COVID restrictions play a smaller role in our daily lives, thereby allowing us the rich, fulfilling experiences that accompany face-to-face interaction. However, we remain committed to making the best of the opportunities that online meetings permit, and pleasantly surprised when Way opens in new and unexpected ways.

Appendix

Complete List of Friends’ Quotations

1) What is your sense of the quality of worship within our Meeting?

Our quality of worship is reasonably strong despite having to do so in hybrid fashion. It does. Feel a bit different on Zoom, but good in its own right.

I think a query helps to guide our worship. I appreciate when people wait, listen and then speak.

I am a relative newcomer to the meeting. I like the quality of worship. I am working on being more calm and focused. I don't know if anyone can assist ...I agree that a query helps.

I am still quite unsettled with Zoom worship, and have been very grateful to be able to be at the Meetinghouse. But it is also difficult to get myself to take in and hold the people on Zoom.

For me the quality of worship with our meeting is good and often deep. Even on Zoom. I find the personal greetings on Zoom to deepen the connections which in turn deepens our
connection to Spirit. Still looking forward to the time when more of us can and will gather in the Meetinghouse without masks.

I have been amazed and gratified how well online worship has worked. There has been depth of worship on Zoom that has rivaled being in the meeting house. I am grateful for the enormous amount of work everyone has put in to make it a success. Having attenders who are at a distance has also added to the richness.

**How can we deepen our connection to the Spirit?**

I think we have a good quality of worship. One thing that has helped me deepen my connection to Spirit has been participating in a Faithfulness Group.

We could probably benefit from a discussion on what it means to be moved by the spirit to speak at meeting. For example, if someone comes with a prepared poem to read during the meeting, is that being moved by the spirit at the meeting, or moved by yourself before the meeting?

Connecting to Spirit is a life-long journey, for sure....adult education can help.

**2) What do you most love about our Meeting?**

I love the kindness that we practice with each other, if imperfectly.

I love how we look after and take care of each other.

I love our Meeting community, a gathering of people with similar values and a commitment to enacting our concerns for equality and justice for all in our society.

The fellowship and the common sense of purpose many of us share in addressing issues of social and economic injustice in our wider society. I am encouraged by the renaissance of commitment and action in pursuing these issues.

I love the way the testimonies manifest themselves - Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Stewardship.

The strong sense of community; the care and support given to each other. The commitment to anti-racism work and right relationship with Native Americans. The strength and flexibility in dealing with the pandemic. The care given to handling our formerly incarcerated attenders’s return.

**Shared sense of seeking the Voice of the Spirit of Love and how to witness and enact with each other and with the world**

Our capacity to sit together in deep silence, listening for that still, small voice within, sharing without.
I love the individual relationships in Meeting and what comes when we are able to all be together.

I like the fact that we are a community that cares for each other, both in feeling and in action.

I love being part of a loving community traveling and growing together on our spiritual journey.

I have found over many years that I treasure the chance to step away from the turmoil of day to day living. Always, the calm sense of the rising spirit from others and the messages bolster me as I move forward into the week. The gentleness and care for others is so clear.

I most love the meeting for worship and the opportunity it gives to step back from individual concerns. A close second is the fellowship within the meeting even when we have to meet on Zoom and the support I receive from that.

I love that even when we face challenges to agreeing or understanding each other that we continue to try to see what love can do.

What additional thoughts would you like to share?

We have always been a pretty homogenous Meeting; white, upper middle class, professional etc. It would be great if we could increase our diversity. I know this has been said many times before, but I don’t believe that we have ever seriously pursued the challenge, at least recently.

I guess the one thought I had was tying in with that is not only diversity racially but we need to really think about diversity and age. I’m very concerned about attracting younger people to our meeting. And that’s something that would be another kind of diversity.

That friend speaks my mind...And we need more families, young families, which makes a very vibrant [meeting.]

Most of the younger people who’ve been joining our community, and some who have stayed with us, have come directly to the Meetinghouse. So as we continue to deal with our hybrid situation, I think we have to keep that in mind.

This place is (built upon) testimonies, and our advices and queries and lots of other things that can be read in the Faith and Practice are aspirational. (We need) to keep in mind that there’s always (more to accomplish,) and that we don’t have to beat up on ourselves for not having done it all already.

Pastoral care has made a huge commitment to welcoming newcomers. I know some of the recent efforts have been really, I don’t know, we don’t know successful yet but there have
been some significant efforts to follow up directly with newcomers who’ve come. Delete “who’ve come”

One of the things I noticed that’s missing for us is a visible presence out in the community in terms of publications. The name or our meeting is not put out there in the same way as you often see other churches doing. (Note: discussion followed development of a new flyer, and visible involvement in upcoming peace and social concerns activities.)

Okay, thank you. It’s clear we love our Meeting and we want to sit and think about ways to get the word out so we can have more people come and join our community.

3) How has the Meeting been supportive of people over the last year?

Providing meals or rides for Friends….

Through the work of the pastoral care committee and other informal connections. Small groups and faithfulness groups are helpful.

Members of pastoral care have been welcoming. tech support has made it possible for me to attend from afar.

Zoom has provided a way for many who could not otherwise attend to participate in worship. This also pertains to our formerly incarcerated attender, for whom we have provided a special weekly Zoom session.

Pastoral Care does a lot of this but also, individuals are doing good works on their own, within their network of immediate Friends. The listserve has been an enormous help in putting requests for various needs out there to the community and Friends have stepped forward.

Speaking personally, I have found the support of the Meeting as I have become more and more a caretaker to be very helpful. The sense that Bill is also on others’ minds and hearts strengthens me. The work put into our hybrid meeting and into safety measures for Meeting for Worship is a great example of care for our most vulnerable members and the ability to include all Friends as much as possible in Meeting gatherings.

The meeting has been supportive in obvious ways such as help for the Afghan family, monetary donations to charities, working on the formerly incarcerated attender issue, etc. However, the Meeting (in particular Pastoral Care) is helping people in private ways that we don’t all know about.

Robust technology support, on a personalized level. Willingness to hold space for difficult community conversations, invest in the time and support required for these processes, share human frailties, fallibilities, and strive for community understanding and clearness for the next best steps for everyone.
This is a tough question since recent issues have led to some difficult dynamics. The loss of some participants on both sides of a difficult issue has been painful. I don’t know the answer but keep hoping love can prevail.

Connected and disconnected at the same time, if that’s possible. This is a pandemic creation. Some of our connections over the past year have been greater because, on Zoom, we are seeing names and faces, while at the Meetinghouse, I have found it to be more difficult to learn who people are. Also, on Zoom everyone hears what is being shared - this is how I have gotten to know so many of our community better than I ever have over the past years at the Meetinghouse. This is very helpful and has increased my feeling of connection to those I have cared about over the past years.

**How can our support be strengthened?**

I think we hear less than we might about Friends who need help or support, though I don’t know what the solution would be.

I greatly appreciate it when Friends reach out just to say, “Hi.” It makes me feel connected, even more so during these COVID times. I would like to see this happen more. Can we invite/challenge Friends to pick up the phone and call any other person just to say, “Hi, I am thinking of you.”?

In Pastoral Care meetings, we talk about this, and it’s a very tricky thing... We do say, “If you have a need let Pastoral Care know, but very seldom does that move someone to pick up the phone and say, “I have a need.” We mainly hear about it by word of mouth...Maybe those of us in our meeting community might be encouraged to communicate more to someone on Pastoral Care, and then Pastoral Care could reach out and find out if that individual in fact would like some assistance, because not everybody wants assistance and not everybody wants everybody to know... We are very, very careful about what we put out on the listserv; nothing under our name or representation, without a direct phone call to that person saying, “Do you want it posted, and tell me what you want said, and what do you want asked for.” ....It's, a very tricky thing.

Hearing people talk about the importance of welcoming newcomers, I realized that when there's a newcomer at the meeting, rather than speaking in the sort of up here, level of, “Hi, what's your name, where are you from,” we can just start in deeper with, “What motivated you to try this Meeting? What is it that we have that you want?” (By doing so we could) begin to address the issue of what is unique to Quakerism and what we have to offer that is different from some church down the road.

We haven’t visited this in a long time, but it may be time again. Perhaps we should hire a paid, part time Religious Education Coordinator, rather than throw that burden on parents and burning them out over and over again.
Yeah, I think one of the things we're moving towards is ...(obtaining)... some skill sets we need, as a community, to better be able to walk with each other. ...(It’s been suggested that we)... be informed as a community about trauma informed care, knowing that the people who left recently, left because of trauma-related reasons. We don't really know how to do trauma…. I don't have the skill sets or capacities myself, but I do know that we have to learn to walk with people, not work for them, or do for them... I feel like we need (to do this) as a community to help us heal ourselves, and also to help us in reaching out to those who have left Meeting... We don't have the skill sets right now. I don't have them myself.... I feel like we have to face it anew.

4) What has been your sense of fellowship within the Meeting?

The Faithfulness groups and Creative Listening groups are really great in this regard.

Fellowship occurs best when we have face-to-face contact with each other, thus a problem during the pandemic. We need to start planning for the return of social opportunities such as potlucks. The social hour, which has been maintained, is very much appreciated by those at the Meetinghouse.

Being so far away physically makes a sense of fellowship tenuous. I do think following up with people who used to attend regularly but who haven’t been present recently is important.

I have experienced strong fellowship within the smaller groups or committee work as we move forward with of strong sense of purpose and care.

For myself, I find it challenging to recognize when I need fellowship or support, therefore it’s difficult to reach out until my need is unmanageable. Sometimes I’m afraid to impose on others because of my unmanageable needs.

Reset expectations? Is it reasonable to expect fellowship during an hour of silence? Not really. It is more reasonable to expect fellowship when one actively engages with others. For example, by volunteering to work on a committee. By volunteering to rake leaves. By attending 11th Hours. By attending book studies. By creating events that you invite others to join you in. The list goes on.

On the whole, fellowship has remained reasonably strong despite the restrictions of Covid. For me that has come through small groups and get togethers - often over Zoom, and phone calls. One thing we might try would be very small gatherings via Zoom over a shared meal. We have done this within our family. It doesn’t work well for groups larger than 4-5 individuals, but it beats constantly eating alone.

I've been really disheartened by the loss of fellowship and connection with our kids during the pandemic - first with the older kids as virtual connections proved insufficient, and then among all our kids as the continued stresses of the pandemic limited our options for gathering and placed tremendous stress on families. I am encouraged by the First Day gatherings we held this past fall, which although small were joyful and connecting.
Over these pandemic years, there has been less fellowship as we knew it. I miss so very much the monthly potlucks where we have the time to sit and chat with one another over a meal. I do like the idea of setting up smaller zoom dinners. What I feel is missing is more planned meeting activities among ourselves - sledding dates, a hike, a picnic besides the end of year, etc.

I fear that the only way to really do more has to happen when we will once again be with one another in person. I am deeply worried that we have much to do to heal the divide that has been exasperated by the challenge of trying to talk with and listen to one another as we face the issue of a formerly incarcerated attender and his place in our Meeting. We need a path forward. Also, I worry that new attenders who hear the deep concern about this issue are not sure how to react. And since it is such a huge internal issue how do we answer their questions. I admire one Friend who handled just such a situation with a newcomer several months ago.

While we wait for the increased personal connections, post-Covid, with pot-lucks, Friendly Eights, maybe we could hold collective clearing committees - or listening sessions that hold space for how anyone/everyone is feeling now.

We need to take advantage of the summer months for outdoor potlucks, etc., instead of expecting the pandemic to end at any moment.

The fall retreat was a great fellowship experience.

**How can we increase fellowship among members and attenders?**

We have to all realize that yes, we have a Pastoral Care committee, but we're all responsible for pastoral care, it's not just Pastoral Care. And so, if people think of ideas regarding things that could be done to enhance fellowship, they could share them with Pastoral Care, but maybe also step up to help make that happen because we have a relatively small Pastoral Care committee and they can't do everything.
As the year began, we were well into our first year of COVID pandemic adjustment. With almost nine months of holding Meeting for Worship on Zoom, we had learned to center down and gather as a group, while sitting in our own homes. Our participating Quaker dog was joined by other dogs and a cat, bringing more of God’s creatures into the gathered circle. To our surprise, we found that we had good, consistent attendance for our intentional spiritual community in this strange high-tech format. Our participants spanned the country, joining us from southern California, northern Vermont and places in between. A former member who had moved away, others who are new to us -- all have enriched the Meeting with their presence.

A number of us have expressed surprise about the richness of our silence and the sense of a gathered meeting that has been possible, even as we sit miles away from each other. Messages have referred to the Presence of the Spirit, a strong feeling of love and comfort, and a sense of being guided by the Wisdom of the Spirit in these difficult times. Over and over again there have been expressions of gratitude for the support of the meeting and the importance of the messages that arose to those in attendance.

There have been frustrations over the past year as well. We missed our “Meetings for Eating” that accompanied monthly Meetings for Business; we missed our informal gatherings after Meetings for Worship; and we participated in the nationwide isolation from those who were near and dear to us. While our Epiphany Party had to be canceled, we did manage to meet for a summer picnic, observing the health protocols overseen by our competent Medical Director.

As the year came to a close, we found ourselves pleased by the vitality of our small Meeting. While we have often felt ourselves to be on the brink of disappearing, this feels quite different. There is an appreciation for the gift of our new attendees. They have reported a sense of acceptance and we feel enriched and blessed by their presence. While we have lost our students to the shut-down and miss their presence, we feel that we have supported each other through a time that has been uncertain, unnerving, and upsetting. We have been grounded in our gathered Meeting for Worship in a way that has allowed each of us to manage to confront these days and to “keep calm and carry on.”
Dover Quarter
Modern technology and our faith in the Divine have helped Concord Friends Meeting to weather the second year of the Covid-19 global pandemic. Early in the year, we worshipped only remotely by Zoom video conferencing. As vaccines became available in the spring, we joyfully opened the meetinghouse to in-person worship while taking precautions to prevent potential disease transmission. In addition, we invested in technology that enabled hybrid in-person and remote worship.

Friends in the meetinghouse can clearly see our fellow worshipers on a large-screen TV as they Zoom in. An in-house panoramic camera gives remote Friends the opportunity to see inside the worship room. Some Friends find the integration more seamless when sitting in the meeting room than remotely. For some online, hybrid worship feels more fragmented than when we were all on Zoom. Nevertheless, we are grateful for the connections we’ve retained in difficult times. Our vocal ministry is thoughtful, and post-worship check-ins bring fresh reflections and wisdom. We have joyfully brought back worship-in-song in hybrid form. Whether it is a Covid variant or a Nor’easter, we can count on being together on First Day.

Some Friends find that the technology needed to connect us interferes with deeper worship. Thus, a small group meets for worship in the meetinghouse on Thursday evenings using no technology.

Zoom continues to enable us to offer programs and hold monthly meetings for business in either hybrid or online formats depending on the level of danger posed by the Corona virus. For Friends who spend part of the year away from New Hampshire, the investment in technology has enabled continued participation. It also provides an option that eases participation for people with disabilities or other health issues.

One of the benefits of online connection has been small group meetings, in some cases just a weekly chance to touch base with an assigned group of Friends, or regular meetings to discuss a book or general topic of interest. Quaker Basics and Quakerism 201 (Testimonies) moved to online meetings, allowing people to participate more easily
from home. A regular “story hour,” where members and attenders can hear life stories from one another has been a special gift. All this has allowed many of us to deepen connections to individuals in the meeting and to the meeting as a whole. During warmer weather, efforts to bring Friends together in the outdoors, with camping trips and picnic-style gatherings also helped grow and deepen our connections. These efforts have deepened our sense of faith and have shown what we can accomplish when we work together.

We feel a need to engage in outreach to families with children who have had a harder time participating in the meeting during this pandemic whether remotely or in person. We have missed the consistent presence of youthful energy and enthusiasm.

As a community, we are seeking to discern God’s will going forward. We are grateful for the Friends who worked together in faith years ago to build the beautiful space that is our meetinghouse. Are we being called to a new project? Given the beautiful parcel of land we steward, what opportunities exist for an outdoor worship space, spiritual walks or fellowship in the great outdoors?

We feel called to retain technology that makes the meeting more accessible, including the steps taken to ensure people who are hard of hearing can fully participate. We will try to keep the valuable aspects of the past two years as we move forward. We will not “go back” to what was “normal” before. God willing, we will go forward and build on what we have, recognizing we gained something from the challenges of the pandemic.

We continue to encourage our newcomers to grow in the Spirit with us. We seek to encourage the participation of families with children, and for those children to have other children to play with. We maintain a commitment to our First Day School, and to the needs of younger, working people. We are looking for ways to make it easier for young people with busy lives to participate meaningfully in the life of the meeting. In the year to come, we hope to consider events that enable diverse participation and that attract families to our midst. We all look forward to the day that potlucks can resume inside the meetinghouse!

Having met the challenges of the last two years, we look forward to the days ahead, feeling strong in our commitment to one another and to the Divine. God willing, we will be grateful for another year together.
In similar fashion to last year, Dover Friends continued with virtual worship via Zoom but have experimented with hybrid options for those times when a few felt it was safe enough to worship in person. We rejoiced in those few short months last summer when it appeared that the weight of our isolation from each other might lift for good. Alas, the resurgence of pandemic variants in the fall and early winter meant that few could comfortably continue to attend in person. It has also made it difficult to welcome and nurture the newcomer.

Virtual worship has been a blessing for those who are at a distance or whose health requires that they isolate. At the same time, we recognize that some people find it difficult to “sink down to the seed” without the physical presence of our community joined together in our old building. Three or four attend the virtual gathering Wednesday mornings while those attending First Day meeting virtually number about the same as those attending in person prior to the pandemic. We have seen fewer long-distance friends than last year.

Our community is strong despite the challenges posed by the world around us. We welcomed new attenders and welcomed back some we have not seen in some time. Two members transferred to another local meeting and we celebrated the life of cherished Friend and former Presiding Clerk, Chip Neal. We offer Spiritual Breakfast once monthly and an early morning (virtual) Meeting for Worship every Wednesday. One family hosts popup Bible studies.

The brief summer interlude was extremely busy for Dover Friends as we were chosen as a host site for Phase 3 of the Familias Separadas art installation featuring two banners that covered the side of the meeting house and faced a busy street. They conveyed the stories of two area residents who were detained at the Strafford County Dept. of Corrections. The opening celebration in June was attended by Friends from around the Yearly Meeting, faith communities who work alongside DFM on the Seacoast Interfaith Sanctuary Coalition, neighbors and the media. Two local faith communities, South Church and the Community Church of Durham, found opportunities to worship at the meeting house around the theme of immigration justice. They also served as a talking point at our July yard sale to benefit Sanctuary. A closing celebration, Umokuumani: a celebration of African and Black Immigrant Communities in New Hampshire, was held in November, a few days before the banners were removed. AFSC-NH cosponsored these events.

Our Sanctuary Committee continued to secure funds through individual fundraising and donations; donations from Dover Quarterly Meeting and monthly meetings in NEYM, and various trusts and funds associated with Friends. We activated our building permit. Contractors’ quotes are still pending but work on smaller parts of the project has been scheduled and the work may progress in stages. Fundraising continues and both the committee and the meeting as a whole, continue to discern the way forward.
Dover Friends struggle to adequately fill their committees. There was no Buildings & Grounds Committee this year, creating sufficient challenge that a different approach will be considered. The meeting house suffered a third break-in in as many years and Friends are investigating a security system. The T. Wister Brown Cemetery received the loving attention of a team of Friends and attenders who did much cleanup and landscaping over several weekends.

The Pastoral Care Committee was especially challenged by its small size and the particular problems posed by the pandemic. Despite that, and with the quiet but generous help of many individuals, they continue to help several of our attenders going through challenges.

Despite the absence of a Peace & Social Concerns committee, the Meeting demonstrates vibrant faith through action, with a weekly Black Lives Matter vigil each First Day afternoon, preparing meals at The Friendly Kitchen, approving a Minute of Apology to Indigenous People, financial support to AFSC, Friends of Kenya Rising, and the youth committee of the Seacoast NAACP. When the Strafford County Dept. of Corrections closed their facility to visitors due to Covid-19, our Jail Ministry team stayed connected to those inside via Zoom.

Individuals participated in vigils against nuclear armament, encouraged local leaders to shelter the homeless all winter, supported Portsmouth’s Gay Pride, Occupy NH, NAACP, and gathered clothing and food for those in need.

Dover Friends Meeting keeps up to date on happenings via our Weekly Memo. And while Spirit is present in our virtual meetings, we look forward to being together again in our worship space and enjoying the connection and growth best provided together. We are a gathered meeting.
Gonic Meeting State of Society Report

Gonic Friends Meeting is a small community with a spirited and wonderful group of members and attenders who are dedicated to the welfare of each other and the meeting. Though we have struggled with many challenges in the past year, they have been met with an outpouring of support from members and attenders. We have also welcomed some new Friends this year, whose attendance and dedication have buoyed the spirit of the meeting.

Among our challenges this year was the departure to Wisconsin of a dear Friend and attender who we, as a meeting, were very dependent on. This Friend saw to the large majority of the maintenance of the building and care of the meeting community, ensuring that the building was open and heated for worship, writing the monthly newsletter, and communicating with Friends about building maintenance needs. She regularly saw to these needs herself. Her spirit of selfless giving and kindness to all has been sorely missed, as has her presence in meeting. Fortunately for all of us, this Friend continues to support Gonic Meeting from afar and remains active in study groups and other activities.

Gonic Friends reached out to the wider NEYM community in 2021, for help funding the repair of our leaking roof. The outpouring of help and prayers was beyond amazing! We felt supported and encouraged by grants from the NEYM Legacy Committee and many generous meetings and individuals. The repair of the meeting roof was completed in the fall, to the great relief of all. Unfortunately, numerous delays due to exceptionally rainy weather caused water damage to the inside of the meetinghouse. As a result of the roof leaks, the furnace is now in need of replacement. Because of these and other maintenance concerns, meeting has been taking place via Zoom only for the last several months. Social gatherings after meeting and for Ministry and Games Committee have been missed!

Zoom meetings have allowed for participation by one member who would not otherwise be able to attend due to health concerns. This has been a gift! Meeting has continued weekly with anywhere from 1 to 5 participants. We have had robust participation in study groups led by members and attenders throughout the year. Business meetings have also been well attended. One of these study groups, centered around the book *The Gatherings*, led to the adoption of a land acknowledgement statement which Gonic Friends plan to use as the basis for a sign to be placed on the meetinghouse. Gonic Friends have been in communication with local indigenous leaders to receive guidance about the creation of this sign.

Meeting members/attenders participate regularly in a variety of Friends activities including FCNL Advocacy Teams, AFSC-NH Support Committee, NEYM events and Quarterly Meeting. While Quarterly Meeting has been less active during the current year, Gonic Friends have invited others within the Quarter to participate in study groups. Gonic Friends have participated with Dover Friends in making meals at Dover Friendly Kitchen and in preparing a sanctuary space within the Dover Meetinghouse. Members and attenders also share their Quaker values through participation in local community activities which support racial, economic and disability justice.
We are indeed fortunate to have our small but mighty community. The past year has taught us to trust that way will open to help us meet our challenges. As we strengthen our meetinghouse, we find that these struggles have helped to strengthen the meeting community.

Approved March 13, 2022
2021 was another year of adjustments to the Covid-19 pandemic. North Sandwich Friends Meeting started out the year with the meetinghouse closed to gathering for worship. Computers and telephones were the tools used for communication among Friends. Technology has helped us care for our meeting community and continue to connect with homebound Friends.

We were able to meet in person during the warmer months of 2021 (June-October). Some Friends requested earlier Meeting for Worship times on Sundays so we provided two Meetings for Worship. One at 8:30am and a second at 10:30am. This allowed time in between to socialize outside, weather permitting. After Columbus Day we returned to one, 10am, meeting. During this time we welcomed many visitors and some new regular attenders. Although it is a challenge to form relationships with the barrier of the pandemic, we found that we were able to find ways to socialize.

Chuck Ott from Dover Friends joined our meeting via ZOOM to tell us about their Sanctuary Program.

On February 14th, we held a ZOOM meeting for worship with a special emphasis on forgiveness, dedicated to Hector Black. Friends in North Sandwich have come to know Hector vicariously, through their support of Paul Marino's work, funded in part by a Legacy Grant through NEYM, on a documentary film about Hector’s extraordinary example of forgiveness. Friends in Cookeville TN, the home of Hector Black, received greetings from our meeting in North Sandwich and heard of the support of the film project. Both Cookeville and North Sandwich Friends worship in similar, unprogrammed formats, and we joined together for this ZOOM worship.

In August we held a joint Meeting for Worship at Wonalancet Chapel with members of that congregation who were interested in learning about Quaker meetings.

At the September Sandwich Community Fair, we set up a table to share information about the North Sandwich Friends and to help distribute lawn signs saying “Climate Action Now” and literature for the Sandwich Climate Action Coalition of which some of our Friends are members.

In October we walked to the North Sandwich burial grounds to meet at the grave sites of Martha Klitgaard and Dick Breed to share fond memories and a silent memorial. Memorial minutes were completed this year for Dick Breed and Ray Stineford, two faithful members of our meeting who passed away in 2021. Martha’s minute was completed in 2020. Also in October, we joined with other faith communities in the area for a Crop Walk.
In November we held a “Walk and Talk” with a visit from town historian, Jim Mykland, who talked about the Durgin Bridge and Jane Varney Durgin when we stopped to view the covered bridge.

Another social time combined with a necessary task is our spring and fall clean up days that we have each year. It is especially nice to join together on outside projects when we are so restricted on activities that we can do indoors.

Throughout Covid restrictions, building keys were given to persons wishing personal worship or library time.

The Meetinghouse was open for worship on Armistice Day and Thanksgiving Day. We began meeting for worship via zoom on the 4th Sunday of each month and met for the first time in 2021 (Dec 26); attended by 5 persons.

A lot of work was done on our Library. After a generous donation by Ray and Helen Stineford of some new bookshelves in 2020, this year a group of Friends did a lot of organizing and some decision making to make our library user friendly to our members and the community.

A Finance Committee was formed to support our Treasurer and also to determine more clearly what funds we have to use for sharings in the future.

We now have a Facebook page thanks to a volunteer attender.

A team of volunteers help do all the mowing and lawn maintenance. Another team checks on the building during the colder months. This saves funds to use for more specialized tasks such as the tree work and the burial grounds upkeep that was completed this year.

Our meeting faithfully responded to some challenges within our meeting. We were unable to resolve some difficult feelings between Friends within our meeting. After years of attempts, we decided it was time to get some outside help. We were blessed to have a Friend from NEYM and another Friend from our Quarterly offer to help with clearness. After many discussions with Members and Attendees of our meeting, we hope to meet in person as soon as we are able to have our final clearness discussions in the hope that we can bring these issues to a resolution. We are grateful to have all of our North Sandwich Friends willing to participate and prayerfully work towards clearness. The Spirit moves among us.

A special Minute of Appreciation was written for Luisa Facciolo and Nancy Moore to express gratitude for the many years of service and involvement given as they take a sabbatical from NSFM responsibilities.

I am proud to note that this State of the Meeting report confirms that even with a pandemic happening around us, we were able to stay connected and accomplish many of our goals.

Submitted by Ministry and Counsel for North Sandwich Friends Meeting
State of Society 2021
Souhegan Preparative Meeting

Our small group continued to meet all through the fluctuating conditions of the pandemic. For the first part of 2021, we mostly met "virtually," though when the weather warmed one family put its screen porch at our service, and we often met there. As the summer waned, most of us felt the need to continue to meet in person, and with most of us fully vaccinated, we searched for some stable meeting-place. The Milford chapter of the International Order of Odd Fellows made a space available to us, and we began meeting there. The winter surge caused by the "omicron variant" drove us to suspect in-person meetings in the depth of winter, but we are now meeting in person regularly.

Our group continues small, with a core of 4-8 people (plus our Friend in Toulouse, France, who joins us often). Some potential new attenders have become aware of us, and we hope they will be able to join us now that we are in a stable location. We have also been grateful that Friends have visited us as pandemic restrictions have eased. With our numbers so small, absences of even one or two "regulars" makes a noticeable difference, but we hope that soon some of us will be drawn to visit other meetings again, and strengthen us by such connections with other meetings.

The worship is generally settled and nourishing, with ministry shared. Some of us have been meeting weekly or bi-weekly for shared study, and this has been encouraging and helpful. Social issues where Friends have a testimony to make are alive among us, such issues including racial justice, peace, climate change, and relations with indigenous people. Some of our members have attended most Quarterly Meetings in the past year, and a few also have attended Yearly Meeting and been active in yearly meeting concerns.

We often feel that our meetings for worship have been rich and strengthening. We are hoping that in our new, visible and stable location others will come to join us, and we are considering how to extend an invitation in the towns of our area. We are a small community but one in which the Life is often felt at work.
Our meeting began as a preparative meeting under the Weare meeting and then became the Weare Monthly Meeting, until the last couple of years we have been referring to it as the Weare/Henniker Quaker Meeting to clarify its location in Henniker. The first thing we usually ask a first-time visitor to the meeting is “How did you find us?” This reflects that we are a small meeting with three to five worshipers in the winter, seven to eight in the summer. Our population is aged and aging, the “elephant in the room” when we consider the meeting’s future. One young family with children who were married under the care of the Meeting have kept in touch with us but now live a good distance from Henniker and are not often present. We miss the children but are pleased to see they are continuing the “Quaker start” they got here through remote participation in Cambridge Meeting’s First Day program. Besides the occasional attender, we look forward to the seasonal return of three sojourners whose contributions to the meeting are significantly more than just numbers.

Due to COVID we met by Zoom (and telephone) weekly all last winter (2021) and although it wasn’t as good as being together, it kept us connected. The lack of use of our meetinghouse during the winter months required weekly visits to check on its status: (contracted out) snow plowing and sanding, shoveling out the entrance, and keeping the mice at bay! We were glad when the Spring came and we met in the meetinghouse again, although with masks.

The use of Zoom has most definitely facilitated the revitalization of our Quarterly Meeting since far flung Friends don’t need to travel. Marian Baker has taken on the role of Quarterly Recording Clerk and that has increased our participation in Quarterly affairs.

We were disappointed we had to cancel our Christmas carol sing for the second year in a row due to COVID. We hope to revive it in December 2022 as our primary community outreach effort.

However, we were pleased to be contacted by the Caughey family (summer attenders), asking that their daughter Willa and her fiancé, Kelton Minor, be married under the care of our Meeting. Since they live in California, first we met the couple via Zoom and then members of the Meeting hosted a Clearness Committee in Henniker, and also participated in their traditional Quaker ceremony held outdoors near the Caughey home in Antrim, under beautiful, summer weather.

The Meeting focused on four areas of concern over the course of the year: climate change; Indigenous peoples awareness; Marian Baker’s continuing ministry in East Africa; and the effort to resolve NEYM/FUM policy differences. We continued our self-imposed carbon tax assessment which has contributed $6,918.43 (to date) to four Quaker organizations dealing with climate change. We have reached out to local members of the indigenous Abenaki peoples to heighten our awareness of their history and culture including the preparation of a land acknowledgement statement that will be mounted on the Meetinghouse. We have provided administrative support to Marian for her on-going ministry with Kenyan and Ugandan women. And we spent some considerable time wrestling with the issue of NEYM and its role with FUM’s personnel policy, though were unable to come to unity on the issue.

The Souhegan Preparative Meeting continues to make progress, most recently securing a more visible meeting space in downtown Milford, NH. Their State of Society report will be submitted by them.
Falmouth
Quarter
Last year as the pandemic continued, we gathered to listen to God in new ways. Spirit is alive and singing amongst us, sometimes by its joyful presence, or too often by the sensation of its absence. We know that to be a community of faith is to piece together glimpses of God that each of us receives until together we see the whole, and this is hard to do right now. It is hard to see God’s whole vision for us when we cannot find a way that we can gather all together that works for every person. Sometimes, finding ways to be together as one and feel Spirit’s presence takes so much creativity and energy and hope that we get tired or lonely, and we forget our unconditional belovedness.

Sometimes Spirit’s presence (or our awareness of it) flows with ease and grace, even while the pandemic continues to surprise and disappoint us. Hope rose through the spring that vaccination would open the door to join together again in our Meetinghouse as a gathering of Faith. Our opportunities for whole meeting worship on zoom made us grateful to be able to hold worship during the pandemic for those able to be there, and sometimes Spirit would burst forth through the computer screen. We experimented with hybrid worship, but found that there was not life in it for us. This fall we had the gift of outdoor intergenerational worship and fellowship gatherings at Friends School of Portland. We were grateful for the chance to be with so many families that we have missed for the last few challenging years. The trees swayed and the clouds sashayed with joy. Some of us found just what our hearts needed in the sanctuary of a small group, often in person, like faithfulness groups or a weekday worship or a spontaneous opportunity for fellowship, where we could nurture fresh connections with each other and the Divine. Too many of us have not been able to find a way to be present with our community and this pains us.

As the cold weather arrived, we moved to zoom for first Sundays with the whole community invited to worship together to do business and to be in waiting worship. We are experimenting with nurturing new fluid small gatherings, hoping to build new connections even as we are separated.

Spirit nudges us to continue to engage in big questions even in these times when it can feel hard to hold the center. We are not yet sure what these questions are but we’re working on finding them. We feel invited to explore: What is our purpose as a community? What is our role in the wider community? What is our responsibility to our neighbors? Two examples are our work with Family Promise helping to provide support for our neighbors in need of housing, and another is advocating for sovereignty for our Wabanaki neighbors.

We are doing hard work on an empty belly. We are hungry for connection. We pray and are blessed with manna, the nourishment we need each day, to put one foot in front of the other, together.

Portland Friends Meeting is being shaped and reshaped by the Ever-changing and the Eternal.
In considering the content of this report, three words came to the forefront: FAITH, GRATITUDE and PERSEVERANCE. Faith is the trusting in our Creator and His abilities and His promises as made through Christ and the Scriptures by which mankind is justified or saved. We stand by Him as faithful believers and loyal members of His house of worship, ready to serve our calling by way of our gifts and talents as His children, ready to meet the challenges and to endure. Gratitude is feeling or being thankful, which comes from the benefits received by way of our Creator, Redeemer and friend, through life experiences and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Perseverance is a steady course of action or purpose or state of circumstances, to hold on, to continue on course and to maintain in spite of difficulties ... tenacity.

Scripture gives us plenty of examples of this: i.e., Abraham's consistent faith was rewarded (Genesis 12:10) and Daniel gives an example of being faithful regardless of circumstance (Daniel 3:16-18). Faith!

When the giving of thanks is an integral part of life, we find that our attitude toward life will change, i.e., being more positive, loving, gracious and humble. (Ps 92:1,2). Gratitude!

Because Christ lives in us, as believers we can remain courageous and hopeful and endure the hard times. It's our faith revealed: True Christians vs. fair-weather believers. Perseverance!

Our meeting has been confronted with many challenges in recent years, among which are a shrinking congregation (due to losses by way of deaths, relocations, illnesses) and the upkeep of a historic Meetinghouse. The Pandemic and other situations have affected everything from participation to finances which affect us personally and as a group.
We are meeting all this with faith, gratitude and perseverance, remaining faithful to God's provision, to a desire to continue as a Meeting for worship, and to being open to ways to continue on. We seek opportunities to introduce the community to our past history and ways, keeping in touch with the greater Quaker community as much as possible via Falmouth Quarterly Meeting ZOOM meetings, annual contact with our Quaker Ridge brethren, and continued support of the Girl Scout Troop that gathers in our Meetinghouse weekly. We remain prayerful with sharing Bible Study times and being grateful for opportunities to work together to increase our finances by replacing the semiannual bean suppers with a Christmas Fair in the fall. We recently received a grant from the Obadiah Brown Benevolent Fund for needed repairs to the building addition which are scheduled to begin the end of May. We welcome guests to our times of worship throughout the year and are thankful for God's ever present help through the work of the Holy Spirit. One of our new attendees was responsible for drafting a letter to the Maine Legislature and Governor Mills voicing our support of LD1626, the Maine Indian Tribes request for more autonomy. We accept all this as God's presence among us.

To quote Charles R. Swindoll: "God designed us to live in friendship and fellowship and community with others. That's why the church - the body of Christ, is so very important, for it is there that we are drawn together in love and mutual encouragement. We're meant to be a part of one another's lives."

This concludes the review of our thoughts and outlook as for the State of our Society here in Windham, Maine, for the year of our Lord 2021,

Respectfully submitted,

Janice L. Beattie, Pastor, April 2022

Windham Monthly Meeting of Friends
Northwest Quarter
Meeting for Worship each Sunday at 10:00 am
When entering meeting for worship, Friends should leave seats close to the
door for late-comers and should try to find places farther into the room.

•May 2022•
Rhea McCay, Clerk, Penny Wright, Ass’t Clerk
Len Cadwallader, Ministry & Counsel Clerk
Barb Kline-Schoder, Clerk of Trustees
Scot Drysdale, Treasurer, Cathy Miles Grant, Recording Clerk

WORSHIP GROUPS
under the care of Hanover Monthly Meeting
Kendal at Hanover, contact
Peg Myers (603) 643-2389
Dick Powell trpowell@gmail.com

MEETING WEBSITE
https://www.fgcquaker.org/cloud/hanover-friends-meeting
Webmaster: Technology Working Group -
Fran Brokaw, Tom Monego, Melissa Post, Beata Randall, Scot Sablan,
Suzanne Serat, Clerk
Hanover Friends Meeting on Facebook
Len Cadwallader, Fran Brokaw admin

MEETING LIST SERVE
main@HanoverFriends.groups.io
Site manager: Scott Sablan scottzmail@gmail.com
CALENDAR

All Meeting events are held on Zoom unless specified.

SUNDAY MORNING

10:00 am  Meeting for Worship on Zoom, see logon information from Penny Wright Saturday
children join the Meeting for the first 15 minutes of worship
Fellowship after Meeting

A Reminder:
Our next Meeting for Worship for Business is June 19, 2022

Hanover Friends Meeting on Facebook

Hanover Friends Meeting is a public group publicizing Friends beliefs, interests, and activities; To join send a Facebook message to a member of the group or to Fran Brokaw or Len Cadwallader.

Hanover Friends Members is a private group for engaging with other meeting members and attenders of our meetings to aid in knowing one another better. To join send a Facebook message to Ed Feustel, Len Cadwallader, or Suzanne Serat indicating your affiliation with meeting.

Link to Adult Ed Programs: While we have been meeting on Zoom for the last year we have recorded the Programs and Spiritual Journeys, Adult Education Committee has presented. This is the link to access these programs:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cz1nOAXY2WD0OWTnTl98Jfyo2Plvx0Q7?usp=sharing

From the Reopening Focus Group:

Given the rapidly evolving nature of COVID 19 information, including updates to travel restrictions between Vermont and New Hampshire, Reopening Committee encourages Friends to bookmark the websites below, to ensure quick and frequent access. Please also refer to the COVID 19 related resources posted on the NEYM website.
https://www.nh.gov/covid19/
https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19/current-activity/vermont-dashboard

Hanover Friends Meeting acknowledges that we worship, work and live on the homelands of the Abenaki people. We know this truth: that European and American colonial powers and people overran the Abenaki homeland settlements, changed the names of many places, deforested the lands, polluted the waters, and tried at times to extinguish the Abenaki. No full amends can ever be made. From time beyond memory, the Abenaki have been and still are here. We pay our respects to them and to the wisdom of their elders and their culture. May we prove ourselves worthy and faithful friends and allies.
Upcoming Events:
June 15 – 7-8:30P – Ministry & Counsel invites you to a listening session. Now that we’ve been using a hybrid form of worship for about two months, we will share how it has been working for us. What are the ways it has helped us along our spiritual path? What are the ways it has impeded that process and could be enhanced? To include everyone, including our far-flung members, this listening session will be on Zoom. A link will be sent out shortly before the event.

June 18 – 2-5p – Memorial Meeting for Erica Brinton at Tracy Hall in Norwich VT. Many folks from across the Upper Valley will be invited who were part of Erica’s many circles of activities, hence the need for a different location. There will be shape-note singing. Also, simple food (COVID permitting).

August 6 -11 New England Yearly Meeting! In person! At Castleton University. Also, some events will be on Zoom. The Castleton campus is in VT about 1.5 hours away. Family-friendly! Children are FREE! Pay as you are led! No one will be turned away. The link to all the programs and registration forms will be posted shortly.

Lindsay Dearborn, clerk of Peace and Social Concerns, encouraged those who carry a concern for an emergent crisis related to peace and social justice to consider applying for Bequest Funding, and suggested a process for doing so. Faith Alexandre, convenor of the working group to review the Bequest Funds process, offered a clarification of the current approved process. That is, the individual with a concern brings the initial application to the Clerk of the Meeting, who then brings it to the Nominating Committee to designate the appropriate committee of the Meeting to shepherd the concern. Faith also mentioned that the working group will bring before the Meeting, at the June MfWfB, the findings from the Bequest Funds review, along with recommended changes.

See Business Meeting Minutes, ANNOUNCEMENTS and SHARING for details on all events.
Hanover Friends Monthly Meeting for Worship for Business
15 May 2022

Conducted by Zoom


Following a period of silent worship, Craig Putnam read our Abenaki Land Acknowledgement statement:

Hanover Friends Meeting acknowledges that we worship, work and live on the homelands of the Abenaki people. We know this truth: that European and American colonial powers and people overran the Abenaki homeland settlements, changed the names of many places, deforested the lands, polluted the waters, and tried at times to extinguish the Abenaki. No full amends can ever be made. From time beyond memory, the Abenaki have been and still are here. We pay our respects to them and to the wisdom of their elders and their culture. May we prove ourselves worthy and faithful friends and allies.

Announcements:

Saturday, May 21: A Memorial Meeting for Worship for Rose Law Miller will be held at Kendal at 10AM. Due to the limited seating at Kendal, we were advised and have scheduled a Memorial Meeting for Worship, at the Meetinghouse on the same day, May 21 at 3PM. Rose’s family and some of her friends will attend both worship times. Friends are invited to bring flowers from home with vases for this gathering. We will continue to mask, maintain social distancing, and engage in fellowship outside following worship. All are welcome. One greeter is needed at 2:30.

Monday, May 23, 6:30PM. Reopening Working Group meeting. All are welcome. Penny will provide the zoom link.

June 4th and 5th: Northwest Quarterly Meeting, hosted by Middlebury Meeting. It will be held remotely via zoom. Further information will be available as the planning evolves.

Lindsay Dearborn, clerk of Peace and Social Concerns, encouraged those who carry a concern for an emergent crisis related to peace and social justice to consider applying for Bequest Funding, and suggested a process for doing so. Faith Alexandre, convenor of the working group to review the Bequest Funds process, offered a clarification of the current approved process. That is, the individual with a concern brings the initial application to the Clerk of the Meeting, who then brings it to the Nominating Committee to designate the appropriate committee of the Meeting to shepherd the concern. Faith also mentioned that the working group will bring before the Meeting, at the June MfWfB, the findings from the Bequest Funds review, along with recommended changes.

Weds, May 25, 6:30PM. The May Anti-Oppression Conversation will focus on discrimination against people with disabilities. It will include the Neil Marcus life story video (Marcus was a member of Carol Weingeist’s family). Whitney Green Nicholson will participate. Zoom link and other materials will be sent in advance.

The Fellowship Committee is happy to share that Hanover Friends Meeting’s piano has been carefully tuned and repaired by Johnson Piano Tuning thanks to the generosity of Peter and Chrysanthi Bien.

Opening Worship: Following a period of silence, clerk Rhea McKay read the following passage from George Selleck’s Quakers in Boston, 1656-1964, 1976, p. 270 on a true sense of community as the basis for Quaker decision making:

Friends found that even the proper functioning of the Quaker business meeting depended upon a strong sense of community, or caring in the group. Decisions were reached without a vote, by “gathering the sense of the meeting.” But this would happen only when those taking part respected and cared for one another. It was one of the happier discoveries of the early Friends not only that individuals endeavoring to follow the Light of Christ Within would be led to a unity, but that the caring group could be led as well,
and might even be given a higher insight than any individual.

**Business and Committee Matters:**

Ministry and Counsel Committee

1) Bev Houghton provided the second reading of the State of Society report 2021 (attached). She took note of several suggestions made, including that in-person meetings at Tracy Hall were separate and additional to the Zoom meetings, that appreciation be expressed for the generosity of those whose bequests made the improvements to the building possible, and that mention of the children’s programs should be moved from the end to a more central position.

01-05-2022 -- The State of Society Report for 2021 was received with gratitude for its comprehensiveness and beauty, and approved in the knowledge that Ministry and Counsel will incorporate suggested changes.

2) HFM feedback on the draft chapter to the New England Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice Revision Committee will be postponed to the June Meeting for Worship for Business.

3) Together with the re-opening committee, Ministry and Counsel has called for a listening session on June 15, 7:00 PM to hear of Friends’ experience with the use of our initial format for a hybrid form of worship. An announcement of the time and a link will be sent on the listserv.

4) Erica Brinton’s Memorial Meeting for Worship is being planned under the care of Ministry and Counsel on Saturday, June 18, 2-5 PM at Tracy Hall, Norwich, which will better accommodate her large circle of friends than the Meetinghouse. Related committees have been invited and agreed to contribute from budgeted funds. We are invited to bring flowers from our gardens, home-baked bread (to honor Erica’s own bread making), and jam. Volunteers are needed to set up chairs at 1:00. Shape note singing practice also begins at 1:00.

02-05-2022 -- The Meeting approved approximately $500 to rent Tracy Hall for Erica Brinton’s Memorial Meeting for Worship.

Finance Committee

Faith Alexandre, clerk of Finance Committee, presented the Year-end report on FY 2022 (May 1 2021 – April 30 2022, attached), which opens with the following:

The Finance Committee looks back at fiscal year 2022 with pride in our work and gratitude for the work of the Meeting’s other committees. The loving commitment and caring of Friends and our Meeting’s larger community – including our tenants and the groups that share our Meeting House – has enabled the Meeting to steer a calm and steady course through the financially uncertain times brought by the pandemic.

Finance Committee is grateful for the diverse skills and insight that each of us on the committee brings to our collective work. In particular this year, we thank Ben Guaraldi for his time on the committee before his family claimed him. And we are ever appreciative of the work of the Meeting’s treasurer and assistant treasurer, Scot Drysdale and Richard Neugass.

With gratitude,
Faith Alexandre (Clerk)
David Eastman
Margaret Fanning
Richard Neugass, Assistant Treasurer (ex officio)
Scot Drysdale, Treasurer (ex officio)

1) Ventilation project -- Faith (?) reported that the Meeting House ventilation project is complete, and all bills associated with the project have been received and paid.

The total cost of the project was $138,253. Of this, $134,204 was construction costs, and $4050 was other project-related costs. Those other costs include rent for the use of Tracy Hall for Meeting for Worship, and rent not charged to our office tenants for some of the time they were not able to use the building.

The Meeting approved a number of sources of funds to pay for the project. Here are the sources, the amount approved by the Meeting for each, and the amount actually charged to that source.
The total cost of the project was 6% over the original budget amount. Note that the decision to charge the non-construction costs to the project was made after the Meeting approved the funding sources. Without those charges, the project would have exceeded the original budget by just 2%.

2) FY 2021 budget vs. actuals (See attached: HMM FY2022 Balance, and Budget vs Actuals)

The Meeting’s total operating income was about $3200 under budget (line 29). Not surprisingly, the primary contributor to the shortfall was the lower than budgeted amount from building use donations. Unrestricted contributions were ~$57,600, just $600 shy of the budgeted amount.

(Note that operating income does not include bequests, restricted donations, capital gains/losses in the NEYM pooled funds, and money designated for the House Major Expenses Fund (all shown on lines 22-26).

Our total operating expenses were approximately $3600 under budget. Primary contributors were significantly lower than budgeted expenses for First Day School and Fellowship. Meeting House expenses were ~$2249 higher than budgeted, primarily due to the change in the Meeting’s property taxes.

The Meeting budgeted to break even in FY2022, but ended the year with a surplus of just over $400 (line 142).

Areas where there was a significant difference between the budgeted and actual amounts or that are otherwise of interest:

- Line 6: Unrestricted contributions were ~$57,600, just under the budget amount of $58,200. Finance Committee recognizes and appreciates Friends’ continued support of the Meeting.
- Line 10: The annual distribution from the NEYM Pooled Funds was ~$8200, lower than the budgeted amount of $9000. As the Meeting spends the Bequest funds, the distribution amount goes down.
- Line 11: Capital gains/losses in the NEYM pooled funds are not budgeted. The actual gain in FY2022 was ~$6000, all of which was absorbed into the Long Term Investment bequest “bucket”.
- Lines 14: Rental income from the two offices and parking was as budgeted. Any loss of rent when the offices were not available to our tenants was charged to the ventilation project.
- Line 15: Donations by groups for use of the Meeting House were under budget by ~$2700. We have continued to receive donations from some of the groups.
- Line 29: Total operating income (not including any restricted income) ~$3200 under budget.
- Line 34: First Day School teaching expenses were ~$3200 under budget.
- Line 65: Fellowship expenses were ~$1600 under budget.
- Line 122: Electricity expenses were ~$800 over budget. It will take a full year with the new system for us to know how to budget this line.
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- Line 127: Oil was ~$500 over budget. We are burning less oil, but the price per gallon has increased.
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- Line 139: Total House expenses were ~$2200 over budget.
- Line 141: Total operating expenses were ~$3600 under budget.
- Line 142: We had budgeted to break even; we ended the year with a surplus of $411.

3) FY2022 year-end balance sheet:

As of April 30, 2022, the Meeting held ~$217,000 in the Bequest Funds, $59,000 in restricted funds designated for specific uses, and $33,300 in undesignated assets.

Of note:
- **Fixed Assets** (1610 to 1640 on the Balance Sheet)
Note that the amount given on the balance sheet for fixed assets is unchanged from last year, about $812,600. Fixed assets include land, building, furnishings and the library, and no adjustment has been made to reflect the town’s reassessment of the Meeting House and property.

- **Meeting House ventilation project**
  The impact of the Meeting House ventilation project costs can be seen in the Long Term Investment and Ministry of the Meeting House bequest fund buckets (lines 3161 and 3162), the House Major Expenses Fund (line 3110), and our undesignated assets. All are down in comparison to this time last year.

- **Bequest Funds** (3161 to 3168 on the Balance Sheet)
  The Finance Committee will provide a report at a later date on the use of the Bequest Funds in FY2022.

**03-05-2022** -- The meeting accepted the FY 22 financial report of the Finance Committee, with gratitude for their calm, their steadiness, and their expertise, which allowed us to move forward through an uncertain time to the completion of our ventilation system.

4) **Related Old Business:**
Last month, we deferred the decision about how to use the 50% portion of our donation to Northwest Quarterly Meeting. The retreat at Bethany Birches did not take place again this year, and the Quarter continues to carry a fairly substantial balance. Therefore, the Quarter has asked that we once again send half the budgeted contribution to an organization that the Meeting would like to support. The total budgeted amount is $2040, so the Meeting needs to decide what organization(s) should receive the $1020 that is not going to the Quarter, addressing concerns in our world outside of our usual annual contributions. At last month’s MfWfB, Friends were invited to send the names of organizations for our consideration. The names of these organizations are presented below.

- New Hampshire Peace Action
- American Friends Combatants for Peace
- World Central Kitchen
- International Rescue Committee
- Friends Ugandan Safe Transport
- International Red Cross for Ukraine
- Doctors Without Borders

**04-05-2022** -- Following thoughtful discussion of the work of these fine organizations in situations of great need, the Meeting chose to divide the unused portion of money for NWQM between a very small Quaker endeavor, Friends Ugandan Safe Transport, where funds could save lives of LGBTQ+ Ugandans, and the International Rescue Committee for Yemen, where US policies and our tax monies are contributing to the starvation of a nation. The treasurer is asked to send checks for $510 to each organization.

Nominating Committee:
For the committee, Dulany Bennett, clerk, presented the report on their work.

**REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE TO THE BUSINESS MEETING: PART 1, MAY 15TH, 2022**

Dear Friends,

It is a joy and a privilege to have the opportunity to serve on our Meeting’s Nominating Committee. We interact with all the local members and attenders of our meeting, and we often learn a great deal about the deepest beliefs and commitments of our meeting Friends. We on the committee had the opportunity to see how committed our members and attenders are to the work of the meeting and to our success as the spiritual home for us all.

This winter we lost our Friend Erica Brinton just as we began our intensive work. She was a great asset to the Nominating Committee, as she knew the meeting very well, and had the trust of so many of us. Her loss set us back in time and greatly saddened us. We are very grateful that Hugh MacArthur stepped forward to fill the terms of Erica’s position on the committee, including serving as clerk next year.

Our new member this year has been Penny Wright, who is an expert on the business of nominating committees. She has served on the Yearly Meeting committee and the committee of Friends General Conference. Penny has brought her wisdom and experience to all our work, in spite of some very challenging medical problems which sometimes sapped her energy, but never her commitment.

Our fourth member, Nancy Corindia, took on all the recording of Nominating matters, presenting us with rosters at each of our weekly meetings, a service with-
out which we could not have been so organized or efficient as we were mostly able to be. In our case Zoom meetings were invaluable, and the structure provided by Nancy kept us moving forward at a steady pace.

The roster of nominations before you this morning represents our best discernment with each other and with each of you. Most committees are filled with people who have found places where they are eager to serve. We have begun to make use of the existence of Zoom to allow members and attenders who are at a distance or who have physical problems to serve.

There are several unfilled positions. Most of these are under discernment by individuals considering the positions. They are likely to decide in the next month. A few positions for clerk remain, as the appointment will almost certainly be internal to the already existing committee membership. Other positions, such as the position with Dartmouth College students and the Granite State Organizing Project, require the Business meeting to discern what kind of relationship we would like to formulate with these organizations before an individual can be nominated to carry it out.

We hope that most positions will be filled by the June meeting for business, but a few will not, and will need to be taken up by next year’s committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the meeting in the nominating capacity.
We believe that we have a group of committee members who will work to keep the Meeting strong and gathered, and we look forward to seeing many of our hopes and plans come to fruition this year.

Respectfully submitted,
2021-2022 Nominating Committee:
Dulany Bennett, Clerk
Hugh MacArthur, Rising Clerk
Nancy Corindia
Penny Wright

The committee presented the proposed slate (attached), along with the following introduction:
Dear Friends,
Here is the slate for the nominations for positions beginning July 1st, 2022. These nominations will lay on the table for one month to be approved at the June business meeting. Part One of the Nominating Committee report will be read this Sunday at the Meeting for Worship for Business and distributed with the meeting minutes.
Dulany Bennett, Clerk of the Nominating Committee
Hugh MacArthur
Nancy Corindia
Penny Wright

Several changes were made at this time. It was pointed out that Finance Committee does not need 8 members, and Richard Morse withdrew from that committee and joined the Young Friends Committee. The liaison to Kendal Worship Group, Sarah Putnam, was added. Gratitude was expressed for the committee’s work and the community’s sharing of their gifts.

Reopening Working Group:
The working group continues to explore the technical tools for inclusion of all, in person and online, for Mf-WfB as well as MfW. An opportunity for all members of this community to evaluate our this experience with hybrid worship will be scheduled for June. Our work to provide Meeting for Worship for Business with inclusiveness and the least among of intrusiveness is ongoing.

Peace and Social Concerns:
Lindsay Dearborn presented correspondence from the AFSC NH Support Committee to the AFSC national leadership regarding the restructuring process that occurred within AFSC last year. The first letter is the more recent, and reflects their hope for a more positive process that responds to the concerns expressed in their minute of June 2021, below.
May 14, 2022

Joyce Ajlouny and Laura Boyce
1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia PA 19102

Dear Ms. Ajlouny and Ms. Boyce,

Last Spring, the AFSC NH Program Support Committee approved a Minute expressing our concerns about the proposed restructuring process and sent it to the AFSC Board of Directors in June 2021. Briefly, we asked that the Board pause and not take any action until the organization was able to review the process and respond to objections being raised by AFSC staff and others.

Since that time, the Leadership Team, the General Secretary, the US unions, AFSC staff and Quakers with connections to AFSC have shared communications that have highlighted the status of the overall process from their perspectives. Over time, it appears that the organization has moved from a place of heightened tension to making progress in their work with staff and governance concerns. We are encouraged by that.

Nevertheless, we remain vigilant. We want to see Regional Committees stay, because we’re acutely aware how relevance, connection, credibility and organizing power can be lost when national/international organizations move away from their core geographic and community contexts and contacts. In our particular case, the Cambridge office has provided essential program, personnel and financial support, not to mention their steadfast advocacy for our program within AFSC and elsewhere - they’ve had our backs on more than one occasion.

We also want to know that AFSC is listening to its Quaker roots and values. We haven’t been surprised, but we’ve been impressed by the numerous, sober, and heartfelt calls among Quakers for AFSC to pause and follow well known “Quaker process” - a slower, more inclusive, deliberative and spirit-led process. We’ve also been impressed by calls for improving AFSC governance: governing in a way that prioritizes local goals, local
perspectives, local relationships, local connections and local decision-making. We sincerely believe that this approach is what gives AFSC programs the moral credibility and authority they enjoy no matter where they are located.

We are hopeful that AFSC will listen deeply to these Quaker voices and address them with the same spirit in which they are made. We enthusiastically extend an invitation to you both to visit the NH Program, and we respectfully request a response to this letter.

Thank you for your attention.

Most sincerely,

[Signature]

Lindsay Dearborn, Clerk
On behalf of the AFSC NH Program Support Committee

AFSC-NH Support Committee members 2021-2022:

Anne Saunders: Concord NH, Concord Monthly Meeting. Freelance writer and editor, contributor/editor AFSC NH Program State House Watch.


Ginny Cole: Rochester NH, Dover Friends Meeting. Clinical Social Worker and musician; volunteer with the recovery community; member Seacoast Interfaith Sanctuary Coalition.

Kesaya E. Noda: Hanover NH, Hanover Friends Meeting. Poet, writer and editor, member HFM Peace and Social Concerns Committee, sponsor and mentor with food addiction community.

Lina Shaya: Dover NH, Dover Friends Meeting. Immigration attorney in Manchester NH; Chair, Dover Ad Hoc Committee for Racial Equity and Inclusion.

Lindsay Dearborn: Lebanon NH, Hanover Friends Meeting. Retired educator and public health worker; member HFM Peace and Social Concerns Committee, FCNL, local music organizations.

Margaret Hawthorn: Jaffrey NH, Monadnock Quaker Meeting. Member New England Yearly Meeting Faith & Practice Committee; member NH Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.

Emelyne Adjio: Manchester NH African immigrant, fashion designer, healthcare professional.

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Minutes from AFSC-NH Support Committee in response to proposed structural changes to AFSC Approved June 7, 2021

10
We, the members of the AFSC-NH Support Committee, want to express our concern about the proposed restructuring and respectfully ask that action not be taken without further review.

The NH Program has shown an ability to work on multiple issues, consistent with AFSC’s overall strategic plan. While one of the stated intents of the restructure is to break down issue “silos,” we feel the proposed structure is more likely to build bigger walls and make it harder to address intersecting root causes. We believe strongly that the restructure as presented could inhibit or even block the ability of the NH Program, and others like it, to adapt in response to changing conditions and interconnected issues.

One of AFSC’s main contributions to work in NH is this ability to show the connections between militarism, racism, economic injustice and other forms of violence. This capacity would be weakened by a structure that favors single strategic issue areas. If the restructuring were to go forward, we have multiple questions about what happens to AFSC-NH’s capacity to, for example:

- Work alongside people in our communities who share concerns around common and related issues with similar root causes? (e.g. how can we address the root causes of migration without addressing economic injustice and militarism/violence?)

- Continue to serve locally as a trusted source for peacekeeping and de-escalation training regardless of the issue area of conflict?

- Educate our communities on the multitude of changing proposals coming from the state legislature and work to lift up the best and block the worst?

The program currently has strong connections to NH Quakers and Meetings, and it benefits as well from close ties to the state’s larger faith community. This community-embeddedness gives AFSC-NH strengths we almost certainly could lose if restructuring adversely affects our ability to adapt to on-the-ground needs that don’t fall neatly into designated issue areas.

We believe the new strategic plan provides more than adequate guidance for the months and years ahead and that there is no need to rush any other changes. We urge the board to reject this restructuring proposal and take more time to consider how best to address the organization’s long-term needs in a way that retains the best of what AFSC is now.

Respectfully,

Lindsay Dearborn, Clerk
AFSC-NH Program Support Committee
Cuba Sister Meeting Committee:

Jenny Keller, committee clerk, provided an update from Chris Jorgeson, emissary from NE Yearly Meeting, on her recent trip to Cuba for their Yearly Meeting. She shared stories of enriched relationships, movement of the Spirit, workshops presented and business addressed. She reported that conditions in Cuba are worse than she has ever seen them in her three trips over 15 years, citing the fact that there was not a deficit of cooking oil as the exception that proves the rule. Best wishes to all the mothers in Havana and Hanover Meetings were sent via WhatsApp (Thank you, Len!) with many photographs and “stickers” and loving “emojis” celebrating motherhood in a loving spirit. Chris’s talk was recorded and instructions on how to access it will be sent embedded in the listserv and you can request the link from Jenny Keller. The Meeting thanked Jenny for her report and looks forward to the link to Chris’ talk.

Meeting closed with a period of worship.

We will meet again for Meeting for Worship for Business on 19 June 2022.

Faithfully submitted,
Kathleen Shepherd, serving as Recording Clerk
Rhea McKay, Clerk

May 15 2022 Finance Committee report on FY 2022
(May 1 2021 – April 30 2022)

The Finance Committee looks back at fiscal year 2022 with pride in our work and gratitude for the work of the Meeting’s other committees. The loving commitment and caring of Friends and our Meeting’s larger community – including our tenants and the groups that share our Meeting House – has enabled the Meeting to steer a calm and steady course through the financially uncertain times brought by the pandemic. Finance Committee is grateful for the diverse skills and insight that each of us on the committee brings to our collective work. In particular this year, we thank Ben Guaraldi for his time on the committee before his family claimed him. And we are ever appreciative of the work of the Meeting’s treasurer and assistant treasurer, Scot Drysdale and Richard Neugass.

With gratitude,
Faith Alexandre (Clerk)
David Eastman
Margaret Fanning
Richard Neugass, Assistant Treasurer (ex officio)
Scot Drysdale, Treasurer (ex officio)

Ventilation project
The Meeting House ventilation project is complete, and all bills associated with the project have been received and paid.

The total cost of the project was $138,253. Of this, $134,204 was construction costs, and $4050 was other project-related costs. Those other costs include rent for the use of Tracy Hall for Meeting for Worship, and rent not charged to our office tenants for some of the time they were not able to use the building.

The Meeting approved a number of sources of funds to pay for the project. Here are the sources, the amount approved by the Meeting for each, and the amount actually charged to that source.

```
Source of funds | Amount approved | Actual amount charged |
----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
House Major Expenses Fund | $23,000 | $23,000 |
Ministry of the Meeting House (Bequest Fund) | $34,000 | $34,220 |
Long Term Investment (Bequest Fund) | $52,000 | $59,036 |
Unrestricted Assets | $22,000 | $21,948 |
Total | $131,000 | $138,253 |
```

The total cost of the project was 6% over the original budget amount. Note that the decision to charge the non-construction costs to the project was made after the Meeting approved the funding sources. Without those charges, the project would have exceeded the original budget by just 2%.

FY 2021 budget vs. actuals (See attached: HMM FY2022 Balance, and Budget vs Actuals)

The Meeting’s total operating income was about $3200 under budget (line 29). Not surprisingly, the primary contributor to the shortfall was the lower than budgeted amount from building use donations. Unre-
restricted contributions were ~$57,600, just $600 shy of the budgeted amount.

(Note that operating income does not include bequests, restricted donations, capital gains/losses in the NEYM pooled funds, and money designated for the House Major Expenses Fund (all shown on lines 22-26.).)

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FY2022 year-end balance sheet:

As of April 30, 2022, the Meeting held ~$217,000 in the Bequest Funds, $59,000 in restricted funds designated for specific uses, and $33,300 in undesignated assets.

Of note:
• **Fixed Assets** (1610 to 1640 on the Balance Sheet)
  Note that the amount given on the balance sheet for fixed assets is unchanged from last year, about $812,600. Fixed assets include land, building, furnishings and the library, and no adjustment has been made to reflect the town’s reassessment of the Meeting House and property.
• **Meeting House ventilation project**
The impact of the Meeting House ventilation project costs can be seen in the Long Term Investment and Ministry of the Meeting House bequest fund buckets (lines 3161 and 3162), the House Major Expenses Fund (line 3110), and our undesignated assets. All are down in comparison to this time last year.
• **Bequest Funds** (3161 to 3168 on the Balance Sheet)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>% of budget</th>
<th>Actual FY 20</th>
<th>Actual FY 21</th>
<th>Actual FY 22</th>
<th>Actual FY 22</th>
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<td>Capital Gains/Losses on NEYM Pooled</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>11,101</td>
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<td>8,249</td>
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<td>Add to House Major Expenses</td>
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<td>64,742</td>
<td>77,988</td>
<td>74,369</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td><strong>Net Margin</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>4,127</td>
<td>4,736</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>411</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Hanover Friends Monthly Meeting

#### Balance Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSETS</th>
<th>30-Apr-21</th>
<th>30-Apr-22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Assets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking &amp; Savings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000 · Mascoma Checking</td>
<td>125,589</td>
<td>12,127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1010 · Mascoma Savings Bank</td>
<td>28,827</td>
<td>43,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100 · NEYM Pooled Funds</td>
<td>229,877</td>
<td>232,974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1110 · Schwab Account</td>
<td>1,000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Checking &amp; Savings</strong></td>
<td>385,293</td>
<td>289,936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Current Assets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1200 · Community Loan Fund NH</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1300 · Community Loan Fund VT</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500 · Accounts Receivable</td>
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<td>1,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1550 · Prepaid Expenses</td>
<td>921</td>
<td>503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Other Current Assets</strong></td>
<td>24,921</td>
<td>25,858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Current Assets</strong></td>
<td>410,214</td>
<td>315,793</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fixed Assets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1610 · Land, per town assessment</td>
<td>140,700</td>
<td>140,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1620 · Building, per town assessment</td>
<td>655,900</td>
<td>655,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1630 · Furniture &amp; Fixtures, residual</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1640 · Library Collection, estimated</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Fixed Assets</strong></td>
<td>812,600</td>
<td>812,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
<td>1,222,814</td>
<td>1,128,393</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### LIABILITIES & EQUITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liabilities</th>
<th>30-Apr-21</th>
<th>30-Apr-22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2101 · Accounts Payable &amp; Prepaid Rent</td>
<td>6,445</td>
<td>6,405</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equity</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3100 Designated Net Assets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3110 · Major House Expenses Fund</td>
<td>22,157</td>
<td>14,406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3120 · Released Friend Fund</td>
<td>1,564</td>
<td>1,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3130 · Reserve Fund (120 days operating)</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>28,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3140 · Cuba Fund</td>
<td>8,265</td>
<td>8,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3150 · Friends in Need Fund</td>
<td>4,100</td>
<td>4,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3160 · Bequest Fund</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3161 · Long Term Investment</td>
<td>134,477</td>
<td>81,489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3162 · Ministry of the Meeting House</td>
<td>1,971</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3163 · Educational Opportunities</td>
<td>59,205</td>
<td>57,787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3164 · Witness, Outreach</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>20,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3165 · Spiritual Growth</td>
<td>42,258</td>
<td>42,376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3166 · Hanover Friends in Need</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3167 · World Crisis</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3168 · Special Needs</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Bequest Fund:</strong></td>
<td>283,911</td>
<td>217,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3180 · Sanctuary Fund</td>
<td>2,284</td>
<td>2,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3190 · Equity in Fixed Assets</td>
<td>812,600</td>
<td>812,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total 3100 · Designated Net Assets</strong></td>
<td>1,162,882</td>
<td>1,088,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undesignated Assets</td>
<td>53,487</td>
<td>33,256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Equity</strong></td>
<td>1,216,369</td>
<td>1,121,988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</strong></td>
<td>1,222,814</td>
<td>1,128,393</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The corporate and spiritual life of Hanover Monthly Meeting thrives although we continue to labor under the ongoing burden of the Covid Pandemic that so disrupted our community two years ago. Covid and its Greek alphabet successor waves continue as a major fact of life and a cause for vigilance and social distancing, but over time we seem more able to encompass them resiliently and with less sense of crisis. Like woodland creatures, we have learned to make and use communication burrows under the snow. Albeit with detours and precautions, we are reprising our corporate spiritual life, and the Spirit moves among us.

Our Meeting House, at this writing, remains closed to in-person worship. The Worship Group at Kendal at Hanover similarly meets electronically, abiding by Kendal’s social distancing regulations. It has added a midweek worship session. While we continue to worship “alone-together” by electronic means, we have placed importance on being in personal touch and supporting one another. We more deeply use the “Joys and sorrows’ exchange at the end of MFW. After Meeting for Worship we have held small “breakout groups” for personal conversations that have been if anything more intimate than post-MFW fellowship over food at the Meeting House. We have held daily “Evensong” gatherings on-line in which Friends can supportively “check in” on one another, have time for sharing, and briefly worship together. “Faithfulness groups” have provided another context for deepening interpersonal spiritual contacts in smaller groups. As health considerations have permitted, we have begun to encourage small outdoor in-person worship groups at homes, especially in geographically outlying areas. Hosted by Peace and Social Concerns and by Adult Education, we have had, on line, a series of moving presentations by individuals on their personal callings and spiritual journeys. These have opened us more deeply to one another. One Friend’s spiritual struggle with Friends United Meeting’s policy toward hiring policy provided an opening for all of us to engage with the issue and with each other. This process also inspired us to further explore our meeting’s relationship with LGBTQIA+ people through a series of programming activities. We continue the work of seeking equality and acceptance of all people, regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, national origin or citizenship. AFSC-New Hampshire is a central resource for us, providing regular information bulletins and visits from its staff. Regular Anti-oppression Conversations in HFM challenge us to own how racism’s tentacles, including unrecognized white privilege, choke all people spiritually and materially. We partner with other Meetings and community organizations in providing resources for immigrant and asylum-seeking people. We participated in writing, and minuted approval of the NEYM Apology to the Abenaki peoples for Quaker participation in the destruction of Abenaki lands and culture.

The Winter Center for Indigenous Traditions, a local resource helps us as we seek a right relationship with Native American peoples. We maintain contact with our sister meeting in Havana, Cuba, and have shared their joys and sorrows as they have dealt with the challenges of the pandemic. The AFSC’s No Way to Treat a Child initiative to challenge systematic ill-treatment of Palestinian children living under Israeli occupation was itself challenged in Northwest Quarterly Meeting by the reflection that US treatment of children, particularly immigrant children, equally requires holding ourselves to the highest standard of equality and human rights.

We miss our children, though, and yearn to be together in community with them. They have been gathering, online and occasionally out-of-doors, under the care of the First Day School Committee. They have provided us with colorful missives in the meeting newsletter showing the books, art, and poetry that has been informing their time together. The Religious Education and Care Coordinating Committee sought and hired a Child Care Coordinator, a woman from our Meeting. Her charge will be to build further connections between the nursery and FDS programs. Our Young Friends provided another successful virtual Alternative Gift Mart this year. The group has found it difficult to engage virtually with other offered programming during this pandemic year and are eager to be together when we reopen.

We yearn and are eagerly preparing for the time when we can all resume being together physically in our Meetinghouse. Our House Committee is shepherding building renovations through the weed-patch of Covid-induced delays. New ductwork has been installed to improve air exchange to make the building...
safer, incidentally also making heating more efficient. Internet infrastructure is being upgraded, a boon to us and to the Meetinghouse tenants. The Technology Committee is preparing for the possibility of “blended” meeting for worship by installing inconspicuous microphones and a camera so that Zoom participants can better integrate with those worshiping in the Meeting Room. Ideas and work are under way to upgrade the ambiance of the building as a whole, aiming for a sense of calm and welcoming embrace. Signage, fencing, and footing in the parking lot are also up for improvement. We acknowledge with humility and gratitude that we have the resources to enable us to do these things, and we are thankful for the generous bequests from Friends that enable us to do these things. Apart from physical plant, our Reopening Working Group is reaching into new territory, trying to reconstruct who we were, and to learn experientially in what ways we will need to change and grow. We experimented with “blended” committee meetings, part video conferencing platform Zoom and part in-person, in Tracy Hall, a facility in Norwich VT, that we were able to use during the summer. Some form of blended worship is coming and will likely continue to be with us for some time. It will enable us to continue to embrace members for whom travel is a challenge. While holding us separately, video conferencing also holds us together. On the other hand, we have observed that there is less spoken ministry in virtual Meetings for worship, and we miss each others’ voices. What will the Spirit bring as we move forward?

We don’t know how our path will unfold. We reach, we try, we pray. We await the further leadings of the Spirit and remain under the care of the Spirit.
Nominating Slate June ‘22- May ‘23

**Adult Education Committee** (3-year term, 6 member)
Patricia Higgins ’23, Clerk
Assistant Clerk needed

- Phebe McCosker
- Bob Houghton ’24
- Barbara Nelson ’24
- **Penny Wright ’25**

**Archives** (3-year term, 1 member, with overlap of new nominee during last year)

- **Suzanne Elusorr’23**

**Clerk’s Table** (2-year term)

- Clerk: Rhea McKay ’23
- Assistant Clerk: Barbara K-S ’23
- Recording Clerk: Cathy Miles Grant ’23
- Treasurer: Scot Drysdale ’24
- Assistant Treasurer: Richard Neugass ‘24

(Clerk Support: Anchor Committee and Committee on Clerks)

**Cuba Sister Meeting Liaison** (3-year term, 6 members)

- Jenny Keller ’25, Clerk
- Mary Ann Cadwalladar’23 Assistant Clerk

- Julian Miles-Grant ‘24
- Sheilagh Smith’24
- Mary Linares’24
- **Greg Gundlach ’25**

**Communications/Tech** (3-year term)
Scott Sablan ’25, Clerk

- Fran Brokaw ’25
- Melissa Post ‘23
- Bryant Patten ‘24
- **Tom Monego ‘25**
- **Will King’25**

Resident, ex-officio
- Maggie MacArthur-McKay

**Under the care of Communications/Tech** (Below)
- Newsletter Editor: Tom Monego
- Newsletter pick-up, labels, mailing: **Need for position to be discerned**
- Picture Board: Tom Monego
- Database Admin (includes directory/mailing list): Beata Randall,
• Listserve Administrator: Scott Sablan (Scot Drysdale, back-up)
• Quaker Cloud (Website) Administrator:
  Need for position to be discerned.

**Fellowship (3-year term, 6-8 members)**
Mary Maxfield ’23, Clerk
Betsy Morse’24, Assistant Clerk

**Finance Committee (4 year term, 6 members)**
Faith Alexandre ’26 Clerk
Margaret Fanning ’26, Assistant Clerk

Treasurer, ex-officio
Asst. Treasurer, ex-officio

**First Day School (3-year term, 6 members)**
Clerk is under discernment
Deb Robinson ’23 Assistant clerk

**House (3-year term, 6 members)**
Rob Schultz, ’23 Clerk
Emergency Contact

**Library (3-year term, 5 members)**
Sarah Putnam ‘25, Clerk

Resident Ex officio
Maggie MacArthur-McKay

Demaris Wehr ’24
Kate Mortimer ‘24
Mary Anne Cadwallerder’24
David Watts ’25

David Eastman ‘24
Dulany Bennett ’26
Suzanne Ellusor ’26
Richard Morse ’26
Scot Drysdale ’24
Richard Neugass ‘24

Ruth Hunter’24
Sarah Monego’ 25
Christine Settles ’25
Kathleen Shephard ‘25

Carol Corratto ‘25

Lady Borton ’23
Greg Gundlach ’23

Nancy Corindia ‘23
Patty Piotrowski ‘
Corlan Johnson ’25
Jenny Dupree ‘25
Ministry and Counsel (4-year term, 10 members)
Len Cadwallader ’23, Clerk
Richard Morse ’23, Assistant Clerk

Craig Putnam ’23
Bev Houghton ’24
Tom Corindia ’24
Melissa Post’25
Kirsten Eastman ’25
Hope Rennie ’25
Bess Klassin-Landis’26
Under Discernment
McKay ’23

Meeting Clerk, ex-officio

Nominating (4-year term, 4 members)
Note: appointments to Nominating are made by the Clerk of HFM, the Clerk of M&C, and the outgoing Clerk of Nominating Committee
Huge MacArthur ’24

Nancy Corindia ’24
Penny Wright’25

Pastoral Care (3-year term, 6-8 members)
Lisa Solbert-Sheldon ’23, Clerk
Katie Rawson Assistant ’23, Clerk

Hugh MacArthur, ‘23
Demaris Wehr ’24
Sue Bridge ‘25
Liz Meller’25

Peace and Social Concerns (3-year term, 6-8 member)
Lindsay Dearborn ’25 Clerk
Fran Brokaw ’23, Assistant Clerk

Joanne Unruh ‘23
Elizabeth Greene ‘24
Kathleen Shepherd ‘25
Kesaya Noda ‘25
Under the care of P&SC:

- AFSC NH (2-year term, 2 reps, staggered)  Kesaya Noda ‘23
- FCNL Contact/Liaison (year to year, 1 rep)  Lindsay Dearborn ’23
- GSOP Representatives (2 reps.)
- Community Dinners (2-year term)  Under Discernment by HFM
- Dartmouth Student Connections  Hugh MacArthur ’25
- Dismas House Dinners (2-year term)  Under Discernment by HFM
  Margaret Bragg ’24

Religious Education Care and Coordinating
Members, Clerks: Adult Ed, FDS, Nursery, YF
Barb Kline Schoder, Clerk

Clerk (FDS)
Clerk (YF)
Patricia Higgins (Adult Ed)

Trustees (5-year term, 5-6 members)
Betsy Morse, ’23, (Clerk)

Judith Pettingell ‘24
Dulany Bennett ’25
Mary Ann Cadwallader ‘26
Under Discernment
Scot Drysdale ’24

Treasurer, ex-officio

Young Friends (3 year term, 5-6 members)
Rhea McKay, assistant clerk

Kattie Rawson ‘23
Gina Sonne ‘23
Signe Taylor/Joel Stettenheim ‘24
Pastoral Care Committee
The ministry of Pastoral Care involves attending to the spiritual and physical welfare of each person in our Meeting. Some ways we support members of our Meeting community include organizing support committees around specific needs, visitations for the homebound, meals and rides for those in need, and other forms of support as each situation may require. If you or a family member have a need for spiritual, emotional, or practical support, please speak with the clerk of our meeting, the listening friend, or any member of the Pastoral Care Committee.

Links to Zoom presentations:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cz1nOAXY2WD0OWTnTI98Jfyo2Plvx0Q7?usp=sharing

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS PLEASE NOTE
Please send all newsletter articles to tommonego@gmail.com if that is not convenient then to the Newsletter via U.S. Mail to Tom Monego Newsletter 138 Route 113 East Thetford, VT 05043. If possible please use a word format (.docx) for text documents submitted. Please use PDF file for spreadsheets submitted. If possible photos should be submitted separately from the document and in JPG format.
Please BE CERTAIN to include date, place, and time of events and announcements to go into the Newsletter.

Newsletter Distribution and Meeting Directory
For a change in email please notify Tommonego@gmail.com
If you are on the website https://www.fgcquaker.org/cloud/hanover-friends-meeting you can change your own address, phone, email in the Community - Directory.
If you have not added your name to the website and have changed your phone number, e-mail address, or postal address please let the maintainer of the Meeting Directory Information know the new information as soon as possible. Contact Beata Randall, Hanover Friends Meeting, 43 Lebanon Street, Hanover, NH 03755 or E-mail her at Beata.Randall@Hitchcock.ORG.
In an effort to reduce costs those receiving the newsletter electronically will NOT receive a printed copy. Anyone wishing to change their subscription from e-mail (PDF) to paper or vice-versa should notify Tom Monego at the email above. If you need extra copies of past newsletter, they are available on the the website https://www.fgcquaker.org/cloud/hanover-friends-meeting.

Do you have some photos of Meeting events?
Send them to tommonego@gmail.com for the newsletter next month
Thanks!
May 2022 Newsletter
Spiritual Hospitality in the time of Covid

State of Society Report for Middlebury Friends Meeting 2021

Friends gathered January 23, 2022, to consider the state of our meeting and to dream of the future.

Despite being physically apart for most of the year, Friends have felt supported and nurtured by the Spirit and one another. Love and kindness flowed through and around us. The traditions and structures of the Meeting provided a sense of closeness and cohesion despite the discontinuities and challenges of the pandemic and other world situations. Our way of worship was an anchor for many: Settling-in, healing circle, deep silent listening, vocal ministry, sharing afterthoughts, brief announcements, the birthday song all contributed to a comfortable rhythm on First Days and framed personal worship for some. We were grateful to technology for allowing us to see and hear one another, and grateful to Friends who entered the experiment with hybrid worship with patience and perseverance. We worshipped with Friends near and far and felt a part of the wider Quaker Community, yet worried about those Friends for whom the use of technology was not an option or not a pleasure.

Opportunities beyond First Day worship reinforced the sense of knowing and connecting with one another: Wednesday evening worship, Quaker Coffee House, First Day School, adult education and friendly forums, Meeting for Business, the library, the newsletter, men’s group, the women’s holiday gathering, our in-person out-of-doors celebrations (the summer picnic at Maritime Museum and the holiday bonfire at Rosenbergs’). Work in smaller committees such as Fellowship, Earthcare, Faith and Practice Revision, Worship and Study, Finance, Children’s program, Technology, NEYM Called Committee, both brought us closer and provided a structure for the ongoing vitality of the meeting. Pastoral Care had a huge and deep role. Friends were deeply grateful to them and concerned that they might be overwhelmed at some point by our increasing needs as a community. Despite the moments of darkness, grief and discouragement, the Meeting has sustained us in working for climate change, social justice, and healing. We have learned that a physical location is not essential to being gathered. We can meet the Guide in worship wherever and however we may be.

We are connected to many Spirit Infused groups in the extended Quaker World: North West Quarterly Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, Friends Camp, Farm and Wilderness Camps, Pendle Hill, Woolman Hill, Powell House, Beacon Hill Friends House, Friends Committee on National Legislation, AFSC, Quaker Earthcare Witness. We connect with many non-Quaker groups who are also working toward a more just and inclusive world. We long to deepen our relationship with members of the Abenaki, migrant, and BIPOC communities. We have watched with joy as young people who grew up in the Meeting are now moving gracefully in the wider world. And we continue to hold a concern that so many of our members are aging and younger families are not taking their place.

The overarching feeling of our gathering was the Ocean of Light rolling over the Ocean of Darkness with waves of love and kindness.
2021 was a year of maturation of our Northeast Kingdom Quaker Meeting, but also one of occasional growing pains.

Covid continued to restrict in-person gatherings - so most of our Meetings were held via Zoom. While we missed the close personal/physical contact, Zoom enabled us to include folks from farther away who might otherwise not have been able to attend Meeting for Worship or Meeting for Business. Our Peace and Social Concerns Committee and our Ministry and Care Committee met regularly, each focusing on important issues that they were moved to consider, each taking on challenges that came to their attention, each actively working to discern - and deepen -“the way of the Spirit” in their endeavors.

Rather than our usual summation in our State of Society Report, this year we are submitting the reports of our three primary committees which we feel reflect and encapsulate the growth our Meeting has undergone.

Attached please find:
1) Peace and Social Concerns Committee Report for 2021
2) Ministry and Care Committee Report for 2021
   - including Resolution for 2022
3) Finance Committee Report for 2021
Ministry and Care recognizes the challenges we have faced during the past two years of pandemic confinement, the benefits we have experienced from being able to meet by Zoom, and the encouragement and hopefulness that have resulted from our warm weather meetings in person during these difficult times.

**Care of the Meeting:** This year we were led to change our committee name from Ministry and Counsel to Ministry and Care. We believe it more fully reflects our intentions for each other and for the Meeting. As we have lived into our role as nurturers of the spiritual life of the Meeting, a new approach to our Meeting for Worship has developed this year. Each week a different attender of our meeting volunteers to center the Meeting for Worship. That person opens Meeting for Worship, reads a query, poem, or quotation at some point in the Meeting as led, and at the rise of Meeting facilitates the sharing of afterthoughts, joys, and concerns. In this way, each week we gather around the movement of the Spirit within each member in turn. Friends have found this way of entering into worship inspiring, uplifting, and inwardly strengthening as we each bring our leadings, inspirations, and concerns before the Meeting to be held and transformed as we gather together in the Light and Love of the Spirit.

**Resolution Statement (please see attached document):** Our leading to create a Resolution Statement has led us through some deep reflection of the joys and challenges of the past year as we have created a document that outlines our goals, leadings, and efforts.

**Pastoral Care:** this has been a primary focus of our work this year. It has involved addressing immediate emergencies of housing and food needs in the community, individual emotional and psychological needs, and occasionally communication challenges that we have tried to address sensitively, recognizing that such difficulties require careful listening, nuances of meaning, and efforts to reach mutual, Spirit-led understanding among members of the Meeting. However
difficult these circumstances, we recognize how transformative they have been. They have led us to recognize the need to establish boundaries of what we can and cannot do as a committee and as a Meeting, as well as the need to offer both space and possibility for the slow process toward healing when there are conflicts, a time of both truth-telling and reconciliation in microcosm.

**Wider Community**: We have been involved individually with local school challenges and ‘culture war’ issues in efforts to support equity and hold firm against right-wing attacks on justice for all. As a whole, Friends have been among the most faithful of groups in being present and ‘holding’ as these challenges become local and more wide-spread. We have also become a supporting member of Northeast Kingdom Organizing joining with other faith groups and organizations to address local needs and challenges.

In December of 2020 at the Northwest Quarterly Meeting, we wanted to find a way to feel and speak our grieving during this difficult time of Covid. We initiated and developed a Meeting for Grieving at the Quarterly Meeting. This was a gathering during which poems and songs offered by Meeting members were choreographed into a meditative experience of silence interwoven with words.

**Programs and Health of the Meeting**: We anticipate initiating plans for various workshops for post-Meeting potluck discussions in the near future. We recognize the cost of ‘being together/apart’ during these past two years and have attempted to hold each other in the Light as we have shared check-ins, life challenges, and global realities, attempting to balance those with gratitudes.

We celebrate the movement of the Spirit in our lives as we learn to love more deeply and to reflect that love to all we meet.

Susan Rhodewalt, Clerk
Ministry and Care Committee

**Ministry and Care Resolution (2022)**
As the Ministry and Care committee, we resolve to nurture the movement of the inner Light within ourselves and each other.

We do this through shared worship, through the holding of each other in the Light, and through the continued exploration and development of our own spirituality as individual members of the Ministry and Care committee. We strive to offer opportunities for growth for the whole Meeting through the encouragement of vocal ministry and the discernment of leadings, and offer discussion hours on these and any other topics of interest to the Meeting as a whole.

We understand that the Inner Light is cloaked in many names and expressions, and we resolve to listen deeply to each other and to honor that holy mystery which resides within each of us.

Our Ministry and Care for each other is based on an understanding of our lives as lived reflections of our Faith put into Practice. We practice through spiritual reflection, prayer, and shared worship, through shared laughter and community building, through the sharing of Concerns and Joys, and through the holding of each other in tender accountability as we live into our Spirit-led Leadings.

We acknowledge that although we are whole, we are incomplete, and know that with our human frailties, misunderstandings and conflict can sometimes occur, and that this may feel hurtful and disruptive to our inherent unity in the Light. We have also found that these occurrences are often opportunities for inner growth and expansion. If an unresolved conflict occurs, we ask that the person(s) involved contact a member of Ministry and Care who can arrange a Meeting for Clearness.

In a Meeting for Clearness, the persons involved in conflict would each have an opportunity to speak in a worship-sharing manner while being held by the Meeting. This involves deep listening by all as we wait upon the leadings of the Spirit. No personal advice or recommendations are given as we understand that the Spirit will reveal the right way forward, oftentimes in unexpected ways. In this way, the Meeting lovingly holds accountable the persons who are in conflict, with the responsibility for eventual unity, problem-solving, and healing arising through them with the Meeting acting as a container of love and respect. The members of the clearness committee may be chosen by the persons involved and should include two members of the Ministry and Care Committee. The role of the invited Friends is to listen in the Spirit and to ask questions to help the persons in conflict come to greater clarity and understanding of each other.
Clearness committees may be used in other ways as we strive to be faithful to the Inner Light while listening with love and compassion to each other. Clearness committees can be arranged through Ministry and Care for an individual concern or leading, as well as for leadings into Marriage, Meeting Membership, Transfer of Meeting Membership, and Traveling Ministries. As noted above, the clearness committee does not offer advice but asks questions with the hope of bringing about openings and new revelations for the person who has asked for support and assistance from the Meeting.

The Ministry and Care committee can also facilitate Meeting Threshing Sessions around a particular concern that involves the whole Meeting. A Threshing session generally involves deep, prayerful listening through Worship Sharing.

The Ministry and Care Committee also prepares Memorial Minutes, and forwards the State of Society Report to the Clerk of Meeting who forwards it to Quarterly and Yearly Meeting.

Our Pastoral Care for each other may have many expressions – listening sessions, financial help, shared physical work together, helping each other in practical ways as we age, assisting each other through illness, and finally, supporting each other into a blessed and peaceful transition when it is our time to pass from this beautiful world.

We understand that our Spiritual Ministry cannot be separated from the Pastoral Care we give. We have found that our individual journeys are not separate from the journey of the whole, and we resolve to live into the Leadings of the Light with faithfulness, compassion, and respect for all.
Peace & Social Concerns Committee 2021 Report

Racial justice, community health, and housing needs shaped our Peace & Social Concerns (P&SC) work in 2021. We deepened Northeast Kingdom Quakers’ long standing involvement with Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA), Northeast Kingdom Organizing (NEKO), and the Equity in Education Committee, which currently supports formation of affinity groups (BIPOC, LGBTQ, girls) in the Orleans Central Supervisory Union schools.

Our pursuit of racial justice led Friends to:
- Demonstrate weekly in support of the Black Lives Matter movement;
- Attend school board meetings;
- Encourage equity and inclusion efforts by boards, educators and parents in local schools;
- Meet with mentors from Building Fearless Futures—a local organization striving to mitigate racial stress in our schools and communities;
- Seek ways for supporters and opponents of the schools’ Equity Policy to talk together, an especially challenging endeavor during this second year of the Covid 19 pandemic when the local school boards struggled, for months, to pass the equity policy.

P&SC benefited from a Friend who urged the committee to enter work surrounding reparations more deeply. As a first step in discerning how to engage with retrospective justice—both corporately, as a monthly meeting and as individuals, the committee distributed copies of Dr. Hal Weaver’s *Race, Systemic Violence, and Retrospective Justice: An African American Quaker Scholar-Activist Challenges Conventional Narratives* (2020) to all Friends who attend our growing meeting. We plan a series of all-meeting discussions in 2022.

Five members, serving as an Economic Justice Working Group, shared a vision for a project that might combine affordable housing/transitional housing and a meeting space. In late spring and early summer the P&SC committee facilitated two meeting-wide threshing sessions when Friends: 1) Recognized the deep injustice that exists and the need for systemic change; 2) Learned about the possibility for a non-profit entity to receive funds for the project from Friends and the wider community; 3) Recognized the many different skills and large amount of resources necessary for such a project.

While Northeast Kingdom Quaker Meeting could not unite to embrace the effort, Friends observed that some in the meeting may act as visionaries while others are pragmatists: we appreciate the gifts we have each been given and recognize the power of the group together. In the fall, several Friends formed “Just Action for Communities to Thrive, Incorporated (Just ACT)” as an independent 501c3 to address the need for affordable housing locally. They plan to give priority to the housing needs of those “to whom we owe reparations.” Ways for Friends to build community support will evolve.

Concern about the paucity of mental health services in Orleans County led NEK meeting to join Northeast Kingdom Organizing, “a coalition of individuals, families, faith and community-based organizations that come together to organize and advocate for economic, social, and environmental justice for the people and the places of Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom.”

Lamenting the absence of discernment on *No Way To Treat A Child* during NEYM’s annual sessions, we embraced efforts to spur Northwest Quarter Interim Committee to engage with justice in Palestine. Locally, several Friends: 1) Served as a clearness committee for a Friend in Duxbury to discern how best to support his work for Palestinian justice, and 2) Encouraged Vermont’s Member of Congress to endorse “Defending the Human Rights of Palestinian Children and Families Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act” helping Peter Welch to become a co-sponsor of H.R. 2590.
Northeast Kingdom Quakers established an Emergency Fund a little over a year ago in 2021. We kept the figure small because we live in small communities. We quickly outran our budgeted amount and needed to supplement from the general fund and personal donations in certain instances. In 2022, we more than doubled this budget. Our outreach was to a family for a fire in their home, a community member in need of food and gasoline, and a member of our own Meeting. Our Meeting wants to be compassionate members of our community as a body, and are open to helping those in need that come to our attention.

Our challenges were first running quickly out of our budgeted funds. This was easily taken care of. The second challenge we had was more complicated and involved discerning the difference between “emergency assistance” and “maintaining life choices”. In this challenge, we needed to discern whether the support we were giving enabled illegal activity and could possibly put Meeting in the position of being party to harm if such should occur. We chose to stick closer to the concept of emergency aid, and to discuss with the community member choices on their part and how that would impact our Meeting. Our funds no longer flowed to that individual. This was a growth experience for our small Meeting. Generosity and aid come with moral and legal consequences. We are more discerning in our actions.
“Eternal God, take my life in your hands and lead me through these blind alleys with a heart free from meanness. I will be satisfied to furnish just a little mud for the Great Construction.”

“Lord, deliver us from fanaticism, from the conviction that we alone have a message from Thee.”

“Eternal, grant me the possibility of revising, understanding and weighing everything anew, truly and freely, without violence. Grant me not to be fossilized against your Spirit and your Call. . .”

~ Pierre Ceresole

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2021 found Plainfield Monthly Meeting, and the world, frozen for a second year of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. We continued to worship remotely through a donated Zoom account. We hosted virtual First Day and mid-week worship, workshops and programs, and meetings for worship with a concern for business. As COVID numbers decreased in our area, we cautiously re-opened the meetinghouse, while continuing to offer early morning remote worship for those who couldn’t be with us in person. When we returned to the meetinghouse, we explored options for holding hybrid meetings both in person and through Zoom, so as to expand our reach and participation within and without our four walls. We love our meetinghouse, and yet its location down in a dell along the banks of the Winooski River put us out of range for wireless internet connectivity. Our attempts at hybrid connections were ultimately unsuccessful. A wired option may be available to us, however we’re not convinced that’s the right direction for the meeting. Then, with colder weather and increasing concerns around COVID variants, we found ourselves once again shuttering the meetinghouse at the end of the year, and returned to gathering only virtually.

There were a few other opportunities to come together in person during the year– an outdoor Vernal Equinox sunrise worship, a work day at the meetinghouse, and our annual summer picnic, which included outdoor worship and playful, restful time to be together in loving community. But we yearn to fling our doors open again.

_Loving Guide, we are disbursed. Gather us up._
We miss each other. We miss gathering in person, with a hearty welcome as we come through the door of the meetinghouse, and a warm hug to send us on our way after worship. We miss the informal chats over a cup of tea and a home-baked treat. We miss the gathering of bodies—as well as Spirit—during meeting for worship. We’re frustrated. We yearn to be together in person, yet we’re anxious about close contact in the face of the pandemic.

_Spirit, we feel diminished. Lift us up._

Beginning in 2019 we have been exploring what roles spiritual gifts and servant leadership play in the structure of our meeting. What do we each bring to the communion table to share? Through 2021 we continued to struggle with understanding the perspective each brings to these subjects. We welcomed a new presiding clerk in July, and continue down the path of exploring how to love and support each other through ministry, worship, and pastoral care. Also, we are well aware of our ever shrinking—ever aging—pool of active attenders. Will many of these faces still be here in ten years? Will the meeting? Will we find ways to reach out to other seekers, and welcome them into our home and hearts?

_Lord, we are rudderless. Steer us on your loving path._

The desire for vocal ministry from more people is welling up in our meeting. However we seem to have lost our voice, with many meetings for worship being held in complete silence. While the silence is frequently deep, the lack of vocal ministry sometimes feels like a hole in our gathering. Do we not hear the voice of our Guide? Are we finding it difficult to speak into the silence from our individual living rooms and kitchens? Are we not experiencing the centeredness out of which vocal ministry often rises? Are we missing that feeling of others holding us and supporting our stumbling attempts to faithfully put the mystery into words? How do we create a loving space in which to listen for and speak the risen word?

_Holy One, we are mute. Help us hear and find our voices._

A state of society report generally covers a calendar year, which is an arbitrary period of time in the life of a meeting. Events, activities, and explorations don’t neatly fit between the first of January and the end of December. We lost a beloved older member in January 2022. She was a vital part of our virtual meetings, and it is difficult to look back for this state of society report and not see her passing as a coda on the year. Long-time members, whose family grew up in the meeting, lost a son to COVID in early 2022. These losses don’t fit neatly on the calendar, and it’s hard to imagine tucking them away until next year’s report.

People have come and gone, as they do. Beloved members of this meeting continued in 2021 to serve the wider Quaker world from California. Another member has moved away to carry out their work
caring for those who are on life’s final journey. New friends have joined us, and their presence has been made possible by our virtual gatherings. Many among us have traveled virtually to other worship groups, meetings and Quaker centers, using the technology that has opened these doors to us, and provided us with opportunities to spread our wings and enlarge our experience.

As we continue the experiment of faithfulness in virtual contexts, we have explored new ways to be members one of another. Friends led us through a series of spiritual journeys, which have sprung from New England Yearly Meeting’s continuing efforts to reduce our complicity in systemic white supremacy and social injustice. Growing out of the tradition of a clerks’ table, we hold monthly round tables to talk over our leadings and to thresh business to bring to the body. Holy Experiment—a midweek lightly programmed worship—continues weekly. And we hold a monthly virtual coffee klatch for informal gathering and sharing. We hope that these efforts help build new connections and deepen relationships, and thereby contribute to stronger spiritual community. Our newsletter remains a lifeline, sharing business meeting minutes, links to items of interest, and personal reflections. Through 2021, the calendar on the back of the newsletter was filled with suggested activities to remind us to live in the moment: “Go on a wintry walk.” “Do something artsy.” “Write a letter.” “Rest and reflect.”

Light of Love, thank you for opening the world. Help us to see the warp and weave of Your time and space.

There are among us those who are faithful to leadings of Spirit. We have Friends actively involved in New England Yearly Meeting and Northwest Quarter leadership. Friends are advocating on behalf of those experiencing homelessness, and welcoming refugees to our communities. Two members of our meeting community are working with those coming out of incarceration, and another two reached out to those we haven’t seen or heard from in a while. A number of us are participating virtually in Faithfulness Groups that reach across the Quaker communities in our area.

Dear God, we thank you for the joy and grace you drop into our lives at unanticipated times and in unexpected ways.

It’s impossible to reflect upon the year without seeing both the inspirations and the challenges, the depression and isolation that stem from COVID; the ingenuity that helped bridge the virtual and actual divides of space and technology; the frustrations in seeking common ground on issues of administrative structure; the joy of seeing faces pop up on the Zoom screen; the struggle to love one another, even when we disagree. Can we love one another, in spite of – and because of–our differences? Can we love one another into blessed community?

Let us love one another.

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“Take me delicately by the wing and grant me to find the right way in simple and true obedience, in prayer (contrary to, and against, and beyond all reason).”

~ Pierre Ceresole

Approved by Plainfield Monthly Meeting April 17, 2022.
Members of Putney Friends Meeting recognize the paradoxes inherent in the sharing of our community over this last year. Taking nothing for granted in the time we are able to have together, many members have leaned into a closeness with the Meeting, while being aware of the absence of Friends who must remain physically distant or who have drifted away from our community.

As always, Worship remains at the heart of the Meeting and we have returned to holding two Meetings for Worship on First Day, now with the later Meeting held in a hybrid format using an Owl device and Zoom. There has been a depth in Worship as Friends hold so much, from individual concerns to global ones. We are grateful for the spiritual space to share in the holding, to offer one another encouragement, empathy, and examples in living lives of integrity. We all feel a bit buffeted by the pandemic and world events, and the Meeting has been a refuge.

While we are grateful for the use of technology to connect us with Friends near and far who have joined us in this manner, the loss of hallway chat, to some degree even with those present in the Meetinghouse, keeps us feeling distant from each others’ lives and individual stories. For those who are newer to the Meeting, this distance has also meant that it can be difficult for some to figure out the unique culture of PFM and one’s possible place in it.

While joining in committee work, personal connections between Friends have allowed for more continuity. The Pastoral Care committee has been busy this year, faithfully supporting Friends in times of need with meals, outreach, and presence. The continuing work of other committees, providing both support and nurture within the Meeting and social justice outreach into the geographic community has buoyed the Meeting with hope for the future.

All around us, from the decision to put a fresh coat of paint on the older part of the Meetinghouse to the steady financial commitment to wider Quaker organizations despite our drop-off in rental income, we see signs of working towards a strong shared future at PFM. Seeing new Friends become members, or join us in Worship, and having families with children return to the Meetinghouse has also brought joy and hope.

The Meeting feels the sense of being held and supported by the Quarterly and Yearly Meetings, with some Friends finding nurture in Faithfulness Groups, Parent Chats, Meeting Leader Check-ins, and other enrichment activities offered by these organizations.

While routines have changed, the essence of what we do has remained the same and we move into this next phase stronger together, with a continued commitment to being a welcoming community and holding each other in the Spirit.
South Starksboro Monthly Meeting State of Society for 2021. The meeting that served as a basis for this report occurred on April 9, 2022, at 4:30 pm over Zoom.

Present: Marie Schonholtz, Patty Heather-Lea, Peggy Kadima Mazela, Greg Pahl, Joy Pile

Since there are still significant numbers of people becoming infected with Covid-19, the March Meeting for Business approved using the same Queries New England Yearly Meeting suggested last year, and also conducting the State of Society Meeting over Zoom.

**How has the worship experience in our Meeting been impacted by changes you have made in response to COVID?**

Fewer people are attending worship. Instead of an average Meeting for Worship consisting of around a dozen Friends, it is usually half that number. But for the Friends who attend at the Meetinghouse, it feels like coming home and they are very grateful that we have continued to attend in person. Some Friends started coming regularly because we were meeting in person. For the health and safety of others, we have stopped singing a few hymns before settling into silence. Friends miss the singing, as many found it was an important way to still the mind and a treasured part of Meeting for Worship for many years. We insisted that those attending the Meeting at the Meetinghouse be vaccinated, that we sit six feet apart from those we don’t live with, and that we wear masks. At one point we tried to include more attenders by scheduling two meetings a month over Zoom and two in person. As the number of new Covid-19 cases seem to recede briefly during the summer months we dropped the mask requirement and meeting over Zoom. In the later part of August, the numbers of new cases increased again with the arrival of the Delta variant. We returned to masking for Meeting for Worship, and using Zoom for Ministry and Counsel and Meetings for Business.

**Have Friends been enabled or excluded by these changes, whether by circumstance or preference?**

Friends have felt both enabled and excluded by changes made intended to protect the health of all. Some Friends mentioned that although they didn’t feel comfortable gathering with others in person, setting aside the time they would have been in Meeting to continue the practice of sitting in gathered silence in their own living room was beneficial. Although the Starksboro Meetinghouse doesn’t have electricity, cell service is now available, and one Friend used her cellphone to bring another into the Meetinghouse virtually during Meeting for Worship. Although the lack of a wi-fi connection at the Meetinghouse made it impossible to have a hybrid Meeting for Worship (gathering in person and allowing others to join through Zoom), Friends attended meetings in various locations, both nearby and distant and felt enriched by experiencing traditions used by different meetings. Friends were spiritually nourished by the great variety of gatherings with Friends from all over the world available through technology. Friends mentioned although some windows seemed to be closed for the moment, others had opened.

But there is no question that some people have been excluded by choice. Covid-19 has made life really stressful. Many people have gotten into the habit of never leaving their homes. Friends wondered how would we make coming to Meeting again part of the habit? One Friend mentioned that she would love feeling comfortable enough to go to Meeting and sing off key again.

Friends felt that Meeting for Business and Ministry and Counsel using Zoom were successful, but just gathering with others from South Starksboro in silence for Meeting for Worship at home was not. We
have not held First Day School since March of 2020, and Friends miss interactions with the children. We have missed seeing them. We have also missed the other social interactions such as potlucks.

**What is the quality of ministry among you and how has it been affected?**

These last few years have been a very difficult time. Friends who have not been attending Meeting for Worship at South Starksboro, mentioned that they missed the time of reflection which occurs at the rise of Meeting. Friends felt the loss of being there to open hearts and minds to others. The shared afterthoughts by those who attend Meeting for Worship has continued. But we miss hearing the thoughts of the children and their reflections on what they did as a group. It is different without the kids.

**How is religious education faring, for adults and for younger Friends?**

Adults Friends gathered for a deep discussion of *Care of the Soul* by Thomas Moore. First Day School has been laid down since March 2020.

**Are there things important to the life of the Spirit the Meeting has been led to take up in the past year, or that felt right to lay down?**

Social concerns raised by New England Yearly Meeting, and Northwest Quarterly Meeting prompted South Starksboro to hold discussions and approve minutes on two issues in particular.

The first was about the Right relationship and the Apology to the Native Peoples of Vermont. We approved a minute acknowledging that the land where the Meetinghouse is sited was part of the territory of the Abenaki Peoples and have posted the minute in the vestibule of the Meetinghouse. We also approved a set of Queries. When distributing benevolences this year, we again allocated money for the Abenaki Food Shelf and for the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.

The second issue was cash bail. Thanks to one Friend who provided us with background materials, we were able to send letters to the Vermont legislative committee discussing a bill dealing with the issue and the Addison County State’s Attorney.

**Participation in activities with Friends beyond the local meeting.**

One Friend has been active with a film festival sponsored by the September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows. The Friend reached out to a family who lost their son in the destruction of the Trade Center Towers. The Friend was also moved to write a letter to the editor about the woman who lost her son when the towers fell who connected with the mother of a person who lost her who had joined Al-Qaeda. Each of the mothers had lost their sons. One Friend still regularly stands on the Green in Bristol holding a peace sign. One Friend is using her land to grow food for others, including the local food shelf. Last year that amounted to almost half a ton of vegetables.
Salem Quarter
Beacon Hill Friends Meeting State of Society Reflection
Approved by BHFM Ministry & Counsel, May 2022

This second year of the pandemic has presented both challenges and opportunities for growth. Following a hybrid worship (in person and Zoom) pilot during the summer, starting in September, we welcomed members of our community and visitors to hybrid worship two times a month. Beacon Hill Friends House (our physical home) has been a valued partner, both in helping us figure out hybrid practices, and in purchasing the technology that we are now using for hybrid worship. Although we reverted to virtual-only in January 2022 due to Omicron, our twice monthly hybrid worship resumed in February. Those of us who met in person spoke of how grounding and deepening it was to be together in person. Participation in our virtual worship declined from 40 participants to 20–25 participants weekly. We are eager to be back to worshiping at the Friends House, and we are committed to continuing to worship online with Friends who are unable to attend in person. Several Friends regularly join us from a great distance. For those of us who attend worship online, the experience is meaningful and vocal ministry, when it occurs, is deep. But many others have not found ways to connect with online worship.

Some Friends have found other ways to do spiritual work within the Meeting. Our Right Relations Working Group has been active this year, writing our own letter of apology to native American communities as well as shepherding our approval of the apology from NEYM. This work has felt rich and spirit-led.

Our fellowship committee, and others, have found other ways for us to get together. We’ve had backyard meetings for worship, outdoor fellowship at BHFH, online baking days, and socially-distanced walks. Pastoral care has made phone calls to check in with folks and wondered over the lack of requests for help. During 2020 and 2021, our ad hoc Tech Hosting committee trained many of us to be tech hosts for Zoom, developed instructions, and kept the roster filled each week. They have helped many for whom the hurdles to worship were technological. Now that hybrid worship has been established, this committee was able to lay itself down in late 2021. We are now working on how to sustain a hybrid schedule (with multiple roles that need to be filled weekly) without burning out the pool of people who might fill them. This has led us to consider how to pare down these tasks and to hold them more lightly.

Through this past year we have provided some online First Day School for a group of very young children, augmented with in-person outdoor socializing for children and parents. Online FDS has consisted often of reading a story or listening to music, in the 30 minutes before Meeting for Worship. Friends without young children have participated as well. While this has helped to connect the children and their parents, we have been less successful in connecting with the few teenagers in our community. This coming year, we may be seeing as many as 10 children in child care and First Day School, and are hoping to hold it in-person at BHFH.

We will not be returning to how things were in early 2020. Rather, we are seeking a better way to be in worship and community, blending the best of technology and the in-person contact that many of us seek.
In both informal conversations and in formal sessions which took place on December 11, 2021, February 6, 2022, and April 3, 2022 Ministry and Counsel and the entire Meeting met to discuss, reflect on, and listen to one another about the effect the Covid pandemic has had on our practice and quality of worship.

We have continued to be challenged by having to meet mostly online due to Covid, engaging young people in First Day School on Zoom, and losing adults who drifted away because of a lack of face-to-face contact. These challenges were partially offset by a joyous Christmas celebration with a substantial number of people attending in person and others on Zoom.

Worship has moved to a hybrid mode with a small but growing number of people attending in person and more on Zoom. Worship and vocal ministry remain steady if diminished for some. In-person and Zoom attendance is not significantly smaller than previous adult attendance but lacked the depth of worship that in-person worship allows.

There has been a concern that especially in families with younger children, those families have felt disconnected from the worship community with the children not having the opportunity to learn what it is to be members of that community. First Day School has had regularly scheduled activities for a few young people with some being outdoors and others held in the meeting house. The children have been invited to safely join the adults for the last 15 minutes of worship once a month but none have yet taken advantage of the invitation, so we remain separately gathered in adult and family communities.

The core of the meeting as a community has remained but we have unfortunately lost contact with Friends who choose not to use Zoom or don’t have internet access.
FRESH POND MONTHLY MEETING  
of the RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

ANNUAL STATE OF THE SOCIETY REPORT 2021

It is difficult to put into words the complexity and variety of our experience in the past year as Friends called to live in the world but not be “part of it.” Or, to put it another way, to live in the world while grounded in Quaker values. Friends were asked to share four or five words about their reflection on the state of our lives together, and how the Spirit has been moving in us as we have lived through the vicissitudes of a second year of the pandemic. We have also seen increased signs of climate change, a host of political tensions and our own increased awareness of the ways in which we hope to change. We want to widen our perspectives and to enrich our lives as individuals and as a Meeting by being both more transparent and more inclusive. The Cloud pattern which emerged has been instructive and thought provoking. The Cloud algorithm below shows the number of times words or links to those words have been used, indicating by the size of the letters how often that occurred. Many words were not included, but this narration takes all of them into account.

![Cloud Pattern]

It is not too dramatic to say that we feel we have been slowly starving from the lack of physically sharing space with one another in worship. At the same time, we have been blessed by expressions of caring and togetherness. Reflection on long-term needs and questions have been made more abundantly clear to us in this time of enforced social isolation, even though what the future holds is not at all certain.

Fresh Pond Meeting is seeking to discover who we are as a Meeting, to define gifts and limits, and to be responsive to a multitude of social and political unrest which surrounds us. As hard as it is, we remain expectant and hopeful. We continue to support one another through grief and joy, exhibiting extraordinary caring and support through illness and death.

Maintaining a loving community and connection despite the obstacles incurred by the pandemic has taken up a great deal of our time. Our community has been flexible and creative in meeting these prolonged challenges.
Nevertheless, we find ourselves wistful and anxious. We are searching to discern a way forward; we do not know when or exactly how we will be able to manage all the details of a hybrid Meeting for Worship. We only know that we yearn for it.

We created a Transformation Working Group to help us as a community reflect on how to transform our Meeting to be more inclusive and responsive, coming into right relationship with Native Americans, to be more conscious about our intrinsic and systemic racism and empire building, and hope to be a more obviously open and affirming Meeting for people whose identity and sexual orientation are on the margins. The “Women’s Group” which has been meeting monthly since the inception of our Meeting 33 years ago, in extensive discernment about its purpose, has showed its intention by changing its name to “Sharing from the Gender Margins.”

We have worked hard to have the patience to hold all these issues in our hearts and find compassionate ways to share our concerns with each other.

We have been blessed on many fronts: the place where we hope to meet again for worship, the Cambridge Friends School, has been retrofitted to provide an alternative to re-circulated air as well as ultraviolet C lighting which inhibits any Covid virus; the commitment of many Friends to have care of the Meeting as a whole, so that we have in place groups working on all these issues as well the ordinary work of the Meeting: determining gifts and leadings, managing First Day School, the necessary administration, and the spiritual welfare of our Meeting.

We have also been given the wonderful opportunity to accompany the Three Rivers Worship Group as they seek to discern their way forward to becoming a Meeting. We are excited to join with them as they seek new ways of worship and witness. We have reflected on the origins of Fresh Pond and hope to hold Three Rivers with great care.

Fresh Pond Meeting is blessed with many Friends engaged in ministries beyond our Meeting and some of those beyond the Religious Society of Friends. Our Meeting provides these Friends the support of long-term Care and Accountability committees.

It is also true that we are weary of so much screen time (Zoom fatigue), in part because we are “on line” a good deal of every day in the rest of our lives. We find ourselves anxious with the lack of personal contact particularly in contrast with previous times when we met not only on Sunday but at each other’s homes for committee meetings and other events. We miss having social time, including sharing food. We have begun to discuss ways to recapture some of that through small groups gathering around different issues including just simply having fun, as in birthday parties.

Our children, in particular, have missed out on a great deal of what would normally be expected in the way in-person mentoring and gatherings. It has moved us into experimenting with more intergenerational venues, both during worship and at other times. Our Spiritual Growth Committee has created a new intergenerational Zoom event, “This I Know.” It is a structured opportunity for all-ages activity and discussion. It takes place on the second Sunday of each month, after the close of Meeting for Worship.

We have been concerned at dropping levels of attendance at Zoom worship since the pandemic started. We are actively searching and trying to discern ways to transform ourselves to be a vital, open, loving community which invites all members and attenders to feel the safety and comfort of Divine Leading and Love.

Approved at Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting for Business, April 2, 2022
The FMC minutes provide testimony to his influence in many other capacities as well, recording him as welcoming new members, serving on marriage committees, and working with ad hoc committees on meeting projects, such as the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the building of the Meetinghouse.

Jock worked with Randall Forsberg on the Nuclear Freeze Campaign. He was a leader in the Sustained Boston Coalition for a Strong United Nations, which produced eight conferences of U.N. issues, such as peacekeeping, environmental preservation, and U.N. reform. These took place at the Kennedy Library from 1993 to 1997. He also worked with members of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). A colleague remembers that it was Jock’s sense of peacefulness in himself which provided the grounding for harmonious work together.

Jock’s office in the Cambridge American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) building was the World Federalist headquarters in the Greater Boston region. He was also a founding member of Earthnet, which brought together in dialogue those with conflicting views. Jock was a leading figure in the Sustainable Cambridge Coalition and in Massachusetts Peace Action. He brought these concerns and connections to his work with FMC.

Jock and Ariadne Politou met at FMC, where Ariadne was volunteering in the AFSC Clothing Room. They were married in the meeting and were faithful members.

Ariadne and Jock had five children, Cynthia, Anne, Rebecca, Malcom, and Lydia. Their home was full of music; two of the children, Cynthia and Lyd, have become professional musicians. Many friends and family remember the wonderful way Jock taught a wide range of skills such as sailing, rowing, chess, and playing the guitar. He and Ariadne also served as host family to many Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) foreign students.

After 67 years of marriage, Jock Forbes died July 19, 2021, only one month before Ariadne died in August. A memorial meeting for them both was held in the Spring of 2022 when pandemic restrictions allowed.

State of Society Report for 2021, Friends Meeting at Cambridge

2021 was a year of tentative emergence from the isolation and fear of the pandemic. Zoom allowed us to stay connected in worship, Forum, Afterthoughts, and our many committees and small groups. We had virtual First Day School, a Christmas music fest, game nights, and silent retreats. In July, we opened the Meetinghouse and began the adventure of hybrid worship. Joyfully, Friends from Mexico, France, and distant parts of the United States could join us and have become—or have been able to remain—active parts of our community. Integrating technology has been challenging and requires considerable time and effort. It has also created conflict and required difficult decisions. Some Friends are tired. Some feel disconnected from the community. Some of us long for the familiarity of old patterns, but the world has changed and, with the help and guidance of the Divine, we are creating something new.

Many find their deepest sense of Spirit working with others in small groups—Faithfulness Groups, support groups, committees, interest groups, neighborhood groups, breakout groups on Zoom, and more. Others find satisfaction in worship at Raytheon, being with our children,
and even working through conflicts. Support from the Pastoral Care Team, and to each other informally, has been particularly meaningful during COVID-19 and changes to our patterns. “I felt Spirit when I felt the many hands at work in the community.” “FMC has carried many of us through the pandemic. That might be true whether or not we were participating in online gatherings.” Many new young people have found us during these times, bringing curiosity and energy. We hope to mix the generations so that we may learn from each other.

Yet the conflict and messiness in the world do affect us, as individuals and in our interactions with each other. There is grief. Edginess and crankiness can arise, and Spirit calls us to be mindful, to be patient, and to support each other. Communication can be more difficult on Zoom. Finding love and Spirit in informal intimate conversations where thoughts and experiences are shared has been restricted by COVID-19 accommodations. The closure of facilities left us missing simple lunch, being with the children, and seeing our faces in person without masks. The work to be done is sometimes overwhelming. Some are unable to feel spiritually connected. Some have chosen to stay away. There is a desire to further connect our faith with action, to help the Light shine in the world and heal, and a call to a more visible witness, a common sense of purpose.

We need trust in each other and trust in the Divine. We must remember to look for Spirit in the midst of busyness. Re-weaving the fabric of our community is like darning a sock that is worn and has holes, yet still made of strong material. Love, listening, and discernment can create strong threads to close the gaps. In the end, it will be familiar, though changed, comfortable, resilient and durable.

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**Report from FMC Membership Committee, May 15, 2022**

In our service on the Membership Committee, we have participated in the last year in five clearness committees for prospective (and, ultimately, new) members of FMC. Three of these clearness committees met by Zoom and led to new members in three remote locations: Washington, D.C. (Mary Grace Menner), Durham, North Carolina (George Capaccio), and Cozumel, Mexico (Leo Bray).

These clearness meetings with geographically remote members allowed for the same depth of sharing and spiritual inquiry that we would expect had all participants been in the same room.

The Membership Committee has also received requests to explore membership from other attenders who are geographically remote. Recognizing the commitment implied by individuals who undertake membership, the Membership Committee feels a corresponding need to assure a commitment on the part of FMC to including geographically distant members and attenders, as well as those who face challenges in physical mobility to participation in meeting for worship, Afterthoughts, committee meetings, and other gatherings. The use of such technologies may also allow greater participation on the part of attenders and members who need to stay at home to provide care for children or other family members.

The pandemic forced FMC to make technological adjustments that have allowed for remote and hybrid meetings. These adjustments have created a wealth of opportunities to involve geographically-distant attenders and members in the life of our community.
Thirty-four members and attenders of Wellesley Friends Meeting met in January of 2022 to discuss the state of our Society. Six meetings were held, all via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In each meeting, we opened with worship, after which we read the following quote from George Fox:

“Ye have no time but this present time, therefore prize your time, for your soul's sake.”

We then read the following queries, which guided our reflections:

How does the Spirit prosper among you?

What in your Quaker practice and your experience at Wellesley Friends sustained you during the past year?

We continue to reflect on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our lives both within the Meeting community, and in the wider world. We feel uncertainty and disconnection in our lives because of COVID-19, political divisions in the wider world, the ongoing struggle toward racial equity, and climate change. Our nation is as divided as it has been in the last century, possibly since the Civil War. That is hard for those of us who believe in the ideal of a unified society. This moment challenges us to maintain faith in God / the Spirit, as we navigate many dangers and struggles. This is hard, continuous work. We feel the need to continually seek out the work to which we are called, as a Meeting, and as individual Friends. We seek to walk cheerfully over the Earth, answering to that of God in everyone.

In these challenging times, we are grateful for the sustaining, quiet space of meeting for worship. The silence and stillness of waiting worship has sustained us and remained a constant thread in our community life, even as we have been unable to enjoy other forms of in-person fellowship. In some ways, we are more aware of the movement of the Spirit in remote worship, because of the sparse environment. We are also grateful for the way remote meetings have allowed us to expand our circle, to include those who are physically distant from Wellesley. We are grateful for this new community that need not be anchored to a particular physical space.

In spite of the requirement for physical distancing, throughout the pandemic, we have also worked to maintain some of our cherished traditions, such as Work Day and special holiday meetings and celebrations. We reflected, in particular, on the importance of memorial meetings, and how they inspired and comforted us. Likewise, we have been able to maintain other important aspects of our fellowship and community outside of the meetinghouse, through avenues such as committee work, advocacy and witness, outreach within the Meeting and in the wider world, small spiritual growth groups, and regular meditation and devotional practices. We are grateful that Wellesley was able to develop a hybrid meeting for worship early in the pandemic: some hardy Friends worshiped in person, outdoors, even through the winter, maintaining a physical presence at the meetinghouse. We rejoice in these sources of continuity and togetherness.
As the pandemic has ebbed, we are happy to have been able to partially reopen the meetinghouse, to enable some in-person connections. We rejoice in the memories we have made in the meetinghouse over the years. We look forward to being able to be fully present in the physical space again, to revisit those happy scenes, and to make new ones. In this time of transition, we are grateful to all the people who have worked so hard to maintain the technology to allow remote meeting for worship, and to those who have developed safe plans for reopening the physical space of the meetinghouse.

Nonetheless, this year has also brought challenges for our Meeting: virtual meetings are not the same as in-person ones, and come with their own spiritual and technical hurdles. Sometimes the lack of physical presence makes it harder to settle into Worship and be fully present. It can be harder to season and share messages in obedience to the Sprit in remote meetings, and so we find at times that we yearn to be in physical proximity to our community. We are seeking, therefore, to deepen our spiritual practice and we look forward to the renewed spiritual gifts this work may bring.

We also note ongoing challenges in matters of outreach and pastoral care. We feel the absence of young families in our Meeting. We note we must ensure our outreach to families with children is robust, and that we provide the kind of religious education and childcare resources that allow families with young children to take part in meeting for worship. It has also been difficult, at times, to support one another through the pandemic, as our physical distance makes it harder to be aware of others’ needs. Finally, we reflect on the losses we have experienced this year, as well. Not only through the deaths of loved ones, but because some community members have drifted away during this trying time.

Ultimately, we look forward to coming together again as the pandemic recedes, though we recognize the need to be intentional about raising up our in-person community, as the opportunity becomes available. We are called to build upon the deeper sense of community that we have missed so much, and on the individual strengths we have developed through our own spiritual practices and insights during this pandemic time.
Sandwich Quarter
Allen's Neck Friends Meeting  
739 Horseneck Road, Dartmouth, MA 02748

STATE OF SOCIETY 2021

After more than a year’s absence due to Covid-19, Allen's Neck celebrated a return to the Meeting House in July 2021. A hybrid form of Sunday worship—with in-house participants (and safety protocols in place) and remote Zoom worshippers—has continued ever since. At a called meeting in January 2022, Zoom was affirmed as part of gathered worship for the foreseeable future, and many expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity this new technology affords us.

We remain in transition from a more programmed worship at Allen's Neck to an increasingly silent waiting worship. We have continued to have a F/friend in Care of Meeting on Sundays (with M & C oversight), and worship has often been deep and meaningful. The daily worship that has been held on Zoom since the spring of 2020 was formally recognized by business meeting and continues as a vital part of Meeting.

Our semi-retired pastor and minister among ministers, Peter Crysdale, continued his work as mentor and guide: participating in daily and Sunday worship, Meeting for learning, his long-standing writing group, and his visitations with members. We have lost more than half a dozen people who were dear to our Meeting in the past year (not from Covid, gratefully), and memorials and remembrances have held a significant place in this year’s shared spiritual life, strengthening our sense of community during these challenging times.

* * *

The Worship Sharing on our State of Society, 3/6/22, afforded personal testimony on all of these matters. For example, reflecting on her concerns about the “minister among ministers” model, one Friend described how “rotating being ‘in care of meeting’ has given me a broader perspective and involvement… [and] has changed me fundamentally, seeing that Light of God in anyone.” Another, referring to the daily Zoom meetings she attends regularly, noted that “I’m not at all sure how I would have gotten through these past two years without Allen’s Neck, but it would most certainly have been with less peace, hope, and grace.”

Referring to Quakers as “a gem, but a hidden gem,” a Friend expressed his concern that more thought should be given to getting our message out to more people, especially to a “younger crowd,” to help ensure a healthy future for the Meeting. A later sharing considered how being part of a group dedicated to service was helping overcome feelings of helpless/hopelessness: “We can do small things on our own which can lift us up, but together we can do more.”

One Friend, after feeling she had lost faith in mankind, had “profound” experiences at AN that were “a remedy and a balm for me. I had no idea I needed it so much.” After describing “all the buffeting of the past year” another expressed his “steadfast sense of AN as a community that I could rely on…a safe and wonderful place: a true anchor to windward.” “It’s a place for people to find their inner sea, the place to find grace that the living sea offers us,” added a third. “I am grateful for the time I have sat here and for what I have found here. I have been found.”

And, finally, perhaps most poetic of all, this sharing: “I have an image this morning of being a kite, and the Meeting is on the ground holding the string.” Bless us all!

Approved at Meeting for Business – 3/20/22

Accepted at Sandwich Quarterly Meeting on April 23, 2022
In this second year of the ongoing Covid pandemic Martha Vineyard Friends Meeting continues to find the centrality and depth of our communal worship experience, undimmed by physical separation.

As well, over the last year MVFM has vigorously attending to many social and internal concerns.

We continue our support of the MV peace council raising funds and awarding scholarships to peace essayists from the graduating class at our regional high school. We also invite the public and clergy to join us in peaceful vigil on Hiroshima day and in local demonstrations on the issues of our day.

Friends continue to assist in the governance of the island non profit Harbor Homes of MV whose mission is to leave no island person without shelter. Friends continue to support board of health concerns and the Martha's Vineyard hospital.

Our meeting has reached out to Nantucket friends to explore the possibilities of closer engagement and support. As well, we have done this with Quakers in Myanmar and Russia.

Ministry and council has focused on two main areas of development. The first explores our meetings ongoing interest in expansion of members and the second has focused deeply on service and activism.

In this ongoing era of political upheaval, pandemic and war, we have found ourselves evermore urgently feeling a desire to clarify our concerns and make a meaningful and impactful contribution beyond our island shores in support of peace and justice.
Mattapoisett Friends Meeting and Barnstable Friends Meeting (Preparative)
State of Society Report - 2021 (approved March 27, 2022)

This report is laid out with a central theme and related text surrounding it. It is modeled after the Talmud (Bible commentary), one of many diverse spiritual sources we find useful.

Like with our prayer shawl, we all tried in 2021 to contribute to the whole in our own way. Our imperfections are woven with our love for each other and for the Divine.

Some of us have met in person for the latter half of the year through the Omicron variant, some of us have visited online. We had spiritual challenges as well as growth last year: in how to show support for racial equality; in bringing together all of our faith community, including those with health challenges; in stewarding the buildings under our care to the benefit of the community; in moving toward a more Spirit-centered process.

We are thankful for one another, including for our preparative meeting which adds so much to our growth. We have learned from and appreciate the work of our members in 2021 in social and environmental issues and those who maintain contact with quarantined Friends.

In the current year, we hope to take better care of each other and to reach out more to our community. Though we are wearing masks and keeping distance, our sense of connection and spirituality continue to deepen.

Healing/comfort Shawl/blanket

In 2020 as the virus took hold and hospitals were overwhelmed, Mattapoisett and Barnstable Friends started this project. The squares for the first shawl/blanket were finished in 2021.

With prayerful attention and love, a square in any size, shape or color was knitted or crocheted. Eventually they were stitched together to be loaned to an individual in need of comfort. The idea is that every stitch is part of holding us all together, each is its own prayer for unity above the rancor, chaos and fear. Imperfections are seen as simply creating more holes for the Light to get through.

Especially when the virus reemerged Barnstable Friends evolved to using a hybrid system where people are invited each Sunday to worship on their own then connect together via Zoom.

We continue to feel Spirit lead us to work for racial justice supporting the Tools for Racial Justice website and the creation of the companion site: The Journey of Healing. A concern over a Black Lives Matter sign led to the creation of new study guide (see: https://tools4racialjustice.net) It also led to the adaptation of a "Hate has no Home here" yard sign to "Love has a Home here".

Upon reflection, like the Healing/comfort shawl/blanket, both Mattapoissett and Barnstable Friends Meetings feel we are stitched together with love and prayer. We feel Spirit hο/διε us with all our imperfections in the Light.

Accepted at Sandwich Quarter Business Meeting on 4/23/22

"Pure Light is all colors
Therefore it has no hue
Only when singleness is shattered
Does color appear"

from 365 Tao Daily Meditation by Deng Ming-Dao

For Barnstable Friends Meeting (Preparative) 2021 was a time of movement and evolution. We were able to meet in person at our beloved Burgess House for some of the Spring and early Summer. However due to changes in the town of Barnstable's management of the building, in the middle of the busy summer, Barnstable Friends Meeting was told to vacate the building within two weeks.

After considerable prayer, a member offered space and with Mattapoissett Friends' support and approval, Barnstable Meeting moved into a peaceful place at Doctor Lords Road in Dennis.

Another way this meeting experienced movement and evolution was with one of our founding members moving to Maine to be near her son and another semi-regular attender moving to Maine to aid her mother.
In 2021, New Bedford Meeting met every Sunday (often in person with masks, with a Zoom option) for meeting for worship and held monthly meetings for business via Zoom. Although slightly smaller than before the pandemic, our meetings for worship remain better attended than they were five years ago, and relative newcomers to the meeting have been a source of new strength and vitality for our meeting. Two sources of fellowship and joy during the year were a) the launch of monthly after-meeting work parties on our building that afforded us a much-valued sense of socially distanced togetherness and teamwork and b) the start of a history project, where interested Friends and the collections manager from a nearby museum gather regularly to work on inventorying and organizing archival material and old books that the meeting possesses.

There is a sense of new life and vitality in our meeting, and we are grateful for that. However, growth and change are difficult—and so is operating a Friends meeting during a pandemic. These stresses at times made maintaining communication, community, and comity in our meeting a challenge. We hope that 2022 will usher in a more amicable period for our community.


Accepted by Sandwich Quarterly Meeting on April 23, 2022.
In February of 2022 Sandwich Monthly Meeting Ministry and Counsel met for worship and a discussion to assist with writing the 2021 State of Society Report. Answering queries about the quality of worship and efforts to foster the spiritual health and growth of our monthly meeting were part of this process.

As the pandemics of covid and global warming loomed over, threatened and harmed our earth, its people and all life forms around the world, Sandwich Monthly Meeting continued to meet in worship and business. We have been motivated by our faith in God, however conceived and named, to help others and care for the natural world around us. Our faith informs us that through our kind actions we may bring healing to ourselves as well.

This past year was heavy with the deaths of weighty Friends. The SMM clerk noted that a generation is now mostly gone. This we recognize with great humility and must ask ourselves: Are we modest, humble and resilient enough to step into the path of eldership and knowledgeable membership? Caring for one another, doing whatever we can to stay in community one with another, was a recurring theme throughout the year. The SMM Clerk noted the importance of pastoral care; carefully visiting the elderly and those who are housebound, those who are ill, and reaching out to those in need. “If there is only one thing you do at this time, this is the most important.”

When Meetinghouses were closed in 2021 due to Covid, West Falmouth offered a Sunday Zoom Meeting for Worship which was greatly appreciated and attended by some members of all three Preparative Meetings. This created new bonds and a stronger sense of community among the Monthly Meeting. Many were surprised that a Zoom Meeting for Worship could offer the depth of silent worship and sharing that it did. In its own way Zoom has enabled us to stay connected to the wider community of Friends, and with Friends among our Preparative Meetings, and Friends afar who we otherwise might not be able to see or hear from. An in-person New Year’s Eve gathering for worship in East Sandwich meetinghouse was planned but was cancelled due to new covid concerns. A Zoom meeting for worship was offered but lightly attended.

For the second year in a row SMM for Business has suffered from not being together in person. Conducting business is just not the same in the two-dimensional platform of Zoom, especially in gathering the sense of the meeting. The sense of community seems dissipated and clarity, and even intimacy of communication becomes easily compromised. We miss the subtle expressions and body language that communicates our human-ness. We wonder what the relationship is between “a sense of connection” and actually being together in person? Though we were grateful for the technology to gather together virtually, we still longed for a time when Monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business included worshipping together and sharing hospitality among the three meetinghouses.
In December of 2021, SMM approved a Land Acknowledgment statement that serves to honor, show respect and support of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe:

_Sandwich Monthly Meeting acknowledges that their Meetinghouses and land reside within the ancestral territory of the Wampanoag, “People of the First Light.” We recognize and respect that Indigenous Peoples are traditional stewards of the land and waterways, and that an enduring relationship exists between them and their sacred homeland._

The Clerk of Sandwich Monthly Meeting will deliver the Land Acknowledgment to the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Chief and the Tribal Council.

During 2020 SMM M&C met every other month. In January of 2021, we decided that meeting monthly was a necessity and we found both comfort and joy in each other’s company, especially the times we met in person outdoors or in the E. Sandwich Community House. As M&C worshipped together there were many spoken messages about how nature has been a “saving grace.” Messages about connecting to trees, birds and other animals, the weather, water, and sunshine. Sharing reports from our Preparative Meetings and news of our individual lives felt good. Sharing our joys and sorrows brought us closer as a faith community. We experienced joy and sorrow as part of the same thing. We need to remember and share the lessons learned.

M&C offered a Seeker’s Day topic “What are you Longing For?” to Preparative Meetings, to gather ourselves and our resources of courage, love, compassion for others and for ourselves, and connection.

_Approved by Sandwich Monthly Meeting, April 3, 2022
Accepted by Sandwich Quarterly Meeting on April 23, 2022_
State of Society for West Falmouth Friends Preparative Meeting 2021

Quality of Worship, Vocal Ministry, and the strength of the Meeting Community
We continue our meetings for worship on zoom because of Covid. Virtual worship has allowed the participation of Friends who do not live locally, as well as those with health issues who have been precluded from attending in-person worship in the past. Attendance continues to approximate our in-person worship prior to Covid. Adding to the depth of worship is the sharing of our after messages which has allowed us to understand each other better. We have even come to know and enjoy each other’s pets who join us for our meetings. We are heartened by learning the different ways we can worship and continue to find comfort in seeing each other’s faces.

Prior to Covid, hospitality after meeting offered an important place for socializing and mutual support. Loss of hospitality has been deeply felt and has challenged us to find ways to meet with each other safely. Nevertheless, there have been several ways we fostered spiritual growth in person. We held an outdoor book group discussion of *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson. We have made efforts to cheer Friends having birthdays by gathering outside their homes and singing “Happy Birthday”.

Efforts to foster spiritual growth and evidence of growth
West Falmouth Meeting’s Young Friends have met via zoom for the entire year. Several adults in the Meeting have joined the 45-minute sessions to share thoughts and experiences. Topics have included Quaker history, biblical roots of our religious life, and wisdom found in indigenous communities, as well as timely concerns about violence and the environment.

Significant events or activities in the Meeting’s year together
In 2021, our Peace & Social Order Committee began a monthly zoom talk series, starting with presentations by West Falmouth Friends about their social justice leadings, then expanding to include our social justice partners from beyond the meeting. These talks were publicized beyond our meeting and were recorded and made available over YouTube as well as Zoom. Topics covered included gun violence, right relationship with Native Americans, grave protection and repatriation of Native American artifacts (NAGPRA), the quiet diplomacy of the Quaker U.N. Office, Earthcare Witness, AFSC, UNICEF, and the legacy of racial red-lining.

Our Women’s Group has continued to meet two evenings a month, via zoom when necessary, for worship sharing on a topic such as Quakers and the holidays, things that give us hope, stormy weather, a favorite flower/tree/botanical, and generosity. When the pandemic allows, the Women’s Group also gathers in person at the local assisted living facility where a Friend lives.
Possible tensions in the Meeting and how Friends respond to those challenges
As the pandemic wears on, it has caused concern for some members who feel worship is best when we are physically together. We have struggled with pandemic restrictions regarding the safety of gathering for in-person worship. We continue to look for answers that will serve all members by having listening sessions and individual conversations. The zoom listening session was well attended, with the query “What does Meeting for Worship mean to you?” We had a facilitator and tech host from New England Yearly Meeting to allow everyone to be present to hear each other. We are investigating hybrid worship that offers the advantages of an in-person gathering and the inclusion of Friends via zoom. Our goal continues to be to enhance and strengthen our community.

Approved at West Falmouth Meeting for Business on March 27, 2022.
Fran Lightsom, clerk

Accepted at Sandwich Quarterly Meeting on April 23, 2022.
As we finish our second year with the Covid 19 pandemic many challenges have remained. Our struggle with these challenges has allowed for a time of deep reflection and a revisiting of our practices and commitments.

We have struggled with attendance at Meeting For Worship. While many Friends have found Zoom/hybrid worship fulfilling, there are still some Friends who are not ready to come back in person and yet find that Zoom worship does not provide the experience they need. We especially miss the exuberant participation of young Friends. However, in a joyful twist, the challenge of maintaining an active faith community’s connection during the pandemic’s isolation has helped us become more acutely aware of each other as individuals. Each person has experienced the pandemic differently. Each person has unique needs and challenges. Each person has a unique story to tell. This year we have been called to reach out to each other, to hold each other in the light, to create new ways of connecting. There has been a heartfelt intentionality in creating opportunities for alternate worship experiences that can bring together multigenerational gatherings. We have found deep worship experiences gathering around an Advent fire pit, singing songs and offering prayers and poems. We have found worship in joining together to share safely and conscientiously prepared and served soup and bread. We have felt God’s presence in gathering for Bread Day where deep messages arose during the time of waiting while the bread itself rises. While these communal activities are not new, the deep spirit-filled joy they provided took on new importance as we struggle to maintain connection.

These connections have extended beyond the meeting with our outreach. Our Peace and Social Justice Committee, working with constant reporting back to and input from the Westport Monthly Meeting community, has been a unifying and spirit-filled presence. Our work on systemic racism and our testimony in support of Black Lives Matter led to a hateful response from several individuals from the outside community. This in turn led us to hold a vigil to stand for love in Westport and against hate. We were joined in this by and garnered loving support and solidarity from many area faith communities and social justice groups. Plans are set to continue this community wide discussion and maintain this connection.

Our Ministry and Counsel Committee helped to cosponsor a vigil of healing with Donna Amaral to give people a chance to gather and grieve communally for all the losses experienced through the pandemic. Through reflections, poems and candle light we lifted each other up and created a strong bond of shared grief and shared hope.

With hope and joy we look forward to resuming our Book Fair, an event much loved by the community and an opportunity for us to present our faith vision to any who may be interested. Likewise, we look forward to increasing our physical gatherings and strengthening our bonds with each other.

Approved 05/22/22
Southeast Quarter
Vassalboro Quarter
As we are geographically far apart, our Quarter focused on connecting with each other in our faith and actions. The monthly meetings have expressed the loss of attendance of some Friends due to discomfort with technology or with lack of personal contact but have also shared joy at having Friends from away being able to join for worship, and new friends finding our meetings.

Vassalboro Quarter continued to meet four times, despite the challenges presented by Covid:

- The February VQM program, hosted by Acadia Friends, centered on Earthcare: Action, Empowerment and Engagement.

- On April 24, Friends approved "A Minute on the Inherent Right of Tribal Sovereignty of The Wabanaki" presented in support of legislation before the Maine Legislature. In addition, after great care and prayer, Friends approved a Minute on the treatment of Palestinian children in detention by the Israeli military which was to be considered at Sessions of New England Yearly Meeting.

- In May, the Quarter also hosted the All Maine Gathering, which centered on the concerns of Wabanaki sovereignty, racism and the environment.

- We’d hoped to meet in person for the VQM September 11th Fall Gathering but ended up hosted by Vassalboro Monthly Meeting on Zoom. Friends reflected together on 9/11: 20 years on, suffering during COVID, right relationships with Canadian First Nations affected by Hydro-Quebec, and support for the environment through Maine’s proposed Pine Tree Amendment.

- At our Quarterly Meeting in November, we celebrated the Quarter’s ten-year commitment to support a scholarship at Ramallah Friends School with a retrospective, captured in a video made by Farmington Friends and shared with all Monthly Meetings.

In our ten Monthly Meetings, one a Friends Church, committee work and small group sessions have continued over the year, with focus ranging from racism, Wabanaki rights, the environment, social justice, peace, pastoral care and ministry and counsel. Many meetings have had reading groups to go deeply into areas of concern. Midweek worship sharing groups have added to a sense of community and connection.
Friends serving on committees of Ministry & Counsel/Nurturance & Pastoral Care in the Meetings of Vassalboro Quarter met to report on their work, not only sharing ideas and inspiring each other, but introducing themselves to each other.

A number of VQM Friends have represented their meetings and appreciated participation in the NEYM monthly gathering to support their service and to share resources.

Despite Covid and all its restrictions, we have all adapted in various ways to keep meeting and will continue to find ways to include those who have not been able to meet with us on Zoom. Ideas for the future include having meeting buddies with regular contact and also intervisitation via Zoom; phoning and sending cards to those who aren’t able to join us on Zoom; including the idea of afterthoughts so that Friends can share messages that didn’t come to completion during Meeting for Worship.

Some comments from Friends reflecting on this past year:

“We are very aware that much is lost without the regular “rubbing shoulders together” and sharing food. All of the non-verbal and the sideline verbal connections are very important, and we feel a sense of sadness at that loss.”

“I feel that we are communicating in a more open and heartfelt way.”

“I’m looking forward to meeting in person, not just for the interpersonal contact, but I hope that we recover some of those people who have not been zooming with us.”

“We’ve reaffirmed that we understand ourselves as a community of spiritual companions, and that we offer support to one another…. We’re like a cradle or just a strong place where we come to support and love and encourage one another and then we go out to do what it is that we feel called to do in the world.”

With reference to this Quarterly Meeting session: “I feel like we are a community, a joined community, in what we’re experiencing, the joys and the struggles.”

Submitted by Margaret Marshall, Clerk, Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting
The Belfast Area Friends Meeting (BAFM) State of the Society Report for 2021 is made up of comments by Friends during our February 13, 2022 Meeting for Business; our Worship Sharing on February 27; our Ministry and Counsel (M&C) Meeting on March 4; and our Meeting for Business on April 10.

During the week before our Worship Sharing in February, M&C sent an email to Friends with *Queries for the Meeting Community* from the 2015 edition of the New England Yearly Meeting Interim Faith and Practice.

M&C encouraged Friends to look at our strengths, our hopes, and our accomplishments; and to contemplate the vitality of the Spirit rising among us.

M&C saw this as a means to take stock of our Meeting, to celebrate the times we have come through, and to look to the future as a time to deepen and broaden our community as spiritual Seekers. We tried to make clear that all were welcome to share their insights, whether a regular participant in Meeting activities or an occasional attender. We believe that all voices are needed to make our Meeting as strong a Worship Community as possible.

**Here are comments from Friends:**

I am seeking understanding of the situation in the Ukraine in the context of our Peace Testimony—not an external directive but one of wordless action, a sense unity, and sense of the Universal.

I’m not feeling the immediacy of Divine Presence in our zoom Meetings for Worship. I love the Meetings for many other reasons. I’m hoping we can meet in-person sometime this spring.

For many years, Meeting was a way for me to find some equanimity with the person I thought I was, my situation, and what the world was like. Then, in a 12 Step Recovery Program, I saw that I could transform. I didn’t just have to be okay with the way that I was, but I could also be willing to change, be uncomfortable, do the work, practice every day. Now Meeting helps me to notice where I’m uncomfortable, where I can change, and to be okay with that, not have it be too painful. Things keep coming up that remind me that I still could transform and feel more happy, joyful, and free, and do good service.

It could be that many of us are stressed, tired of winter, tired of Covid, strung out. As human beings we may be impatient, irritated. Maybe the Meeting Community, in a way, is a workshop for that. It gives us a chance in a safe place to work through whatever junk we are going through, maybe be irritated or stressed. With each
other, we hold that. It’s safe and okay. No one is going to reject you. Quiet separate meditation doesn’t provide that chance to be in community, to be together as human beings with our strengths and weaknesses. It’s one reason to have a Quaker Meeting. It’s a safe place to be people together exploring in good faith and faithfulness how to get through what we are all going through in our own ways.

The writer William Maxwell offers this line, “Life on Earth involves accepting the unacceptable.” We’re not accepting all that is unacceptable but we are accepting the presence of the unacceptable. We are inevitably co-existing with the horrible things that weigh on us. I put that together with a line from the movie Out of Africa, “Our poor listening hearts.” Because we are together and we can speak from our hearts about what wears on us, that is the vitality and the Divine Presence and what keeps me coming back.

If Friends were not meeting in worship in this place that feels safe enough, not perfectly safe, I would not be worshipping on Sunday mornings. There’s a certain accountability to the community that keeps me coming back and doing something useful in my life; accountability not in an oppressive or demanding way but more an invitation.

When we started meeting this way we didn’t know how long it would be this way. It was Vick’s Vapor Rub for my soul. It might not have provided healing but it felt good when I was ill and alone, recovering from “long Covid”. This is one of the few places where we talk about faithful action. I am often concerned about how and what can I do. There’s a part of me that sometimes feels: Shouldn’t Meeting be a place where I’m told what to do? Quaker Friends won’t tell me what to do about an ethical dilemma I’m encountering. However, I can come and be reminded about my intentions, what I’m doing, how I’m going to proceed for the next 7 days. Coming to Meeting via zoom, I do sometimes feel a spiritual connection. We manage to forget the space between us. If nothing else I’m with a group of people who have similar values and beliefs and the goal that we are all striving toward... in our own ways. Being able to think of it that way may help me to get over the longing to feel like we are in the same stream. Getting back in person would be very good, but I won’t drive to Belfast. I’m hoping we still have a midweek meeting continuing on zoom.

Our Meeting has a social responsibility related to the Food Cupboard and our place in the Belfast faith community, the Greater Bay Area Ministerium. I have been our representative to the Food Cupboard board and have been asking for someone to replace me for a long time now. We haven’t done that. We get so involved with our own personal therapy and the things that are happening all over the world, that we forget about our own community and that there are people who need food. At this point, we don’t have a representative. We need to decide what to do. It’s not a good place for us to be in the community. This is an issue we need to take into our hearts and look at.
I am the one member of our Care and Concerns Team. I’ve been sending out notes to our BAFM list. I hear about illness or incapacity after that person is well or has been attended to. In terms of outreach, we haven’t been able to respond in a timely way. I don’t know Friends on the list with earlier connections to the Meeting. I’m sending out cards asking if they want to be kept on the list. What does the Meeting think of Care and Concerns and how they would like it to work? M&C will be meeting with C&C to discuss this soon.

I go to Meeting because I must. The silence continually draws me to do this. It isn’t always convenient, but it’s not convenient to not to listen either. That’s why I keep coming. There are times when it feels very united. Others when it feels very scattered. That’s how it goes it seems. That’s how I am even. A lot of people including myself have been under a lot of stress. That makes it a little rougher to do whatever we think we should be doing. We just have to keep the faith that this is vital. It’s pretty simple.

I would rather that we were meeting in person, but there is an accessibility to zoom, a safety in not falling on the ice or being exposed to the virus. It is amazing the degree to which we can feel each other on zoom. Locality is not a limiting factor. Spirit is here. It’s just going on a different channel. Maybe I just have to adjust the dial a bit. I trust that whatever happens will be expansive enough to include people who can’t show up. It can work. I would hope that in these times we stretch our history to be as inclusive and opening as possible because we all need each other. In every tradition, when you meet with this intent to service and listening, something happens.

During Worship Sharing, one Friend offered words from a Methodist hymn and one Friend offered a translation of the Our Father.

... from a Methodist hymn by Robert J. Hughes

Open my eyes, O lord I pray
Open my eyes that I may see
Glimpses of truth thou hast for me;
Place in my hands the wonderful key
That shall un-clasp, and set me free.

Silently now I wait for thee,
Open my eyes, illumine me,
Spirit divine!

Open my eyes that I may hear
Voices of truth thou sendest clear
Open my heart, and let me prepare
Love with thy children thus to share.
Open my mouth, and let me bear
Gladly the warm truth everywhere;
Open my heart, illumine me,
Spirit divine, spirit divine. Amen.

... and from “Prayers of the Cosmos: Reflections on the Original Meaning of Jesus’s Words” -- Commentary and Translation by Neil Douglas-Klotz

Our Birth in Unity
(KJV version: Our Father which art in heaven)

O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos,
you create all that moves
in light.

O Thou! The Breathing Life of all,
Creator of the Shimmering Sound that
touches us.

Respiration of all worlds,
we hear you breathing—in and out—
in silence.

Source of Sound: in the roar and the whisper,
in the breeze and the whirlwind, we
hear your Name.

Radiant One: You shine within us,
outside us—even darkness shines—when
we remember.

Name of names, our small identity
unravels in you, you give it back
as a lesson.

Wordless Action, Silent Potency—
where ears and eyes awaken, there
heaven comes.

O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos!
Cobscook Friends
State of the Meeting
REPORT FOR 2021

Like many others observing coronavirus precautions, we continued to gather online rather than physically together. As a small rural fellowship of Friends dispersed around Cobscook Bay in easternmost Maine, this has sometimes been a convenience, especially in winter weather or for those dealing with infirmities, but we are left lamenting the cold reality that a long time has passed since we've spent time face-to-face and the difficulties that has imposed. When we’re not in the physical presence of each other, heart-to-heart, there have been fewer vocal messages in our worship, for one, and less social interaction, for another. We’re missing our book studies, monthly potlucks when the families come, and the annual picnic. Even so, as we’ve resolutely sat in our own homes in our shared online weekly time together, we’ve appreciated the inspirational reading voiced at the beginning of the hour and found the worship that followed deep and refreshing. We’ve especially cherished the check-in conversation at the close of worship and felt an ease and level of trust among us growing into significant strength. We sense a depth of community with a very strong core, one that those new to us have noted as warm and welcoming.

This leads us to questions about ways in which Quakers invite newcomers. What is our presence online, in the larger community, and so on? We need to think about how we reach out to others, especially the opportunities to invite more in to our circle when we're back together in person.

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Our peace and social justice engagement has focused on walking with the Wabanaki peoples and supporting them with advocacy and collective learning in their struggles locally, statewide, and beyond. Concerns have ranged from water supply quality for our Passamaquoddy neighbors living at Pleasant Point/Sipayik to legal redress in the Maine legislature to the mourning following the discovery of more bodies of children who had vanished at government boarding schools in Canada. Our everyday associations with the Wabanakis have grown naturally through individual relationships, our workplaces, and activism, and we sense changes in awareness evolving in the broader public. In this, we have felt blessed by circles of neighbors – other Friends across the state, groups such as the Episcopal Committee on Indian Relations, and the Wabanakis themselves.

In this, we anticipate more ways of collaborating with others having shared beliefs, concerns, and dreams. While interfaith activities in Washington County have constricted during the
Covid-19 epidemic, we envision opportunity in reviving an ecumenical council in pursuing these callings.

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We can joke about “being five hours from anywhere” or, as one member once quipped, “I don't do any Quaker things west of Whiting,” where our meetinghouse sits, but we have witnessed our relationship with the wider world of Friends being boosted through our use of Zoom. Participation in Vassalboro Quarter activities and those of New England Yearly Meeting were also heightened by the enhanced accessibility. We hope to build on connections made virtually when we finally all come back together in person.

A level of comfort with the technology and platform led us to agree to host a Quarterly Meeting session in the depth of winter. Being online would mean we wouldn't have to be concerned about inclement weather and eliminated the demands of overnight hospitality within our small body. (As things turned out, had a face-to-face session been planned, the February meeting wouldn't have been held, due to poor weather that day.)

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Despite only having met once for "in-person worship" during 2021, Cobscook Friends Meeting has felt the presence of the spirit moving strongly among us. The miles of separation between our homes have been diminished by our commitment to creating a space for us to gather as a faith community to nurture that of God in one another.
In response to losing our winter home due to pandemic issues, ERMM continued the tradition of walking worship. We walked along the Benjamin River in Sedgwick, Maine during the early months of 2021. We walked in clear skies, lightly falling snow, and gusty winds. We rarely missed a week. As the weather warmed, we gathered in a circle in the parking lot or on the dock after our walking worship for a few minutes of fellowship. Even masked and socially distanced, it was evident these were precious points of contact in isolating times.

We resumed meeting inside at our summer home- the Sedgwick Chapel- at our normal time of May. Following Maine CDC guidelines and our inner light, we readied the meeting space for summer visitors by moving the heavy benches into something that resembles a circle. We eagerly welcomed our first summer visitors in June and continued to welcome more and more as the summer progressed. In response to several children visiting for an extended time, we spruced up our “young friends” area and enjoyed their young spirits.

Summer led to Fall and the question of where we would worship come wintertime. Again, in response to a need, we inquired of the chapel and were told that we would be more than welcome to continue to worship in the chapel during the winter months. The water would be drained from the pipes, so the facilities would be limited, but we would have heat. We gladly accepted. And so, we finished the year worshiping inside in the chapel we have come to love.

What we were called to respond to during the past year was far less serious than what many others have been called to do. Keenly aware of the suffering that surrounds us, we gathered for the final meeting for business of the year to disburse our financial gifts. With gratitude in our hearts for being in the position that allowed us this opportunity, we sent most of our contributions to local organizations that provide direct support in keeping people warm, fed and housed.

Individually, Friends from ERMM continue to be involved in activities that nurture their spiritual growth. Some are called to service in the Quarter, others in delivering food to the homeless shelter, participating in social justice initiatives, and some, simply praying. Together, we share the fruits of these labors through meaningful vocal ministry during meeting for worship, or in conversation during our regular fellowship times.

ERMM continues to be blessed with spirit that moves freely among us.
Dear Friends of New England Yearly Meeting,

The year, 2021, was a struggle for our Meeting as we entered the second year of Covid 19. The loss of in-person meetings significantly challenged our sense of community, while, at the same time, our use of internet-based video (Zoom) has kept us in touch and allowed attenders from significant distances to participate meaningfully. Overall, we are a fairly quiet Meeting. The quality of worship and the style of vocal ministry has changed as we continue to get accustomed to the new technology, including difficulties with limited internet availability. Overall, the strength of the Meeting community seems to have been maintained and perhaps improved.

While having difficulty focusing on a Meeting-wide direction for our spiritual growth, we have adopted a Meeting-wide support for individual witness and activism suitable to each member. The evidence of this spiritual growth could be seen as members took on projects including activism around a state legislative effort to adopt a state constitutional Green amendment, organization of environmental education especially as it pertains to water quality and the threats posed by metal mining, and providing a local school with water testing kits to monitor local water quality. The support of the Meeting has been wonderful.

Events and activities, other than those mentioned above, include two of our members attending meetings concerned with tribal/state relationships, tribal sovereignty, and law. We continue to choose books and pamphlets to discuss once a month. This year we read “Being Peace” by Thich Nhat Hanh and parts of “The Green Amendment” by Maya K. Van Rossum. Because of Covid 19 we did not have a lot of social gatherings, but we did sneak in one outdoor potluck picnic in the summer.

Over the past two years, we have lost two very dear Friends, Dave and Ginny Davis. Dave and Ginny were the founders of our Narramissic Friends in the 1970’s and this Meeting has been gathering continuously for almost fifty years, mostly due to their efforts. Through their lifelong guidance and example, they created a safe place for individual and communal spiritual growth. Those that knew them were blessed by their presence. We have also had two very active Friends relocate to continue the next phase of their lives. We miss the energy and spirit seeking influence of Margaret DeRivera and Geoff Bellows.

Our connections beyond our Meeting have also been limited by Covid 19. However, we connected with a local committee called Bucksport Community Concerns and jointly sponsored an elderly person so that the person could get into senior housing. We have also participated in Quarterly Meeting as Meetings in the Quarter have continued to present topics of interest.

Our future is looking bright despite the many challenges of this past year. We have two new attenders who are adding both energy and wisdom to our Meeting. We are hopeful that our interest in expanding
our worship opportunities to include young people may soon come to life. The end of 2021 found us making plans to offer First Day School in 2022. What better way to end a State of Society Report.

We send our greetings to NEYM and thank them for their continued support.

In Love and Peace,

All Members and Attenders of Narramissic Valley Meeting

(Compiled by Luki Hewitt, clerk)
State of the Society of Friends
Orono Monthly Meeting
2021

“True silence is the rest of the mind; and is to the spirit, what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment.” -- William Penn

“There is something of God in every man, let us affirm it more certainly than ever, but surrounded as we are by millions of new-made graves and with the voices of the hungry and the dispossessed in our ears, let us not easily accept the impious hope that the natural goodness of ourselves is sufficient stuff out of which to fashion a better world.” -- Gilbert H. Kilpack, 1914-1999

“Often, as I work, I sense a stirring, an excitement, a focus, that seems more than just a pleasure in the creative process of finding the right words to express something. I feel the quality of message in my body, coming through my typing fingers, rather than out of my mouth, knowing that when those words come to be spoken on Sunday, there will be that stirring of the Spirit once again ... I do my best work when I prepare well ahead of time and give the message time to soak into me. Often I find it is what I really need to hear myself.” -- Maggie Edmondson, 2007, Winthrop, ME Meeting Minister

The last State of the Society Report prepared by Orono Monthly Meeting was in 2018. Because it is now 2022, this report is focused on the year 2021.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the meeting canceled in-person worship in order to prevent the spread of the disease. The last in-person meeting was held on July 19, 2020. Following the availability of vaccines and the reduction in community transmission, in-person meeting for worship was restarted on May 30, 2021.

During Orono Monthly Meeting’s hiatus several members worshipped, virtually via Zoom, with members of the Belfast Monthly Meeting. They were very kindly received by that meeting.

Orono Monthly Meeting currently has 5 core members with occasional visits from students and others. Meeting is held at the Wilson Center, a center for spiritual
exploration and multifaith dialogue near the University of Maine/Orono campus, and attendance ranges from 1-6 attendants. In spite of these small numbers, members wish that Orono Monthly Meeting continue to meet. The location provides an opportunity for students at the University of Maine/Orono to attend. If the meeting were to disband this opportunity to attract students would be lost; however, the meeting needs to improve on methods to let students know who we are and how they might join us in worship. Meeting in the Wilson Center can be a beacon to potential new members and the meeting will reach out to its director, Sonja Birthisel, to see if she can recommend ways to inform students of our presence.

In 2021 Robert DeLaney wrote the meeting asking to become a member. A clearness committee was established chaired by Kay Carter of Belfast Monthly Meeting, and included Fred Irons of Orono Monthly Meeting and Daryle Carter of Belfast Monthly Meeting. The clearness committee recommended Robert for membership and the minute recommending Bob for membership was read and accepted in Orono Monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business on June 27, 2021.

The meeting had a worship sharing meeting followed by a pot luck meal on December 12, 2021.

The year 2021 certainly was a year of treading water and holding on.
Vassalboro Friends Meeting (Vassalboro, Maine)
Response to State of Society Queries 2022

*How has the worship experience in your meeting been impacted by changes you have made in response to COVID? Have Friends been enabled or excluded by these changes, whether by circumstance or preference?

Those able to participate via Zoom have grown a little closer in the Spirit due to the contrast between the intimacy of Meeting (even over Zoom) vs. the pervasive isolation of the early part of the pandemic. The Meeting community provides much needed grounding and connection. But the hybrid style meeting (Zoom, with a few people in person at the meetinghouse) can create a division between those on zoom and those in the Meeting House. Some Friends were also absent during the pandemic because they were Zoom-averse or unable to access the internet. This loss is felt among us. The Meeting has tried to reach out to those not attending but some have still not returned.

The core of our community is well-connected and committed, and we recognize that Zoom does allow those who are unable to be physically present (for whatever reason) to attend worship and connect with others, sometimes from three different time zones simultaneously. Those of us who are technologically challenged are profoundly grateful for those who provide technical leadership week after week, as well as those who tend to the additional tasks of opening and caring for the Meetinghouse that life with a pandemic entail. We are also deeply indebted to our Covid sub-committee, with its wide range of expertise and frequent meetings, for keeping abreast of the changing tides of the pandemic and advising us on ways forward to maintain worship after the manner of Friends as best as we are able to do. Despite the sudden surge of Covid over the summer, we were able to come together safely to celebrate the life of a long time member with her family.

• What is the quality of ministry among you and how has it been affected?

Our ministry is nourishing, thought-provoking and often spiritually enriching. The dearness and importance of one another feels deeply apparent. We hear the words: I love you. How can I help? We are using “worship sharing” via zoom twice per month, which has brought several relationships to a stronger place. We have played games and laughed. The realization that we are reliant upon and care deeply for one another has been clarified during the past two years. Not being dependent upon one sole person for ministry or the need to meet in a hallowed place has deepened the understanding of what it means to be a Friend. At the same time, some still struggle with the constraints on social interaction. We miss one another.

• How is religious education faring, for adults and for younger Friends?

We have not been able to serve our children at all, though we have several Friends in their twenties attending schools and travels. We hear from them and support their efforts as we can. We have also had three or four young adults attending Meeting for Worship on occasion when we were able to safely gather in the Meetinghouse during the summer. Aside from quarterly meeting workshops provided by some of our members, adult religious ed has also been minimal, though we have had some helpful meeting-wide gatherings (NEYM visit to talk about how to
help others while maintaining clear boundaries and without getting overwhelmed). The added complications and concerns of the pandemic seems to have taken up much of the “elective bandwidth” of M&C, leaving scant energy or motivation for new religious ed initiatives. M&C did recently offer a program concerning the revised chapter from Faith and Practice on the functions of that committee, which was well-explained and appreciated by those who attended. Although our immediate attenders do not include children, we have dedicated money, advisors and physical attention to the Friends Camp. We are aware of and committed to the needs of children.

- Are there things important to the life of the Spirit the meeting has been led to take up in the past year, or that felt right to lay down?

Our usual 20 minutes of worship in song prior to meeting for worship has been replaced with one or two music videos (often with lyrics) chosen by the person opening Meeting to fit their reading. Hospitality, coffee hour, and fellowship after meeting have been largely put down. With some more imagination, we might have done otherwise. The study group to learn about racial identity, race, and racism has been very meaningful to those who have participated. The murder of George Floyd in the dark beginnings of the pandemic spotlighted the urgent need for more honest awareness of the horrors of racism; the last two years of annual Sessions (Cherise Bock; the brave decision to hold Sessions 2020 entirely over Zoom; the elevation of the importance of the work of noticing when words and actions have caused injury to others) have encouraged and motivated some individuals to take up their own personal work of raising awareness of oppression in all its forms in earnest. We also have several Friends working (individually and in conjunction with Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy) on issues of decolonization and apology to the Wabanaki peoples of this region.

Our Finance Committee took the opportunity to address a long-standing concern by describing the history and uses of the Meeting’s special funds and accounts. The committee also clarified some general budget line items that were not intuitive, some of which had specific uses. The resulting document will serve as a continuing reference for the use of our financial resources.
We started the year worshiping only via Zoom, moving to hybrid worship in June, aware of both the limitations and the opportunities the technology offers. Often we had as many or more Friends joining us by Zoom than were present in person. We rejoice that Zoom has opened opportunities for participation from Friends living far away for most or all of the year. The Meeting now regularly has a time for afterthoughts after worship which enriches our time together. Throughout the year the Meeting has also been strengthened by mid-week meetings for prayer, a written copy of Sunday’s pastoral message, phone calls and in-person visits when possible, and weekly e-mails which contain community news, prayer requests and details of opportunities for study, political engagement, and other activities. Ministry and Counsel has been tireless in considering and tending to the wellbeing of the Meeting. One of its members started a faithfulness group in which five meeting members participate.

A highlight of our year was a celebration, on August 29, of the 25th anniversary of having Maggie Edmondson as our pastor. As part of the celebration, we were visited by NEYM Secretary Noah Merrill, who gave a message lovingly reiterating ways that Maggie had touched his own life and ministry. Many Friends, both local and distanced (via Zoom), gave heartfelt messages of gratitude for their connections with Maggie over the years as Maggie pastored or counseled them, shared committee and community work, etc. Themes mentioned were her capacity to anchor our community with her inspiring “grounding” messages; her humility and wisdom; her ability to lend great comfort; her gift in bringing scripture to life for us in our every-day lives; and the way she is a model of faith and devotion for us all.

Early in the year, with a concern for the essentially inaccurate picture given by our statistical reports we contacted inactive members and especially ones who have not maintained connection with the Meeting to ask them if their membership was still significant to them and if so, how we might help them re-engage with the Meeting or with a Meeting close to where they now live. We also let them know that if we did not hear from them, that in the interests of having a more accurate picture of the Meeting’s members we would discontinue their membership. We are pleased to say that while there is still room for improvement our statistical report now more accurately reflects who we are.

Two things came together in the summer as a catalyst for us to do spiritual work of clearness regarding our future with the meetinghouse:

- Firstly, during the pandemic, worshiping largely online, we found, to our surprise, that our spiritual connections grew stronger and deeper. We gained a sense of ourself as a Meeting unconnected with our meetinghouse.
- Secondly we discovered that our meetinghouse needs an expensive roof repair. It felt like the right time to ask (as we have at intervals in the past) if we should continue to maintain it or if it’s time to relinquish it and meet elsewhere.
Ministry and Counsel held an overnight retreat in September and then the Meeting met in November and December for a series of two-hour clearness sessions with gifted facilitator, Liana Thompson Knight of Durham Monthly Meeting to explore the following questions and discern how Spirit may be leading us.

- Who are we and who do we feel called to be?
- How do we live faithfully as a spiritual community in this period of the Meeting’s history?
- What would best support our life together in the way of a building or housing of some kind?
- How are we led to use our material and financial resources?
- What about our human resources of time and energy?
- What witness will be made by the decisions we make?

We realized that part of what it meant to live faithfully as a Meeting community at this time was to engage in this clearness process. We were all feeling tired and anxious because of the pandemic but it felt right not just to take the easier path of maintaining the status quo but to really question the Meeting’s needs, trusting that where we were led God would give us energy and even joy in following that guidance.

The clearness sessions gave us a chance to express what it is that we seek in a spiritual home. We heard that it primarily involves connection with Spirit and spiritual companionship - a community where it is safe to question, to be vulnerable, to learn, and find support and guidance for experiencing the Divine. We want to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance, of “coming home”. Being part of a community which engages in activism, political engagement and advocacy is also important to us. We want our spiritual community to be one in which we practice living according to God’s ways. All these things we have found in our community and they bring us great joy. There is a sense of the Meeting as a refuge - a sanctuary of compassion, love, and acceptance. It is a place we come together to make sense of the world; a place where we hold one another up, hold one another accountable, and support one another’s individual paths. In our places of deepest questioning we feel held till we can “come round right”.

Our communal spiritual practice is to gather with this particular group of people at a particular time. What we carry with us into the week from our Sunday worship is not affected by whether or not we met in person or via Zoom. However, there are some “add-ons” when we meet in our building – a sense of those who have come before and worshipped in this building, and for some of us many years of personal memories. It feels good to have some place to “go home” to “find our family”. The drive to the meetinghouse can feel like a preparation for worship. We realized that it wouldn’t have to be the particular building in which we currently meet but it feels important to have a place of some kind.

We realized that we have ambivalent feelings toward the meetinghouse itself. It is a legacy from the past and we honor and respect our predecessors who built this grand building. The building reflects who Friends were in the late 19th Century and how they wanted to honor
God. We’re not sure it reflects who we are in the present day. In many ways it feels like something from another era – a gracious add-on to our communal life. The building is not distinctly Quaker, looking more like a typical New England church so it doesn’t immediately convey a Quaker presence, nor does it demonstrate our ecological values. The fact that we share this space with another church does convey something good to the world. The banners and plaque outside make a witness that shows how people can change – what a church that looks like this can be now in the world. However, the meetinghouse is in a very rural location. It can’t speak to many people because not many drive by it.

Our meetinghouse has a gracious character of stillness, and a welcoming, prayerful quality which envelops us as we step inside. It holds joyful, healing memories. It’s a place we are accustomed to going to be with people we love. It opens the opportunity for us to offer hospitality, something which is a precious thing in this world. When we are able to share it the building feels like a gift. At the same time the building also feels like an extravagance which is not essential to our spiritual community. The size of the meetinghouse is disproportionate to the size of the Meeting community. We are keenly aware of the amount of time and energy it requires from those charged with its care as well as the financial resources it takes to maintain it. We realize that we may not always have an income that will allow us to maintain the building, which already strains our budget. We feel burdened when we consider that these human and material resources could perhaps be used in a better way. In many ways it feels like a childhood family home. Such a home is something special, almost as if it held the collective of our souls. We have a nostalgic attachment to it but the family moves on, other people live there, and perhaps the home is even torn down but its memories continue to enrich our lives. During our clearness sessions we felt the weight of making a decision around ownership of our meetinghouse which has housed the meeting since 1883 and realized that whatever conclusion we reach there will be much time and energy involved in moving forward. There is security in having a home of one’s own but it can feel like a burden if it involves too much effort to maintain it. We realize that moving also takes a good deal of effort, mentally, physically and emotionally. The uncertainties of meeting in rented accommodation would pose its own challenges.

During the sessions we considered our sense of mission. Having a large building enables us to host large groups of people on occasion. That’s not something intrinsic to this particular building but a function of its size. We realized that it isn’t this building which supports our sense of our mission in the world; the people and to some extent the finances of Winthrop Center Friends do that. A few years ago we decided to use our funds to support the ministry of individual members. If we continue to spend money on the building we may not have funds to support our members’ ministry and missions. What we heard from one another is that we are aching to do more in world – not to be busier - but we are deeply moved by the pain and divisions in the world, and by our impact on the Earth. We yearn to do more about that in our lives. The resources currently locked up in our building could be released to become energy used differently in the world.
It is through coming together in worship and fellowship that we are rejuvenated, that we grow and learn, and through which our faith and its expression is enhanced. What feeds us and energizes us is seeking and sensing God together, being able to share faithfully, truthfully and accountably our experiences of God and what that means to us in our lives. We are both activists and contemplatives. While being active in the world is important to us we know that energy is not just expressed in the form of action but also in prayer energy. We would like to feel the energy of the Meeting released from this building and the Meeting utilizing its resources in a way that contributes to making a difference in the world.

We reflected on experiences of being led in the past, personally, and as a community. Friends shared experiences of leadings opening gradually and along a winding path and also ones which have caused a complete and sudden change of heart and direction. At times when “way opens” it feels like it’s happening very quickly, when in fact it’s been years in the making. Sometimes we feel led in quiet and simple ways with gentle moments of grace and sometimes it feels like an “Ahah!” moment. We are aware that feeling we have to be in charge and responsible for everything can get in the way of experiencing God’s guidance. Coming to the end of our ropes, being emptied out, and surrendering to Spirit can open the way to miraculous leadings and happenings.

We also shared ways that we recognize Divine leading. It may begin with a sense of unease – an awareness that change is needed. When clarity comes there can be an upsurge of invigorating energy which can feel impossible to resist. Sometimes the rush of energy, and of what we are being called to do, can feel overwhelming. We may feel flooded with love, or moved to tears by the intimate presence of God. The world may appear brightened and we may have a sense of expanded consciousness. There is often a sense of the pieces of a puzzle coming together. We also found that as a community when we have recognized God’s leading “way opens” often in surprising ways though not necessarily quickly or with ease.

Throughout our sessions we held a strong concern and sense of responsibility for the church which has shared our meetinghouse for the past ten years and we are committed to coming to a final decision together. In the summer we let them know that we would be entering a discernment process and asked them to engage in their own process with a view to then coming together to share how we felt Spirit was leading us. Throughout the Fall we gathered together some of the practical information needed to inform any decision. We met with realtors and did research into what possibilities might be available to us if we decided it was time to relinquish ownership of the meetinghouse. These were not introduced to the Meeting as a whole until the last week of our clearness process in order for us not to be distracted or led into practical discussion rather than spiritual discernment. Right at the end of our clearness sessions we learned that another church in Winthrop with similar values to our own may be able to offer space to both of our congregations and there was palpable relief and a rise of energy with the introduction of that possibility for our future. There was a sense of excitement about moving to something new that feels a part of something bigger; a sense of being energized in a way that would carry us through the practical work making a change would
mean. At the end of the year we could feel how things were moving and we set a time to talk with our partner congregation early in January with a view to coming to a decision.

We feel so grateful for the cleareness process in which almost all the Meeting participated and which drew us even closer to one another. We appreciate how tender the process was and how sacred it felt, weaving in and out of each other and gently moving each other in a direction. We feel the preciousness of the connection to one another, to God, and to the work of trying to live in such a way that we help manifest God’s kingdom here on Earth. We have realized that these far outweigh connection to and fondness for the building. Essentially our spiritual community is housed in our hearts. In some ways the building is a shell and we’re all the soul. We look forward to the next chapter in our life together.