

NOTE: Permanent Board, in considering Earthcare Ministry's request to become a "team" rather than a "committee," declined to approve this change at their June meeting. The subject will come up again in the fall. The following report details their intentions, both of structure, and to their commitment to continue the work.

New England EarthQuakers (formerly EarthCare Ministry Committee)

Purpose: New England EarthQuakers is submitting this Annual Report to New England Yearly Meeting for 2021 — 2022 and informing Permanent Board of our change of name and structure

Report:

At NEYM Sessions 2021, the EarthCare Ministry Committee submitted a minute to NEYM:
2021 Minute of Support for Survival of the Earth and Her Inhabitants

To quote from our minute:

“We reaffirm our commitment to Spirit-led action that supports the survival of life on earth. From that we draw hope. And because scientists tell us we must radically change our emissions in the next ten years if we are to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, we gain the will to take action *now*.

Therefore, we call upon Friends to discern what actions we, individually and together, will take *now*, while there is still time.”

At least two Monthly Meetings, Middlebury and New Haven, took action during the year based on the Urgent Call to Action, our minute that came to 2020 NEYM session. Reports from those two meetings are attached.

The Clerk and Executive Secretary of NEYM met with us and we became aware of the changing structure of NEYM from committees to a variety of other forms of service.

We held a retreat (in-person!) the weekend of April 29 at the Quaker House of West Falmouth Meeting to consider our future, including our structure, name, and what action we wanted to take moving forward.

This was the outcome of our retreat:

The New England EarthQuakers team, formerly NEYM's Earthcare Ministry Committee, intends to continue with our goal to address climate and environmental justice. At our recent retreat, we decided to adopt this new name and a Team structure, and we have now adopted this statement of our mission:

Expressing our gratitude for the beauty of the sacred gift of life and acknowledging our spiritual and physical connection to it, we seek secure protection of the rights to pure water, clean air, a stable and just climate, and a healthy ecosystem for current and future generations, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, gender or income.

We are currently investigating a project to bring this mission to each of the New England states through a Green Amendment to the constitution of each state. We are still gathering information about this project, and we welcome others to join us.

Action: The only action requested at this time is acknowledgement from the Permanent Board of this change from the EarthCare Ministry Committee to the New England EarthQuakers, and change from a Committee structure to a Team structure.

Kimberly Stoner and Gail Melix, co-clerks

Attachments:

Middlebury MM Report to NEYM re call to urgent action

New Haven MM Report to Meeting for Business - Call to Action response

Report to New England Yearly Meeting
From the Middlebury Friends Meeting Urgent Call to Action Ad Hoc Committee

In 2020, the NEYM Earthcare Ministry and Racial, Social, and Economic Justice Committees joined together to put forth the following call to action:

Call to Urgent, Loving Action for the Earth and her Inhabitants: At this critical time, the Earthcare Ministry and the Racial, Social and Economic Justice Committees invite Friends to a year of spiritual and intellectual discernment regarding social injustice, including racism and the plight of Mother Earth. We ask you to answer this Call, to discern actions that can address the challenges of injustice. We further call upon meetings, after suitable discernment, to share with others in our YM the actions they have taken.

In response to this call, a Middlebury Friends Meeting (MFM) ad hoc committee began meeting in May, 2021. After exploring why this concern is important in general, and to each of us personally, we began to seek discernment about the appropriate scope of our actions. We were led to focus locally as we moved forward.

Our first action was to support the Clemmons Family Farm (CFF) in Charlotte, VT, a black owned center that promotes African and African American art and culture, and enables black artists to live and thrive in Vermont. We joined our local Interfaith Climate Action Network (ICAN) and VT Interfaith Power and Light (VTIPL) to purchase a community solar array for the benefit of CFF.

As we considered future actions we were drawn to learning more about the devastating decline of pollinator species. Acknowledging their essential role in the food chain we agreed to pursue action to increase pollination in our area, specifically backyard biodiversity. This would be locally focused and doable within our Friends meeting. During the winter months we built our knowledge base and planned how to entice and encourage Friends to participate. A survey sent to Middlebury Friends revealed interest in learning how to create healthy, natural gardens that attracted pollinators

On February 24, 2022, we hosted an online program, Gardening With Nature, featuring three Middlebury Friends who showed slides and spoke to our guiding query: How can we encourage insects, birds and butterflies into our yards and gardens? Each spoke about what has been learned during years of gardening, specific to creating pollinator friendly spaces and biodiversity. We also gathered and disseminated information that included native plant lists, nurseries, and more. The program was a success, with many in the Meeting responding favorably. As follow up, we are offering educational garden tours and individual consultations during the summer.

We reprised this program for Northwest QM in June 5, 2022, with an added dimension that looks at the expansion of our interests and actions into the larger community. Some on this committee, and others in MFM, have become involved with a newly organized group, Pollinator Pathway of Addison County (PPAC), and have encouraged Middlebury Friends to join their town PPAC groups.

One year after its inception, this ad hoc committee will be folded into the MFM standing Earthcare Committee, where we will continue to hold a concern for social justice and environmental health. The members of the ad hoc committee are grateful to have received

the call for urgent action and for the opportunity to spend this last year learning to understand the importance of the interconnections among all life.

Report to Meeting for Business
Notes from Seekers Session and Funding Recommendations
New Haven Monthly Meeting's response
NEYM Call to Action
June 9, 2021

On June 6, 2021, New Haven monthly meeting held a Seekers Session in response to the Call to Action from New England Yearly Meeting covering climate change, environmental justice and racial, social and economic justice. Fifteen people participated.

After opening worship we shared individual visions about a world where justice and equity could prevail, including:

- How can Friends be motivated by a vision of “having enough” and working for fair distribution, in contrast to the prevailing fear of “not having enough” which causes people to work selfishly from a position of scarcity?
- How can we be good ancestors for future generations?
- Does learning about the origins of the universe and humanity provide one way for people to see how interconnected we all are? Can this be a basis for coming together?
- Can we work from a place of acknowledging and celebrating our oneness?

Friends then spoke about recognizing the need to include the voices of those most affected by systemic and/or institutional racism. Our Meeting is examining patterns of oppression and the ways that Quakers, including ourselves, have fallen short in acting from our principles of equity and justice. We raised questions to guide us:

- Are we committed to learning about and teaching ourselves about the land where our meeting house sits and our relationship as Friends to indigenous people?
- Out of love can we relinquish our own need for control and welcome the voices and organizations that challenge existing social systems? Can we listen and embrace fundamental, transformative ideas?
- Can our Meeting envision a better world from a place of humility? Can we be motivated to use our building and resources out of a Care for All?
- Can our building be a place of refuge? Can it be a neutral site for others to gather for healing? How could we make this happen?
- Can we get out of our silos? We need to get out of our comfort zones and meet a wide range of people in diverse environments.

The sense of the Seekers Session was that these questions will lead the Meeting to action and open ourselves to the wider community. This work, despite its potential starts and stops, is the central work and more important than the distribution of an allocated amount to various organizations working in New Haven at the intersection of environmental and racial justice.

That said, the Seekers Session asked the planning group to identify several criteria for our Meeting's contributions and make recommendations for Meeting for Business to support specific organizations. The deeper hope is that the New Haven Monthly Meeting will risk new efforts stemming from threshing the Call to Action.

Following the Seekers Session the planning group identified a set of criteria for making financial contributions from the \$4,000 previously approved by Meeting for Business. The criteria were:

- Organizations led by those directly impacted by racial, social and/or economic systems
- Organizations where a Friend is personally involved
- Organizations where a small contribution has impact
- Organizations whose financial support is not broad or deep

All of the organizations considered work on the intersection of environmental and racial justice. These four additional criteria may be useful for Friends for future contributions and/or personal involvement going forward.

Recommendation: that contributions in the amount of \$800 each be made to

Solar Youth

CPEN

EMERGE CT

Gather NH

Friends of Kensington Square Park

Planning group: Kim Stoner, Mary Gorham, Maureen Lopes, Jon Gorham, Lesley Higgins-Biddle, Carl Testa, Maria Lamberto