Advance Documents — 2022 New England Yearly Meeting

This Is the Hour
How Does the Spirit Find You?

Bruce Neumann, Presiding Clerk, New England Yearly Meeting
Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting (Cambridge, MA)

Welcome to the 362nd Annual Sessions of New England Yearly Meeting. I wish I could take a peek back at Sessions 100 years ago, 200 years, and 300 years ago. So much would be different, including location, transportation, clothes and, of course, agenda. Yet I hope that we would recognize some fundamental ways of being together and seeking for divine assistance. Of course earlier Friends who got a peek at our Sessions would have a hard time wrapping their minds around “hybrid.” There are many conversations going on about how we can merge the experience of those at home and those on campus. Many of these conversations are about technology, but I will report that the conversations regularly include check-ins about how the technology is in service to the body of Friends and to the work at hand. The tech should not be an end unto itself.

A few days ago, as I write, the Supreme Court threw out Roe v Wade, and there are continuing hearings about January 6. War continues in the Ukraine, the situation in Palestine is unchanged, the Taliban is in power in Afghanistan, and there’s an unprecedented heat wave covering much of the country. There is so much to grieve and to be distressed about. The “Call to Urgent Loving Action” approved at 2020 Annual Sessions reflects the need for Quakers to engage in work in the world, to do what we can to shift the balance. But there is an important undergirding for that work, which I feel strongly this year. We gather to discern how God is leading us, but we also gather to experience the joy of divine presence among us, to be refreshed and restored by that spirit. That experience of the Divine is what anchors our faith, and provides the root for more outward work. For me, and I think many others, gathering in Sessions is one of the places to restore that sense of connection—with the Divine, and with the Divine in each other.

I hope that you all, both remote and on campus, will find that refreshment and restoration of faith and of spirit in preparation for the work ahead. In addition to our theme “This is the hour, how does Spirit find you?” we have made a commitment to our youth this year, both in offering free attendance and in asking a plenary speaker, Emily Provance, who we know can speak to both youth and adults. I believe our Bible Half Hour speaker, Regina Renee Ward, will give us a series of messages which will give us grist for reflection and conversation. Note that as part of our full engagement with hybrid opportunities, Regina Renee will be remote but the worship following Bible Half Hours will be hybrid.

Please, both those at home and on campus, take care of yourself! Pace yourself for what you are able to do, and take a nap if that is called for. And revel in “opportunities,” the Quaker name for seemingly chance encounters which produce friendship, insight, and encouragement.

Introduction to Sessions Business

Two years ago, faced with our first-ever Zoom business meetings, I put aside much of the standard business, having Permanent Board deal with a few things, putting off a couple of others, and just not doing some that we might normally do. While no substitute for being together, the process was useful in bringing to the fore the question “What do we really need to do together?” Last year, with a bit more confidence in our collective abilities to work together on Zoom, and the need to deal with a few things that couldn’t be put off longer, we had a very full agenda with some challenging work.

This year we are again trying something new in having hybrid business meetings. Some of you will be in person at the auditorium at the Fine Arts Center at Castleton, while others will attend by Zoom. While we’re still working on details and logistics, we expect there to be several cameras in the Fine Arts Center, each with a Zoom window. Friends at home will be able to see an overview of the body, but when someone speaks there will be another camera which can zoom in enough that your image will be similar to that of other Zoom windows.

In the Fine Arts Center there will be several screens, showing both the body of Friends gathered by Zoom, and a screen which will spotlight Zoom participants when they speak. I have great confidence in our tech team. I am expecting that I and both reading clerks will be in person at the clerks’ table, and at least one of the recording clerks will be remote. We think this will work!

I will share that I am personally committed to helping those on Zoom to feel like full participants, such that this is a true hybrid meeting, not a business meeting for those in person with others watching on Zoom. But this is new stuff for all of us, so I ask for your prayers and a modicum of forgiveness in the moments I fail to live up to my intention.

Several voices, at least one of them Divine, have been reminding me that, given the weight of life concerns and experience that Friends will be carrying this year, our business sessions should return regularly to worship, which is always intended to be the foundation.
Among the business items that we will tend to are: considering preliminary approval of the Marriage chapter of *Faith and Practice*, some recommendations from Permanent Board about the evolution of how we care for ministry and counsel concerns, and hearing a report from the Right Relationship Resource Group about the distribution of the Letter of Apology. We will follow the report from RRRG with a proposal from Friends Peace Teams to begin engaging in an exploration of NEYM’s involvement with Indian Boarding Schools.

In addition, I intend to use a portion of our time on a threshing session (no decision expected) considering the questions: How do we decide how much of our money to give away? Of that amount, how do we decide how much goes to which organization? These questions were brought to Permanent Board by the Finance Committee, and in some initial wrestling, Permanent Board did not find answers, so I’d like a broader group to contribute to the thinking about this. But multiple people have pointed out that this is a question that monthly meetings wrestle with, and individuals as well.

Remember, Friends, that the meeting for business is at its heart a meeting for worship. While the agenda items give some shape to that worship, we must remember that we come together to listen to the Divine, expecting that together we will have a greater sense of where God is calling us. As I like to say, it’s OK to bring an opinion to business meeting, but it’s not OK to hold it so closely that we do not listen to how the Spirit is moving us. It’s easy, when discerning, to let our thoughts and minds take over, but our challenge is to stay grounded in the eternal. Part of my job in clerking these meetings is to bring us back to a place of worship in moments when we are at risk of losing our sense of a gathered body. Part of your job is to come prepared, both in mind (read the advance docs!) and in heart. Pray that we will be blessed by the light. Pray that if you are given words to speak, you have the courage to do so. Pray that if you speak easily, you will find clarity on whether you are being asked to speak at this moment.

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### 2022 Sessions Business Agenda

**Sunday evening, August 7**
- Faith and Practice—First reading of chapter on Marriage
- Budget—First presentation
- Nominations—Report on the work and proposal of additional names

**Monday morning, August 8**
- Unity Agenda
- Permanent Board
  - Progress report on work towards becoming an anti-racist faith community
  - Request to lay down two committees
  - Requests from Salem Quarter
  - Report on Bodine-Rustin Fund

**Tuesday morning, August 9**
- Report on distribution of the Letter of Apology
- Friends Peace Teams Model Minute on the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative

**Tuesday afternoon, August 9**
- Report from FUM Board representatives
- Review of progress from the 2019 Clerking Structures Report
- Report and recommendations for YM support for spiritual life and ministry

**Wednesday morning, August 10**
- Threshing on donations

**Wednesday afternoon, August 10**
- Faith and Practice—Second look at Marriage Chapter
- Budget—Final approval
- Nominations—Approval of additional names

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### Elders serving to support ministry at Sessions this year

In Friends tradition, an Elder supports, encourages, and challenges the minister and helps them to be faithful. During preparation and during our week together, these individuals are holding and grounding specific Friends in their work and ministry.

**Elders for Regina Renee Ward**: Jen Higgins-Newman and Ryan Higgins-Newman (Beacon Hill) and L.V.M. Shelton (Plainfield)

**Elders for Bruce Neumann**: Callid Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond), Jackie Stillwell (Monadnock), and Jessica Hipp

**Elders for Emma Turcotte**: Angela Hopkins (Northampton) and Gail Melix (East Sandwich)

Elders for Noah Merrill: Julia Forsythe (Putney), Sarah Gant (Beacon Hill), Viv Woodland (Putney), Mary Oeser (Putney)

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### Home Groups

Every year Friends gather at Sessions eager for opportunities for spiritual sharing and connection. Home Groups are groups of 8 to 12 people from across the Yearly Meeting who are interested in having a daily opportunity for grounding, discussion, and deepening their relationships with others. Please contact Fran Brokaw, Home Group Coordinator, with any questions (homegroups@neym.org).
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### 2022 Annual Sessions – This is the Hour, How Does the Spirit Find you?

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<th>Friday 8/5</th>
<th>Saturday 8/6</th>
<th>Sunday 8/7</th>
<th>Monday 8/8</th>
<th>Tuesday 8/9</th>
<th>Wednesday 8/10</th>
<th>Thursday 8/11</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:45–8:45 Breakfast</td>
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### Noon to 3:00

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30–11:30 Registration</td>
<td>9:00–11 Worship (Pavilion) transitioning to Bible Half Hour (Fine Arts)</td>
<td>8:30–9 Bible Half Hour 9:30–11:15 Meeting for Business</td>
<td>8:30–9 Bible Half Hour 9:30–11:15 Meeting for Business</td>
<td>8:30–9 Bible Half Hour 9:30–11:15 Meeting for Business</td>
<td>8:30–9 Bible Half Hour 9:30–11:15 Meeting for Business</td>
<td>8–9:30 Check-out/Key Return 9:45–10:45 Bible HH 10:45–12 Lightly held community time</td>
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### 3:00 to 6:00

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12–3 “Light &amp; Easy” opportunities to visit</td>
<td>12:15–1:15 Registration 12:45 Orientation for First-Time Attenders 1:30–3 Memorial Meeting</td>
<td>12:15–1:15 Registration</td>
<td>1:30 Plenary</td>
<td>1:30–2:45 Home Groups</td>
<td>1:30–2:45 Home Groups</td>
<td>1:30–2:45 Home Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–5 Registration</td>
<td>2:5 Registration</td>
<td>3:30–4:45 Home Groups</td>
<td>3:30–4:45 Home Groups</td>
<td>3:30–4:45 Home Groups</td>
<td>3:30–4:45 Meeting for Business</td>
<td>3:30–4:45 Meeting for Business</td>
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### 6:00 to 10:00

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<th>6:00 to 10:00</th>
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<th>6:00 to 10:00</th>
<th>6:00 to 10:00</th>
<th>6:00 to 10:00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 p.m. Orientation for First-Time Attenders</td>
<td>6 p.m. Orientation for First-Time Attenders</td>
<td>6–6:45 BIPOC drop-in (in person and virtual)</td>
<td>6–6:45 BIPOC drop-in (in person and virtual)</td>
<td>6–6:45 BIPOC drop-in (in person and virtual)</td>
<td>6–6:45 BIPOC drop-in (in person and virtual)</td>
<td>6–6:45 BIPOC drop-in (in person and virtual)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7:30–9:30 Welcome for BIPOC Friends (virtual)

- 6:45–8 Opening Celebration
- 7:30–9 Registration
- 7:30–9 Welcome for BIPOC Friends (virtual)
- 8:30–10 Registration

### 8–10 Registration

- 6:45–8 Opening Celebration
- 7–8:45 Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business
- 7–9 Registration
- 8:30–10 Registration

### Registration

- **Fine Arts Center**
- **Childcare**: Castleton 102/104
- **JYM**: Glenbrook Gym
- **JHYM**: Hoff Hall
- **Young Friends**: Campus Center

### Family Bookstore

- **Campus Center**

### General Bookstore

- **Jeffords**

### General and Family Bookstore

- **Hours will be posted in the Yearly Meeting News**

### Memorial Meeting, Plenary, Bible Half Hour, Business Meeting

- **Fine Arts Ctr**

### Locations of other events

- **Will be posted in the Yearly Meeting News**
Welcome to New England Yearly Meeting 2022
Castleton University, VT

Register in the Fine Arts Center
- Registration
- Info Desk

Upon arrival look for signs directing you to parking

Hasty Finder:
- Anchor Groups: Stafford/Leavenworth
- Bible Half Hours: Fine Arts Ctr
- Business: Fine Arts Ctr
- Childcare: Castleton Hall 102/104
- Children’s Bookstore: Campus Ctr
- Coffee House: Fine Arts Ctr (Wed)
- Contradance: Pavilion
- Family Neighborhood: South/Audet
- Gen'l Bookstore: Jeffords Ctr
- Info Desk: Fine Arts Ctr
- JHYM: Hoff Hall
- Meals: Huden Dining Hall
- Plenary: Fine Arts Ctr
- Registration: Fine Arts Ctr
- Young Friends: Campus Ctr

Free parking permits allow YM attenders to park in any lot.

To Castleton, VT

Campus Map
## 2022 Sessions Coordinators, Officers, Speakers and YM Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts Manager</td>
<td>Frederick Martin*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Half Hour Speaker</td>
<td>Regina Renee Ward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIPOC Opportunities Coordinator</td>
<td>Emma Turcotte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children &amp; Family Ministries Coordinator</td>
<td>Gretchen Baker-Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>Bruce Neumann (presiding), Peter Bishop (recording), Adam Kohrman and Michelle Wright (reading)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID Safety Coordinator</td>
<td>Ginny Kristl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events Coordinator</td>
<td>Elizabeth Hacala*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Group Coordinator</td>
<td>Fran Brokaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Manager</td>
<td>Sara Hubner*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Assistant</td>
<td>Ginna Schonwald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Experience Coordinator</td>
<td>Kathleen Wooten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral Care Team Leader</td>
<td>Abigail Matchette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral Counselor</td>
<td>Kevin Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plenary Speaker</td>
<td>Emily Provance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sessions Committee Clerk</td>
<td>Phillip Veatch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech Team Coordinator</td>
<td>David Coletta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly Meeting Treasurer</td>
<td>Robert Murray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship Coordinator</td>
<td>Kristina Keefe-Perry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly Meeting Secretary</td>
<td>Noah Merrill*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>= YM Staff</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2022 Youth Program Coordinators and Staff

### Child Care

**Coord:** Rainer Humphries  
Jerry Carson  
Peter Colby  
Colleen Crowley  
Chloe Grubbs-Saleem  
Christel Jorgensen  
Shoshanah Kay  
Paula Rossvall  
Karen Sánchez-Eppler  
 Honor Woodrow

### Junior Yearly Meeting

**Coord:** MacKenzie Burpee  
**Mentor:** Betty Ann Lee  
Carol Baker  
Rebecca Edwards  
Tyler Green  
Leah Kelley  
Ezra Merleaux  
Nate Perkins  
Joli Reynolds

### Junior High Yearly Meeting

**Coord:** Gretchen Baker-Smith*  
Anne Anderson  
Buddy Baker-Smith  
Steve Ball  
Dave Baxter  
Merritt Bussiere-Nichols  
Lilly Campbell  
Emily Edwards  
Addison Green

### Young Friends

**Coord:** Maggie Nelson*  
Tom Antonik  
Mel Fiori  
Chris Fitze  
Alex Kuehne  
Evan McManamy  
Laura Sawyer  
Zosia Szatkowski

### Young Adult Friends

**Co-Coord:** Emi Link, Drew Chasse

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* = YM Staff
Guide to Business at Yearly Meeting Sessions

NEYM Sessions are larger than our other experiences of discernment, and this year we will be hybrid, so a few reminders may help us proceed gracefully.

We encourage Friends who are joining us online to become familiar with Zoom before Sessions; you can find an instruction video on the Yearly Meeting website at https://neym.org/zoom-how-tos.

The physical room and the Zoom “room” will open for worship about 15 minutes early. Friends are asked to enter silently, confirm that you are muted if you are on Zoom, and to sit in worship with the Friends gathered.

Worship with a concern for business:
• The Spirit may speak through a less familiar voice if our oft-heard Friends refrain from the urge to speak too quickly.
• The order of business items is subject to change, depending on the Holy Spirit and Friends’ self-discipline.
• We seek not compromise nor a grumbling “well, OK,” but clarity on what God calls us to do here and now, knowing that we may be led later to some further action, understanding, and love.
• Please look for text being presented. If it was ready by press time, look in these Advance Documents. Otherwise, it will be displayed on screen.
• The doors to the physical room will be closed to late-comers for 5 to 10 minutes while Friends settle into worship. Please wait quietly outside the plenary room. Please silence your cellphone. If you are on Zoom, please silence your cellphone, landline, and any other potential disruptions.
• For those joining in person worship with a concern for business:
  o Enter quietly!
  o Sit toward the front and center of the hall.
  o Leave room on the ends of the rows for late arrivals.
  o Reserve the wheelchair-accessible space for those who need it.

During worship with a concern for business:
• Stand (or raise your hand high) to be recognized. Use “Raise Hand” in Zoom (on the Reactions menu) to be recognized (on the phone, press *9).
• Remember that the clerk does not always call on people in the order in which their hands appeared.
• When the clerk has called on you, wait for the wireless microphone to come to you. For those on Zoom, unmute yourself (on the phone, *6).
• Say your name and meeting.
• Speak slowly and briefly, limiting your remarks to the question at hand.
• For those in person, please be seated while someone else is speaking. For those on Zoom, consider lowering your hand—the person speaking may address your concern.
• Ordinarily a person should speak only once to an item of business, unless to answer a direct question or to signal a significant change of heart.
• If you are a Friend who does not speak easily, be bold if called. Your leadings may be the way the Spirit has chosen to speak to us.
• Please do not try to argue the clerks (or anyone else) into your position.
• While the clerks are trying to formulate a minute, help by holding them in prayer. Remember that the minute will rarely be worded precisely as you would have said it.
Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness
What Canst Thou Say?

With this year’s experiment of hybrid Sessions, the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness working group is expanding the holy experiment that the body of the Yearly Meeting called us to: to observe, name, and reflect back to the body long-standing patterns and practices, unseen by many but long seen by others, that result in our complicity in oppression. Equally, we are called to lift up faithful patterns and practices that move us closer to being a faithful community. This naming allows us to be more conscious of how our words and actions co-create the community we share.

This year there will be openings during business meetings where Friends will be invited to share what they are noticing, using the prompts: I feel, I hear, I see, I wonder, I know. In our hybrid space, sharing our “noticings” can bring us together and hold how we are experiencing our community.

Prior years, the working group was asked to do most of the noticing. This led to a misperception that we are “experts” in this process. Rather, we are all learning together, imperfectly, how to do this loving work of naming oppression and faithfulness. This year, we ask all Friends to practice, with Spirit’s assistance, naming patterns as they are noticed.

We will not host a comments box or email for receiving noticings this year. More details will follow about ways we can support each other in this practice.

Pause, take a deep breath and sink into your own spirit for a moment.

What arose for you as you read this?

In faith, the Noticing Patterns Working Group

—POLLY ATTWOOD (CLERK), MELODY BRAZO, MELISSA FOSTER, LISA GRAUSTEIN, JANET HOUGH, BECKY JONES, ANNA LINDO, RICHARD LINDO, HEIDI NORTONSMITH, L.V.M. SHELTON, PAMELA TERRIEN
Unity Agenda

The items on the Unity Agenda are proposed for consideration on Monday morning. Before then, Friends are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Unity Agenda, to read the information pertaining to each item, and to consult with the Friends named for each matter, if need be. General questions can be brought to the presiding clerk, Bruce Neumann. If there are significant concerns that remain, items can be removed from the Unity Agenda for further corporate discernment earlier in the week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decisions and Actions Concerning...</th>
<th>See</th>
<th>Friends Available for Consultation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approving bank resolutions</td>
<td>page 10</td>
<td>Scot Drysdale, Finance clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting board, committee, and representative reports</td>
<td>page 36</td>
<td>Report authors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting Memorial Minutes</td>
<td>booklet</td>
<td>Leslie Manning, Permanent Board clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approving clerks’ authorization to make edits and corrections</td>
<td>page 10</td>
<td>Bruce Neumann, presiding clerk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approving Sessions Planning Purpose, Procedure &amp; Composition</td>
<td>page 10</td>
<td>Bruce Neumann</td>
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2022 Sessions Business Materials for Gathered Discernment

Faith and Practice Revision Committee

We will consider a chapter on Marriage for preliminary approval. A recording of the chapter read by Eden Grace, as well as downloads of that chapter and draft texts, are available online at neym.org/fp-revision/documents-discussion.

Treasurer’s Report

I am pleased to report that the financial condition of the Yearly Meeting remains strong, despite challenges brought on by the covid-19 pandemic.

We received a loan in February 2021 from the second round of the Payroll Protection Program, which was then forgiven in November 2021. That loan replaced reduced revenue in two areas. First, the Operating Division did not have income from Sessions 2021 to support salaries of staff who worked (very diligently) on the virtual Sessions we did have, and second, while Friends Camp did operate in 2021, it did so with a reduced number of campers.

It is the Finance Committee’s policy to have operating reserves at a level of one quarter of the annual expense budget. (At the end of fiscal year 2021, our operating reserves were just above this level.) When reserves held are consistent with this cautious policy, we are able to use unallocated funds to further invest in the Yearly Meeting’s priorities. Over the past year, the Permanent Board approved underwriting, if necessary, the cost of children coming to the 2022 Yearly Meeting Sessions, supporting the forthcoming offering of the Nurturing Faithfulness Program, and funding changes to the Yearly Meeting’s online registration system.

The final statements for fiscal year 2021 are on the Yearly Meeting website (https://neym.org/who/how-were-doing/financial-statements). I invite you to examine the 2021 statements and direct any questions you have to me (treasurer@neym.org). I also invite you to join us at Permanent Board meetings, where I discuss financial statements, any issues that require discernment, and current projects of note.

We are moving to a quarterly closing process for our books, and hope to start posting the quarterly statements on the Yearly Meeting website in fiscal year 2023.

One of the projects I worked on in the last year was a collaborative effort with Leslie Manning (clerk of Permanent Board), Beth Morrill (clerk of the Racial, Social, and Economic Justice Committee), and Joyce Gibson (Durham) to look at the distribution practice for the Freedmen’s Fund. A new procedure was proposed to Permanent Board and approved in April 2022. This new procedure directs the Treasurer to distribute the available income in the Freedmen’s Fund (a pooled fund of the Yearly Meeting) to four Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the south that have schools of education.

In November 2021 I presented a series of grant-making guidelines to Permanent Board. These were developed with the assistance of the clerks of the Racial, Social, and Economic Justice and Legacy Gift committees. The guidelines caution committees to avoid placing too much of the decision-making on a committee clerk or other individual and avoid an uninformed committee providing nominal approval at the end of the process. These grant-making guidelines were approved at the December Permanent Board meeting.

This year the income from the Anna Brown Fund (currently managed by the Treasurer) was used to support programs at the New England Farm Workers’ Council, an agency that focuses on helping seasonal farmworkers attain long-term employment.

The Treasurer is charged with overseeing the general ledger accounts and classes (activities) in the Yearly Meeting’s accounting software. In the last year, an effort by Yearly Meeting Secretary Noah Merrill and the Accounts Manager Frederick Martin (that I approved) resulted in a new classification system to better understand how staff time is used to support the services and programs of the Yearly Meeting. In a related effort, the manner in which staff track their time has been simplified.

I continue to work successfully with the revised Treasurer’s job description. As I enter my third, and probably final, year as your Treasurer, I firmly believe that this job can now be done...
by someone who may have significant work or family responsibilities. This was not the case in the past.

I welcome questions and comments about the reports that I produce or the work that I am doing.

—ROBERT MURRAY

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**Budget Commentary**

**Notes on the FY2023 Budget**

The budget has six endnotes. This commentary gives an expanded explanation of these endnotes.

Note 1 explains that Friends Mutual Health Group had a surplus that it is returning to the customers that it insures, which is the customary practice for a mutual insurance group. The corresponding budget line is NEYM’s share of this distribution.

Notes 2 and 3 explain that the FY2023 budget includes using $30,000 from unrestricted reserves to pay for specific projects. Note 2 points out that $20,000 is transferred to pay for staff time to support monthly meetings and ministries, one of the budget priorities given to the Finance Committee by the Permanent Board. This is a one-time transfer.

Note 3 points out that $10,000 from unrestricted reserves is used to help support the Honoraria Supporting Volunteer Leadership program approved last year at Sessions. The approved plan allocated $15,000 from reserves in FY2022, $10,000 in FY 2023, and $5,000 in FY 2024. After this phase-in the program will be fully funded in the regular budget for as long as Yearly Meeting decides to continue it.

These funds will be taken from unrestricted reserves that are in excess of the 25% of our annual expenses that Yearly Meeting has decided to hold in reserve. Without these transfers we would have presented a deficit budget, because the amount that we are proposing to spend next year exceeds the amount of projected income.

Note 4 explains that the staff received a 6.3% Cost of Living increase and a merit increase. The merit increase was 3%.

Note 5 says that the usual section that specifies how much we are donating in support of each of a number of other organizations (including FGC, FUM, and FWCC) is not included this year. Only the total is given, and this is unchanged from FY2022. The Financial Contributions Working Group has a proposal for how to determine how this amount should be distributed.

Note 6 explains that the cost of publishing the *New England Friend* Sessions issue has been included in the budget line for Printing & Copying rather than being broken out separately as it was in the past.

**The budget appears on page 21**

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**Yearly Meeting Nominating Report**

**The nominating slate appears on page 27**

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### Unity Agenda Materials

#### Bank Resolutions

The following resolutions are brought by the Finance Committee:

1. That Robert Murray be appointed New England Yearly Meeting Treasurer for the ensuing year or until a successor is appointed and qualified.
2. That Robert Spivey be appointed Friends Camp Treasurer for the ensuing year or until a successor is appointed and qualified.
3. That Robert Murray, Yearly Meeting Secretary; and Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary; be individually authorized to open and close bank accounts in the name of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends as needed.
4. That Robert M. Spivey, Friends Camp Treasurer; and Anna Hopkins, Friends Camp Director, be individually authorized to open and close bank accounts in the name of Friends Camp as needed.
5. That Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary; Robert Murray, NEYM Treasurer; and Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk; be designated as alternate signers, individually, of all bank accounts of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends.
6. That Anna Hopkins, Friends Camp Director; Robert M. Spivey, Friends Camp Treasurer; and Natalie Bornstein, Friends Camp Committee Clerk, be authorized, individually, as signers of the Friends Camp bank accounts.

#### Minute to Authorize Edits and Corrections

Friends authorize the presiding, recording, and reading clerks to make and approve edits, clarifications, and corrections to the minutes of NEYM Sessions 2022.

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### Sessions Planning

#### Purposes, Procedures, and Composition

**Purpose**

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

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

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

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

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

Note: The “Sessions Planning Landscape” graphic on page 12 prepared by Elizabeth Hacala is to help in visualizing how the many pieces of Sessions planning will work together. While quite complete for this year, it is not intended to be authoritative or to be used as a guide for what roles are needed each year. It will not be part of the permanent Purposes, Procedures, and Composition document, if approved.

Procedures

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

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

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

  o Theme and Speakers Team: This group discerns the theme for the following year’s Sessions and speakers. It is clerked by the Sessions Clerk.

  o Program Team: Focuses on adult programming, typically including business meetings, plenary, worship, Bible Half Hours, small group opportunities, workshops, etc. Clerked by the Sessions Clerk.

  o Logistics Team: The Logistics Team will translate specific needs of Adult and Youth programs into physical (room size and numbers), communication (including advance docs, newsletters), and administrative (registration and housing) needs. Clerked by the Events Coordinator.

  o Youth Programs Team: Focuses on the programming that will be offered for youth at Sessions, including needs of families and youth, and recruitment of staff. This group will be convened by the Events Coordinator.

• In September of each year, the Coordination Team, the Theme and Speakers Team, and any others they choose to invite will meet to consider the Sessions which just happened. They will consider Sessions evaluation forms as well as personal experience, to learn from the recent event. What went well, what challenges were there? What changes might be useful or necessary? How was the spiritual life of Friends in New England nourished and encouraged? How was the life and experience of monthly meetings considered and supported? What work and learning is not yet finished that should be carried over into next year’s Sessions? The conclusions from this gathering should be the foundation and touchstone for all aspects of planning for the coming year. This meeting will be convened and clerked by the Sessions Clerk. The meeting should include those involved in the previous year’s planning who are not otherwise continuing in service.

  o This team should meet to consider: their sense of the spiritual condition of the body of Friends who attended (informed by the meeting described above); their sense of how Spirit is moving (or impeded) in the wider body; and wider input, on both potential theme and suggested speakers. This team should distill that sense to a few words or a phrase for the theme, which will be a simple reflection of the work they believe the body needs.

  o This team will then consider what guests should be invited to speak to the gathered body. While most often over the years we have had a plenary speaker on Sunday and a Bible Half Hour presenter, this group may be led to suggest a different configuration.

  o This team should present the suggested theme and proposed speakers to the Coordination Team for approval. The Sessions Clerk should report these to Permanent Board for their awareness. Approval by Permanent Board is not necessary.

  o Upon approval by the Coordination Team, the Presiding Clerk, with support as needed from the Events Coordinator, will contact proposed speakers to formally invite them. Upon their acceptance, the Presiding Clerk will hand off responsibility to the Events Coordinator, who will ensure appropriate follow up and connections with Friends as needed in order to confirm elders and make all other arrangements for their service.

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

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

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

    o Opportunities to gather in worship
    o Business meetings
    o Opportunities for learning
    o Opportunities for sharing and relationship-building
    o Opportunities for performance, celebrations, special events, and play
• In consultation with the Coordination Team and with approval of the Yearly Meeting Secretary, a variety of stipended positions may be established to hold a particular piece of work, (e.g., Registrar, Housing Coordinator, Worship Coordinator, Tech Team Lead, BIPOC Opportunities Coordinator). Stipended positions will participate in the appropriate functional team, and will be supported by the appropriate staff person as identified in their role description.

• The NEYM Office Manager will set the schedule for required submissions, including invitation to Sessions, program schedule for publication, advance documents, etc.

• The Yearly Meeting Secretary has ultimate responsibility for and oversight of implementation, logistics, financial management, liability, pastoral care, legal, and safety concerns for Annual Sessions.

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

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

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

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

The Youth Programs Team consists of the Events Coordinator, the Children & Family Ministries Coordinator, the Young Friends Event Organizer, and the Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator.

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

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

A Brief Report on the Antiracism Consultation Working Group

Upon recommendation of the Challenging White Supremacy working group, the Permanent Board has recommitted to our becoming an antiracist faith community. At their request, Challenging White Supremacy has been laid down, with our thanks, and new work has begun. The Permanent Board has created an Antiracism Consultation Working Group to serve as the planning group for a Permanent Board-approved consultative process, facilitated by an external consultant. We have committed resources of time and finances to this effort.

The intended outcome of the consultative process is to bring to the Permanent Board a framework and recommendations—a “roadmap”—for how the Yearly Meeting can concretely: 1) bring the perspectives and insights offered by antiracist theory and practice into the Yearly Meeting’s discernment and action as an institution, and 2) support and encourage local Friends meetings (monthly and quarterly) across our region, as they are led, to bring the perspectives and insights offered by antiracist theory and practice into our discernment and actions as worshiping communities, and into the discernment and actions of Friends as a regional corporate body.

This group, named by the Permanent Board clerk and approved by the Board, is meeting regularly and is in the process of identifying a consultant with whom to work. Its members are Melody Brazo of Fresh Pond, Becky Jones of Northampton, Kristina Keefe-Perry of Fresh Pond and Three Rivers Worship Group, IVM Shelton of Plainfield and Morgan Wilson of Framingham, with Noah Merrill and Nia Thomas. I serve as clerk and convenor of this group. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact me at pbclerk@neym.org.

Respectfully Submitted,

LESLEY MANNING, CLERK OF PERMANENT BOARD

Request from Permanent Board for Approval of the Laying Down of Two Committees

Upon the recommendation of Coordinating and Advisory, the Permanent Board approved these two actions and brings them forward for Approval this Sessions.

1. Permanent Board recommends to Sessions 2022 that we lay down the Development Committee, giving thanks to those who have served since the body was first named in 2004.

Background: About two years ago, activities of the Development Committee were put on hold while Noah Merrill explored new models for development. The Development Committee has played an important role in changing the mindset of Friends in New England, from “Monthly meetings are the primary source of income for the Yearly Meeting” to “While this is still true, everyone who loves and believes in the mission of the Yearly Meeting has a role in sustaining this organization as led and able.” But it became clear that as Friends became used to the new mindset, much of the ongoing annual work of development is best accomplished by staff, with regular input on approaches to this work from Friends with particular knowledge and experience. We have established an ad-hoc development advisory group, which will be available as needed for consultation with staff. Note that this group does not require nominating.

2. Permanent Board recommends to Sessions 2022 that we lay down the Racial, Social, and Economic Justice Committee, again with our thanks to those who have served over the many years, beginning with the Prejudice and Poverty Committee, which took up its work in the mid-1960s, we believe.

Background: In recent years, as NEYM has engaged more deeply and widely with searching to understand our complicity in structural racism, and how we can work to undo that legacy, willingness of Friends to be involved in the work of the Racial, Social, and Economic Justice Committee has waned. Nominating has had an increasingly difficult time finding Friends willing to serve on this committee. At this point, only the clerk remains. We are recommending laying down this committee, noting that this does not in any way mean a retreat from the commitment to the work. Rather, we see it as part of a natural evolution to a fuller picture of how NEYM will grow in its understanding and ability to change how we speak, work, and act. Note that the one structural requirement of the committee, distribution of the Freedman’s Fund, was addressed by Permanent Board earlier this year.

Prepared by BRUCE NEUMANN, PRESIDING CLERK AND CLERK OF COORDINATING AND ADVISORY

APPROVED BY PERMANENT BOARD ON JUNE 4, 2022

Request from Salem Quarter for Distribution of Funds

This request came from Salem Quarter and was approved by the Legacy Gift Committee and by Permanent Board at our meeting on June 4, 2022. We are requesting approval from the body at Sessions.

During the period that Salem Quarter is on sabbath from conducting regular business, the Salem Quarter Grant funds (interest earned on principal) will be distributed by the Legacy Gift Committee. Salem Quarter funds would be designated especially to refresh and restart the Legacy Futures Fund, which would distribute them according to Legacy Fund Guidelines (as laid out in the Futures Fund) with a preference given to applicants from the 13 meetings and worship groups in the Salem Quarter region. Salem Quarter treasurer John Robinson, who has agreed to serve during the Sabbath, will serve as an ex-officio member on the Legacy Committee for the purpose of advising them as to the amount of funds available and in other ways, as needed.

Request from Salem Quarter for Support of Ministry Functions

Permanent Board approved this on June 4, 2022, and is asking for approval from the body at Sessions.

Salem Quarter Sabbath

Salem Quarterly Meeting has approved a period of Sabbath rest from business for a period of 1 to 2 years, beginning after their meeting in spring 2022. In the interim they have requested, and Permanent Board has approved, that in the event that any of the following requests come from a monthly meeting in the Quarter, these responsibilities will be held by Permanent
Board, with invitation to all members of all meetings in the Quarter:
1. receiving and endorsing travel minutes that come from monthly meetings for travel beyond the Yearly Meeting
2. lifting up and laying down meetings in the Quarter
3. discerning the recording of gifts in ministry brought by a monthly meeting in the Quarter, within the guidelines offered by Faith and Practice

Report on Distribution of the Letter of Apology

See report from the Right Relationship Resource Group on page 36.

Friends Peace Teams Model Minute on the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative

On May 11, 2022, the United States Department of Interior released Volume 1 of an investigative report as part of its ongoing Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative. The report outlines the forced assimilation techniques employed to erase the names, languages, religion, customs, and cultural identity of Native American children. Thousands of Native children were forced away from their families and communities and subjected to military-style discipline, forced labor, and institutionalized living in 408 Federal Indian boarding schools. The report also identified burial sites where children who died at the schools were interred; the Initiative will press forward to identify all such sites.

The initial investigation showed that approximately 50 percent of Federal Indian boarding schools may have received support or involvement from a religious institution or organization, including funding, infrastructure, and personnel. The U.S. Senate has recognized that federal funds from the 1819 Indian Civilization Fund “were apportioned among those societies and individuals—usually missionary organizations—that had been prominent in the effort to ‘civilize’ the Indians.” (Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report, May 2022, p. 11.)

Quakers, both individually and as yearly and monthly meetings, were directly involved in the founding, financial support, and administration of Indian boarding schools under the federal government’s effort to eradicate Indian culture by eliminating all traces of Indian identity from upcoming generations.

In 2015, the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS), called upon the religious denominations to investigate their involvement in the operation of Indian boarding schools and to make amends for their complicity in this genocidal enterprise. Friend Paula Palmer was motivated by this call to do preliminary research on Quaker involvement. However, given our local and regional organizational structure, no comprehensive denominational response has yet been made by the Religious Society of Friends, nor have Yearly Meetings yet responded to the call to investigate their own records and take appropriate reparative action.

Both NABS and the Department of the Interior report call for support of pending legislation that would establish “The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the U.S. Act” (H.R. 5444 and S.2907). Friends Committee on National Legislation has called on Quaker organizations to voice support for this legislation, and several monthly and yearly meetings have done so.

In the next phase of its work, the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative will take further steps to investigate the degree to which federal funds, including monies held in Tribal trust accounts, were paid to religious organizations and institutions to operate Indian boarding schools. It will also continue to investigate where Native children have been buried.

Therefore

We resolve that it is our responsibility as New England Yearly Meeting to undertake a thorough and comprehensive review of our own records to determine what financial support our institution received from the federal government to operate Quaker Indigenous boarding schools;

We resolve to determine the amount of financial and material support our institution contributed for the operation of the Quaker Indigenous schools;

We resolve that it is also our responsibility to identify any graveyards where Native children may have been buried in conjunction with the operation of any Indigenous boarding schools we ran or supported and to report our findings to NABS and the Department of the Interior;

We resolve to publish a report of our internal investigation;

We resolve to determine the value in current dollars of the money received from the federal government, and of the funds and materiel our institution contributed, for the operation of Indian boarding schools.

We resolve to apologize to the tribes and nations affected by our actions, and in consultation with them, to make reparations in a form and manner acceptable to them.

We resolve to encourage individual Friends and corporate bodies to urge their U.S. senators and representatives to cosponsor and support passage of the “Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the U.S. Act” (H.R. 5444 and S.2907).

We resolve to provide financial support for tribal programs for Native language instruction and revitalization, acknowledging that the Quaker Indigenous schools contributed to the elimination of Indigenous languages.

Progress Report: Inclusive Leadership Development

Two years ago, I began my progress report with these words:

As Friends, we seek to heed the leadings of the Spirit, to support one another in living faithfully, and to co-create a world that better reflects God’s peaceful and just vision for all of creation. A central way we live this faith is by tending to the gifts we have been given, individually and collectively. When our gifts are nurtured, faithfulness is encouraged, and our ministry and movement thrives.

Much has happened since those words were written, but for me they still encapsulate the “why” behind our many efforts.

It has now been three years since Friends at Sessions formally embraced a vision of “inclusive leadership development” in the Yearly Meeting, including committing to a wide array of next steps related to eliminating barriers to service and increasing our capacity to nurture Friends’ gifts. If you are new to this conversation or could use a refresher on the details of what we’ve already decided and done, you can find back-
You'll find a graphic created for this year's Best Practices in Nominating workshop offered by members of our Nominating Committee capturing the key elements of this approach, which you can also learn more about via the Nominating Committee clerk's report.

The Best Practices in Nominating workshop is far from the only place where explicit training and mutual leadership development has happened in the last two years. NEYM's program offerings have also included trainings in clerking, committee clerking, recording clerking, and conducting business in a hybrid manner; trainings for small-group facilitators and youth workers; a workshop on maintaining meeting records and artifacts; a workshop for financial stewards on fundraising, budgeting, and accounting; monthly facilitated check-ins for meeting leaders; and three Spiritual Life and Ministry gatherings where many members of local meeting Ministry & Counsel shared practices, challenges, and insights. The feedback from all these offerings has been consistently excellent, and while we learn something we could do better each time, we also have found that the overall shape of these offerings meets a need for many of our meetings for training, resource-sharing, and mutual encouragement among Friends who are “peers” with each other in their service. In the coming years, we must work to keep the delivery of these relevant and high-quality program opportunities a priority.

Another important recent undertaking related to our commitment to inclusive leadership development is the use of honoraria for our largest volunteer roles in an effort to help reduce the financial barrier to this essential service. After much discussion and consideration by the Permanent Board and members of related working groups, this experiment began this fall. It will take more time to be able to assess the impact of this experiment.

Although many of the inclusive leadership development recommendations have been accomplished or are now underway, and many others are ongoing efforts that require our continual commitment, some of the recommended “next steps” still feel out of reach.

The first such recommendation is to greatly reduce the amount of administrative work required of our volunteer leadership roles (such as Presiding Clerk and Permanent Board clerk) by creating assistant roles. By greatly decreasing the amount of correspondence, organizing, and scheduling that these roles currently entail, it would become more likely that non-retired Friends could say “yes” to such roles. While Coordinating and Advisory has briefly discussed the possibility of expanding NEYM’s staff to include an Executive Assistant sort of role, such a move would require not only a lot of fundraising but also serious consideration on where such a role fits in our staffing “wish list.” Where in the priority list does the desire for decreased administrative burden on volunteer Yearly Meeting leadership fit in against our other understaffed areas, such as in communications, religious education, outreach, development, and programming for young adults?

This dilemma dovetails with another one we face as we progress in our inclusive leadership development journey. While we have made huge strides in our leadership development offerings, our success has been mostly limited to Friends already active and serving within their local meeting. And while outreach to “potential Quakers” or less-active Quakers is most sustainable when driven by local meetings, the question of NEYM’s role to play in this area is alive for me.
Coordinating and Advisory Committee’s charge now includes the line “the members of this committee hold a particular responsibility to build a culture of inclusive and sustainable leadership development.” I look forward to spending time with C&A, paying attention to these important, complex questions in the year ahead, consulting broadly and hopefully moving in our shared clarity towards proposals which can be shared with the Yearly Meeting.

In the year ahead I also look forward to continuing to work with the Antiracism Consultation Working Group, as I am sure that consultative process will both continue many necessary conversations and also provide many useful insights and perspectives relevant to NEYM’s inclusive leadership development efforts.

As I wrap up this report, I must return to gratitude. Like many Friends, I can get stuck in the “yearning gap,” the wide expanse between my biggest hopes for our world and our society, and the broken (and breaking open) place where I now stand. I must remind myself, and those who are called to listen, that while sometimes we need the fuel a far-off vision can offer, we are only ever truly fed by what is already in our midst. Thank you for tending so lovingly to the gifts within you and others, Friends. Thank you, God, for giving us all the gifts we need. Thank you and onward!

—NIADWYWWEN THOMAS, QUAKER PRACTICE AND LEADERSHIP FACILITATOR

Progress Report and Recommended Next Steps: The Nurture of Ministry, Eldership, and Spiritual Life

When men and women come to this pass that they have nothing to rely on but the Lord, then they will meet together to wait upon the Lord: and this was the first ground and motive of our setting up meetings; and I would to God that that was the use that everyone would make of them, then they would be justly and properly used according to the institution of them at first; we should use them as poor desolate helpless people that are broken off from all their own confidence and trust and have nothing to rely upon but the mercy and goodness of God. (Stephen Crisp, 1691)

Introduction

This report is offered with deep gratitude for and awareness of the cloud of faithful Friends, known and unknown, who have stewarded and nurtured the spiritual life of New England Friends for generations, who continue to do so, and to all who will come after us.

Rather than proposing a break or sudden departure from what has come before, we hope the report offered here can be seen as one more small step in our unfolding journey together with the Spirit.

We offer these recommendations with humble awareness of the foundation on which we stand: the faithful stewardship of ministry and spiritual life in which so many Friends have participated, and which is happening day in and day out in quiet conversations, relationships, and meetings for worship in local communities across our region.

How we got here: Why this report?

In November 2020 the Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends approved a recommendation from the Working Group on Ministry & Spiritual Life¹ that the Yearly Meeting engage in a season of experimental discernment, during which the formal structure of the Committee on Ministry & Counsel would be temporarily set aside until August 2022. At that point, a progress report would be given to Annual Sessions, and recommendations for future steps would be considered.²

The proposal envisioned a time of openness and learning, during which it was hoped the Spirit might offer further guidance on how the Yearly Meeting should proceed, and the Yearly Meeting in Sessions would have an opportunity for discernment and direction regarding next steps. The hope was that this time would allow for the significant energy invested in maintaining an overburdened committee structure to be available instead for prayer, listening, and consultation. The proposal envisioned a series of three daylong, intentionally hosted gatherings focusing on the nurture of the spiritual life of meetings, and on better understanding the recognition, nurture, and care of Friends called to various forms of ministry.

Initial reports and updates on this experiment were offered for Sessions in 2020 and again in 2021, and news of this experiment was shared with all local meetings. Friends from across the Yearly Meeting and beyond participated in these gatherings.

Ongoing listening and attention to the overall fruits of this experiment was held by an overlapping group of Friends with related responsibilities, including the interim clerk of Ministry & Counsel, the former clerk of the Working Group on Ministry & Spiritual Life, the Quaker Practice & Leadership Facilitator, the clerk of the Permanent Board, and the Yearly Meeting Secretary.

This latter group, for these purposes referred to as the “Ministry Transition Team,” was also charged with preparing a report and recommendations for next steps to the Permanent Board, and to Annual Sessions in August 2022.

This is our report. Please contact mc-clerk@neym.org if you have questions.

Respectfully submitted,

—JEREMIAH DICKINSON, INTERIM CLERK OF MINISTRY & COUNSEL; SARAH GANT, FORMER CLERK, MINISTRY & SPIRITUAL LIFE WORKING GROUP; NIA THOMAS, QUAKER PRACTICE & LEADERSHIP FACILITATOR; LESLIE MANNING, CLERK OF PERMANENT BOARD; NOAH MERRILL, YEARLY MEETING SECRETARY

¹ The short-term working group to examine Yearly Meeting Support for Ministry and Spiritual Life was created by the Permanent Board at the direction of the Yearly Meeting in Annual Sessions (Minute 2019-46), and in consultation with NEYM Ministry & Counsel, to “explore the Yearly Meeting’s support for ministry and spiritual life and offer recommendations for structures, practices and leadership roles that would best serve the current needs of Friends.” For more information, see Appendix 1.

² See the further recommendations of the Working Group on Ministry & Spiritual Life, 2020 (https://neym.org/nurturing-ministry-spiritual-life-experiment)
Report on the Gatherings on Spiritual Life & Ministry

Since the spring of 2021, there have been three gatherings for spiritual life and ministry: Tilling the Spiritual Soil of our Monthly Meetings, The Call and Challenges of Ministry, and Life in the Connections: Ministry and Our Meetings.

The gatherings were planned, hosted, and evaluated by a team of hosts and elders which included several Friends with recent experience serving on NEYM Ministry & Counsel.

These were planned to be broadly accessible opportunities for engagement around factors nourishing spiritual life, the experience of ministry and the nature of the relationship between the meeting and minister. In each—the first two via Zoom and the third in hybrid format—Friends with widely differing experiences of ministry worshiped, heard presentations from ministers and other speakers, and participated in small groups and workshops.

Friends who participated overwhelmingly expressed gratitude for the content of the gatherings and for the opportunity to engage with others around issues that feel vitally important and relevant to concerns they were carrying. Many Friends also expressed strong hopes that the conversations could be brought back to their local meetings.

Friends also spoke to the need for opportunities more specifically geared toward those among us who have an identified ministry, chances to "talk shop," as it were. These were envisioned as opportunities where ministers could share experiences, nurture one another's spiritual discipline and practice, and offer support and feedback around the consolations and desolations of the call to public ministry.

In all, 203 Friends participated in at least one of the three gatherings, reflecting the involvement of 40 meetings and worship groups that are part of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, and an additional 18 Friends meetings affiliated with yearly meetings beyond New England.

Key Learning and Insights to Share

Any forms [for] the cultivation of the religious life are in themselves always subject to change ... they are scaffolding to be torn down and re-erected in new forms in accordance with the stage of growth of the life they seek to aid. To take them as an end in themselves is idolatry and blasphemy.

Without practice, without discipline, without continuous devotion, without failure, correction, re-dedication, re-orientation, [there is] no growth in the religious life ... which is not an episode, or an event, but a life. (Douglas V. Steere, in Prayer and Worship, 1938)

Through these gatherings, and in prayerful consultation, conversation, and observation, we have been consistently reminded of a small number of areas of possibility and yearning that the Yearly Meeting might seek to help Friends address. The recommendations that will be offered below seek to respond in part—simply, humbly, and directly—to the longings we have heard, knowing that more learning will come in time, and trusting that further clarity will be given as the journey continues.

Here, then, are the desires we heard, in simple terms:

- A desire of local meetings to strengthen their capacity to provide spiritual tending and care of individuals and of the corporate body of the meeting.
- A related desire for the reliable presence of trusted Friends available to walk with local (monthly and quarterly) meetings, and those in servant leadership roles in their meetings.
- A yearning for Friends called to ministry, and those led to nurture them, to meet together, to learn, challenge, and encourage one another in their service.
- A desire for substantive Quaker adult religious education within local meetings, accessible in a variety of ways to Friends in diverse seasons of spiritual growth, widely available to all who choose to participate.
- A longing for ongoing prayerful holding of the body of New England Friends as a whole, and for an awareness of this ongoing holding on the part of the wider body.

In addition to these longings, we also want to offer these reflections on the process and the approach we have discovered so far, and affirm considerations we pray will be held as this journey continues:

- We are reminded that Friends are engaged in a process of prayerful experimentation, learning, and discovery, and that this needs time. Even as we continue to take steps forward into newness, and feel the Spirit urging us on, we encourage Friends to trust in the unfolding of God's time.
- This is about shifting our culture—our ways of seeing and being—even more than giving the needed attention to reforming structure and practice. It's about learning as we go, allowing imperfection, and trying new things.
- We've come to understand that ministry expressed through personal faithfulness in service to the community as a whole is vital to the life of the Body, and we need to find more ways to validate and support those heeding calls to ministry. We see a need to affirm and seek the wisdom Friends' tradition has to offer about the growth and development of a vocation to ministry in a person's life and the life of a meeting. The response to a call to ministry is not a one-time event, but an ongoing spiritual discipline that leads to—and requires—growth and change.
- There is a particular need now to encourage and attend to the faithful exercise of gifts of preaching (vocal ministry) and teaching (spiritual formation and religious education).
- Looking ahead, it's important to give attention to the whole "ecology" of the Quaker movement—local meetings, individuals, quarterly meetings, the yearly meeting. The responsibility of the Yearly Meeting in this time of exploration is to ask what direct role the Yearly Meeting as such can helpfully play. And yet, much of what is needed must arise from and be rooted in local and quarterly meetings.

The Yearly Meeting can encourage, nurture, and reflect back important themes and insights, and can directly offer some things. It is important that the Yearly Meeting play an intentionally limited role, responding to and encouraging Friends rooted locally as they grow into God's leading for their community. Then, the new growth can flourish, and be relevant to and sustained in each local context.
Rather than seeing the Yearly Meeting as the primary actor in nurturing spiritual life and ministry, we might envision the Yearly Meeting as the mycorrhizal network of fungal filaments in the soil of the forest floor that connects, senses, responds, upholds, tends the diverse life forms in the forest, which are the local meetings and persons in whom the Spirit is living, active, teaching, and seeking expression today.

• There is a cultural, worldly pressure and temptation to privilege doing over being, activity over prayerful presence. While action is needed in some places, we are reminded that sustained, prayerful attention and availability is also necessary. We are called to abide in the dynamic tension between holding and doing, knowing that at the heart of our faith is paradox.

Recommendations for Permanent Board and Sessions Approval

Next steps in the Yearly Meeting's nurture of the ministry and spiritual life of Friends:

1. Gather a small body of Friends to companion and accompany local meetings
   a. Meeting together regularly, this body would work closely with the Yearly Meeting Secretary, Presiding Clerk, M&C Clerk and others as relevant to bring sustained and prayerful accompaniment to local meetings, with particular attention to walking alongside Friends serving their meetings in leadership roles (meeting clerks and clerks and members of ministry & counsel or pastoral care)
   b. While this may at times involve specific resources or intervention, far more significant is the encouragement and affirmation of the gifts of the meeting and those in servant leadership roles to nurture a culture of spiritual accompaniment and gratitude for the Spirit's work in the local meeting.
   c. A detailed, proposed charge for this group, and a description of the responsibilities for the clerk of this group, is included in Appendix 2.

2. Hold a “meeting for listening” for the Life in local meetings
   a. Plan and host an annual, daylong gathering in the late spring for Friends across New England to reflect on the life of our local meetings and to prayerfully consider how the Yearly Meeting's programmatic priorities and activities might faithfully support the spiritual life of local meetings in the coming year.
   b. Insights and reflections at the gathering would substantively inform both programmatic offerings by the YM in the coming year(s), as well as flow into the annual Funding Priorities process for the YM, to be further developed by C&A and approved by Permanent Board and Sessions.
   c. This meeting would be planned and hosted as a partnership between the Quaker Practice & Leadership Facilitator and the clerk of Ministry & Counsel.
   d. Share in prayer and worship together, with an emphasis on the life of Friends meetings in our region
   e. Consider reflections on state of society reports, statistical reports, and other news and information regarding the vitality and experience of local worshiping communities
   f. Offer reports and updates about programmatic activities supporting local meetings in the past year, as well as plans and intentions looking ahead
   g. Listening from this meeting, coupled with insights from the local meeting accompaniment body (see 1, above), and other opportunities, would inform the subsequent preparation of the NEYM State of Society report, which will be shepherded by the clerk of Ministry & Counsel, supported by Friends they may be led to invite.
   h. Would involve a variety of modalities for sharing and reflection, including some more directed and specific, and some more open and expansive.

3. As a regular part of Permanent Board meetings, and at Annual Sessions, host opportunities for the wider body of Friends in New England to learn about and celebrate Friends active in public ministry

4. Offer regular opportunities for prayerful holding of the wider body of Friends in New England, for those led, and invite Friends to this discipline
   a. The clerk of Ministry & Counsel would work with the Presiding Clerk to invite Friends with a concern for prayer and eldership to hold the Yearly Meeting in prayer, both from their own homes and through simple in-person opportunities as this is possible, and as led.
   b. This would involve inviting Friends to serve in this way, helping Friends know this is happening and how they can participate, encouraging opportunities for prayerful holding at particular times, and sharing prayer requests in a more consistent way.

5. The Yearly Meeting recognizes the expressed desire for opportunities for Friends serving in ministry and eldership to gather as led for “shop talk,” mentoring, mutual accountability, and learning
   a. In contrast with previous recommendations, these opportunities would not be initiated or formally organized by the Yearly Meeting. What follows is offered as an affirmation and reflection on what we have heard in our listening and discernment.
   b. Guidance we have heard from experienced ministers and elders, that we feel is valuable to reflect to the wider body, and those who might consider hosting or attending such opportunities:
      i. Opportunities need to be sufficiently focused and clear in scope to allow for deeper sharing and development of common language among Friends called to similar kinds of service (e.g., vocal ministry, eldership, pastoral counseling, prison ministry, witness). This allows for differences in experience to be acknowledged without forcing a “one-size-fits-all” approach.
      ii. Opportunities should give attention to both creating conditions for trust and intimacy (relatively small size, space for sensitive sharing) and the need for prayerful holding, eldership, humility, and grounding through oversight.
      iii. Friends offering invitations to such opportunities should be clear and explicit about the focus, format, and purpose, to help Friends understand if a particular opportunity might be nourishing or appropriate for them.
iv. It is hoped these opportunities will take a variety of shapes, at the leading of concerned Friends, or as hosted by local meetings and quarters.

v. We foresee the emphasis of these opportunities to be on personal faithfulness, on the journey of ministry and personal spiritual formation in Friends tradition as a long-term spiritual discipline, and on mutual encouragement, accompaniment, and accountability.

c. As resources allow, and consistent with the criteria outlined here, the Yearly Meeting may consider light support for these activities through promotion, staff consultation, or funding for dependent care or travel expenses.

d. The goal would be to nurture a culture and ongoing practice of these kinds of gatherings of Friends called to ministry, eldership, and oversight in a variety of forms and rhythms.

6. Increase awareness of (and as able, increase capacity to offer) formal programming to support adult religious education, spiritual formation, and training in Quaker practices and disciplines

a. Focus on developing capacity for religious education and spiritual formation within local meetings, possibly through peer circles and encouraging engagement by Friends active in their local meetings with wider networks of religious educators.

b. Lift up the existing tools, opportunities, and capacities the Yearly Meeting has developed in recent years for the nurture of spiritual life and service (e.g., the staff role of Quaker Practice & Leadership Facilitator, the calendar of programming opportunities and partnerships both in person and online).

c. Focus on increasing awareness, participation, and access to existing programming, including the Nurturing Faithfulness program and related opportunities, and shorter-term opportunities such as best practices in nominating, clerking and recording clerking workshops, faithful stewardship programming, and more.

7. The Yearly Meeting consider a searching review with attention to purpose, care, and oversight for quarterly meetings

a. According to Faith & Practice, quarterly meetings are charged with essential responsibilities relating to care and oversight of local meetings (including both the establishment and the laying down of monthly meetings) and key dimensions in the nurture and oversight of ministry beyond the local meeting (including the recording of gifts in ministry and endorsing travel minutes).

The relative vibrancy and capacities of quarterly meetings vary. Several efforts in recent decades have sought to re-enliven the activity of quarterly meetings, often with significant short-term successes. The subject of the challenges quarterly meetings face in fulfilling their responsibilities to nurture meetings and ministers (and indeed the relevance of these bodies) is a common topic of concern throughout the Yearly Meeting.

Recent processes of engagement with quarters have not included the consideration of action by the Yearly Meeting itself to revise the assigned functions and geography of quarterly meetings as described in Faith & Practice, or to provide more sustained, consistent, and robust support, integrated with the ongoing work of the staff and volunteer leadership of the Yearly Meeting, to those serving on behalf of quarterly meetings in carrying out their work on behalf of Friends.

b. We recommend that the Permanent Board be charged, as time and energy allow, with undertaking a review of the function of quarterly meetings historically and at present, in consultation with the clerks of the eight quarterly meetings (and with quarterly meeting ministry & counsel bodies or relevant equivalents, where applicable).

The purpose of this review should be to explore and, as led, recommend to the Yearly Meeting changes to the charge, composition, structure and function of quarterly meetings in New England Yearly Meeting, to more fruitfully nurture the life of local meetings (monthly meetings, preparative meetings, and worship groups) and Friends serving in ministry. These changes, if approved by the Yearly Meeting, would be incorporated in Faith & Practice consistent with the process for revision of Faith & Practice.

Proposed Process for the Yearly Meeting

Moving Forward

Continuing the experiment for three more years: We recommend that, in approving the recommendations above, the Yearly Meeting approve that this continuing experiment go forward for three years, until Sessions 2025.

During this time, the formal structure of the Committee on Ministry & Counsel would continue to be temporarily set aside while the steps recommended above are put into place and further discernment can continue. The scope and role description for the clerk of Ministry & Counsel has been revised consistent with these recommendations (see Appendix 3).

Oversight of the experiment: During this time, the experiment will continue under the oversight of the Permanent Board, with specific responsibility delegated to a group consisting of the clerk of the local meeting accompaniment group, the clerk of the Permanent Board, the Yearly Meeting Secretary, the Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator, and the clerk of Ministry & Counsel. The Presiding Clerk would also be invited to participate as led. This "Spiritual Life Listening-Group" will replace the current constellation of the "Ministry Transition Team."

Ongoing Discernment, Listening, and Reporting: This group will regularly reflect on learning and developments, and offer opportunities for wider listening with Friends throughout the Yearly Meeting. These Friends will ensure reports both to Permanent Board and to Sessions in an ongoing way, annually to Sessions and to Permanent Board at least every six months. This group will also seek opportunities to share learning and reflections with a wider audience throughout the Yearly Meeting and to solicit ongoing insights and feedback.

Recommendations on Next Steps: This group, in consultation, discernment, and ongoing prayerful listening across the Yearly Meeting, will be responsible for bringing to Sessions in 2025 a report on the experience and learning of the previous three years (2022–2025), and recommendations for next steps.
Appendices

Appendix 1. Background on the origins of the Ministry & Spiritual Life Working Group and the review of how the Yearly Meeting nurtures ministry and spiritual life

In 2017, at the direction of Annual Sessions, the Permanent Board established the Clerking Practices & Structures Working Group to make recommendations for how service and leadership on behalf of the Yearly Meeting could be more fruitful and sustainable.

In 2018 this Working Group brought several recommendations to Sessions, including specifically that the scope and structure of Ministry & Counsel and the role of the clerk of Ministry & Counsel be reviewed, with the goal of bringing recommendations for how the work of nurturing ministry and the spiritual life of local meetings, long the charge of the NEYM Committee on Ministry & Counsel, might be more fruitfully and sustainably accomplished and held.

In 2019, at the direction of Annual Sessions, in consultation with the Committee on Ministry & Counsel, Permanent Board created and charged a new working group, the Working Group on Ministry & Spiritual Life. This group engaged in an extensive review of previous material relating to the functions and responsibilities of Ministry & Counsel and preceding bodies in the life of Friends, examined the longstanding challenges Friends had faced in faithfully carrying out the broad charge of Ministry & Counsel, and conducted a process of consultation, including individual conversations, inviting insights from meetings, and small listening sessions with a diverse constellation of Friends with relevant experience, perspectives, and gifts.

While the Working Group initially developed several proposals for change to address the concerns raised in their charge, discernment following these consultations yielded a surprising and clear direction. Rather than trying to rush to “fix” the challenges that had plagued Ministry & Counsel, there was a sense that God was inviting the Yearly Meeting to reframe other potential new proposals and projects for a time, to create space for new life to arise.

The emergence of the covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 resulted in a pause of several months in the Working Group’s process, as many Friends’ attention was fully focused on offering pastoral care and accompaniment to Friends and meetings, and to responding to the effects of the pandemic on their own lives and the lives of their communities. In summer 2020 that work resumed again, leading to the recommendations approved by the Permanent Board in November 2020 and the laying down of the Working Group on Ministry & Spiritual Life.

Between late 2020 and the spring of 2022, a group of hosts and elders served faithfully, generously, and fruitfully to offer three Gatherings on Spiritual Life and Ministry, welcoming Friends from across New England and beyond. The Friends serving in this way were Janet Hough (Cobscook), Jen Higgins-Newman (Beacon Hill), Jennifer Hogue (Cambridge), Marty Grundy (Wellesley), Nia Thomas (Northampton), Richard Lindo (Framingham), and Jeremiah Dickinson (Dover). David Coleta (Three Rivers/Fresh Pond), Elizabeth Hacala (NEYM Events Coordinator), and Ryan Higgins-Newman (Beacon Hill) provided invaluable technical support. Many other Friends shared their gifts, skills, and insights to make these opportunities possible.

Appendix 2. Proposed Purposes, Procedures, and Composition of Meeting Accompaniment Group

Meeting together regularly, this body would work closely with the Yearly Meeting Secretary, Presiding Clerk, and others to bring sustained and prayerful accompaniment to local meetings, with particular attention to walking alongside Friends serving their meetings in leadership roles (clerks, clerks of ministry & counsel, etc.)

In support of this charge, Friends serving as part of this body would:

1. Regularly read and reflect on state of society reports
2. Pay attention to news shared in local meeting newsletters
3. Consider reports of Friends traveling and visiting (as well as visiting meetings themselves)
4. Participate regularly in monthly local meeting leader calls, and contribute insights to planning for these calls
5. Call or email to check in with clerks of meetings on the life of the meeting overall
6. Meet and consult with the NEYM Presiding Clerk and Secretary (and the clerks of the relevant quarterly meetings, and others as appropriate) to support ongoing care and attention to the life of local meetings
7. As needed or requested, provide specific support and presence with meetings (and quarterly meetings) in times of crisis or need for particular accompaniment
8. Ensure appropriate integration and information-sharing within the group and with relevant partners (Secretary, Presiding Clerk, relevant staff), in ways that are consistent and timely, and that maintain appropriate confidentiality and care
9. Curate and moderate the “pastoral care” email list maintained by the Yearly Meeting, including promoting subscriptions, clarifying the scope of and guidelines for what information will be shared, and considering how to strengthen the attention to prayer and care that this medium might provide
10. Insights from this body would form an important stream informing the writing of the annual NEYM State of Society report
11. Invite other Friends join in this work as needed, in support of particular situations or needs for accompaniment

Role: Accompaniment and “walking with” local meetings—not “fixing” issues that may arise. As needed/requested by Friends serving in local meetings, these Friends might assist with referrals to other Friends (especially other local meetings with relevant experience) or resources related to a wide range of potential considerations. These might include, but not be limited to, training and content for “pastoral care” accompaniment by and within local meetings, help with conflicts and challenges, support for young families, welcoming, fostering openness to change, and care of ministry.

This body would not try to fix challenges in local meetings, but would pay attention to how to increase capacity of the meetings themselves to respond to the challenges they may encounter. This group would always work in partnership with quarterly meetings, where possible and appropriate, and support the efforts and strengthening of quarterly meetings as they in turn seek to support local meetings.

Composition: 5 to 7 Friends, nominated by the NEYM Nominating Committee, with a clerk also nominated by the NEYM
Nominating Committee, approved by the Yearly Meeting. Explicit encouragement for local meetings (and quarterly meetings) to suggest Friends with the relevant gifts, and reflecting the diversities of context across our region, for consideration by the Nominating Committee to serve as part of this group. The clerk of this group would also serve (for the duration of this experiment) as a member of the Coordinating & Advisory Committee.

**Term of Service:** Appointed with the prospect/possibility of a five-year term. The practice would be reviewed (and considered for change or continuation) in three years (report & recommendations to Sessions 2025). Given the importance of ongoing trusting relationships, context, and experience in this work, the intention would be that eventually Friends would be appointed for staggered five-year terms. This is consistent with what has been learned from the work of some other bodies (Permanent Board, Finance Committee, Archives Committee) where longevity of relationship and experience with the particular work has been found helpful.

**Gifts and experience needed:** Spiritual and emotional maturity, gifts in oversight, pastoral care, and accompaniment, conflict resolution, prayerful holding, boundary-setting, communication, and administration. Capacity for holding sensitive matters in confidence, with consultation in trusted relationships as needed. Experience (past or present) serving in leadership roles in their own local meeting. Experience walking with those in servant leadership roles, mentoring, being a non-anxious presence. Joy in connection with Friends, love for and commitment to the nurture of local meetings as the foundation of Friends’ life together.

**Appendix 3. Revised role description for clerk of Ministry & Counsel**

**Primary Function:** The Ministry and Counsel Clerk serves to foster and encourage the spiritual life of the Yearly Meeting as a whole through a ministry of prayer, listening, and eldership. This Friend will:

- Participate as a member of the Coordinating & Advisory Committee, with particular attention to prayerful eldership and the spiritual condition of Friends
- Partner with the Quaker Practice & Leadership Facilitator to plan an annual meeting on listening for the Life in our local meetings
- Invite Friends, both generally and particularly, to pray for the body of Friends in New England, both individually and in informal opportunities in person
- Maintain awareness of Friends engaged in public ministry and of opportunities for furtherance of their work among Friends
- Shepherd the annual State of Society report process for the Yearly Meeting, bringing a completed report to Annual Sessions each year
- Participate in and advise on care for worship and eldership at Annual Sessions
- Serve as part of the group shepherding the ongoing experiment in ministry and spiritual life, reporting on learning and insights, and preparing recommendations for further attention by the Yearly Meeting in this experiment
- Encourage and support the clerk of Permanent Board and Presiding Clerk to ensure opportunities to celebrate and share news of Friends’ service in ministry, as part of meetings of the Permanent Board and during Annual Sessions.

To keep the Clerk free for the essential work above, this Friend is asked to refrain from taking on other substantial administrative and project management tasks. Instead, the M&C Clerk will be available to prayerfully advise and consult with staff and other volunteers as they carry out their duties.

The Ministry and Counsel Clerk will regularly correspond and connect with Friends across New England, and as helpful will refer requests or inquiries, and share their insights and learning, with those serving in relevant Yearly Meeting leadership roles, including Coordinating & Advisory Committee, Permanent Board, and the Spiritual Life Listening group (see 'Oversight of the experiment, page 19').

**Hours and Service Site:** This volunteer role represents a significant commitment, expected to require an estimated 5 to 10 hours per week. There is no location required, though a combination of email, telephone, Zoom meetings, and in-person visits with Friends will be necessary, in addition to reading reports and sharing updates.

**Accountability:** The M&C Clerk is nominated by the Nominating Committee and approved by the Yearly Meeting. The Clerk is accountable—offering and receiving mutual support and oversight—to the Coordinating & Advisory Committee, the Permanent Board, and the Yearly Meeting in Sessions.

This Friend will also be assisted (as needed) in establishing a support and oversight committee to help ground their service, hopefully grounded in their local meeting.

**Qualifications:** spiritual maturity and grounding in Friends faith and practice

- Strong relationship with their local meeting
- Evidence of a sustained gift in eldership
- Depth of understanding of ministry, faith formation, Quaker practice, meeting life
- Empathic listening skills, even while being able to hold a view different than the one expressed
- Capacity to nurture trust
- Consistency in clarifying and then meeting commitments
- Awareness of key relational dynamics across NEYM
- Skill for facilitating conversations among those holding differing perspectives
- Effective communication, both in writing and in person
- Skills in collaborating, open to new methods and tools

**Functions & Tasks**

- Engage in regular listening for the spiritual condition and unfolding ministry among Friends in New England
- Receive and appropriately relay or refer requests made on behalf of Monthly and Quarterly Meetings
- Maintain supportive contact with Friends serving in public ministry
- Maintain regular conversation with NEYM leadership about the spiritual condition of Friends and Friends meetings and the nurture of ministry
- Participate in (approx. monthly) meetings of Coordinating & Advisory Committee
- Serve ex officio as a member of the Permanent Board (approx. 5 meetings/year)
- Consult with the Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator to advise on the development and promotion of resources, programs, and other opportunities for Quaker spiritual formation and religious education
• Advise and engage in the Sessions planning process to ensure a solid spiritual foundation for worship opportunities at Sessions
• Advise Sessions planners on other aspects of Sessions as led and requested, including the recruitment of Friends with relevant gifts for roles such as care of worship, elders, care of microphone, home group leaders, and those providing pastoral care
• Contribute to communications on behalf of (and to) New England Friends about our spiritual condition and unfolding ministry
• Prepare an annual report for the Advance Documents for Sessions (June 15)
• Shepherd and oversee the writing of NEYM’s annual State of Society report
• In coordination with NEYM communications team, write to monthly meetings annually to request that they prepare and share State of Society reports, offering guidance on process and content
• discern, recruit, and collaborate with other Friends to write NEYM’s State of Society report to be brought to the body at Annual Sessions

Appendix 4. Graphic Reflecting Current and Proposed Support of Ministry & Spiritual Life (see next page).

Thresholding on Donations

Every year, the NEYM budget list organizations that we give money to annually. Some we are members of, a few we choose to give some support to. For many years the amount we gave to the three largest organizations (FUM, FGC, and FWCC) were determined by a complex formula that no one remembered the reasoning behind, and a few years ago we changed our practice to giving each organization the same amount.

Last year the Finance Committee approached Permanent Board, saying “we don’t think we are the right group to discern either how much of our budget is given over to donations or how we divide up the total amount we intend to give to other organizations.” These are indeed complex questions with no obvious or simple answers. PB appointed a few Friends to consider this, but they reported that it was too big a question for three people in the time they had to work with. PB will need to continue to wrestle with this, but the questions are pertinent to monthly meetings and to individuals as well. I would like to use some of our time to hear Friends’ thoughts. I do not expect to come to unity on a recommendation for PB or Finance Committee, but the voices that we hear may inform that work this coming year, and may be useful as monthly meetings consider the same questions.

• How do we decide how much of our budget should be money that we donate to other organizations?
  o Why do we give?
  o Is it a specific dollar amount or a percentage of our total budget?
• For a given amount, how do we decide how much to give to each of the various organizations we are committed to?
  o What is our intention with the various organizations? “Merely” membership, or a belief in their mission?

BRUCE NEUMANN
Yearly Meeting Support for Ministry and Spiritual Life

Connecting Friends in Similar Service (current)
Friends with relevant gifts and experience partner with staff to host “peer circle” events and opportunities for Friends serving in roles such as:
- Clerking (and recording)
- Eldership
- Nominating, naming & nurturing gifts
- Financial stewardship
- Ministry support & oversight
- Faithfulness groups
- Pastoral care
- Pastoral ministry
- Local meeting servant leadership
The Quaker Practice & Leadership Facilitator curates and regularly updates relevant resources (e.g., examples from local meetings, guidance from Faith & Practice) through neym.org.

Offer workshops, trainings (current)
The Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator (in consultation with the clerk of Ministry & Counsel and other relevant partners) ensures consistent, high-quality programmatic offerings in key areas, both as discrete events and as part of larger gatherings (Living Faith, Annual Sessions).

In inviting presenters/leaders, emphasize skill-building, mentoring pairs (more experienced/less experienced), strengthening local meetings

Host annual “meeting for listening for the Life in our local meetings” (proposed)
Each spring, host an open gathering to:
- worship together
- reflect on local and quarterly meeting state of society reports, inform writing of state of society for Yearly Meeting
- reflect on programmatic work and efforts to nurture spiritual life of local meetings in the past year
- share upcoming opportunities to nurture ministry and spiritual life
- celebrate how Friends are experimenting, building capacity, and being faithful
- listen to inform programmatic offerings in the coming year

Spiritual formation, religious education (current)
- nurture capacity in local meetings
- explore and ensure continuing support for future offerings of the Nurturing Faithfulness program
- strengthen awareness of existing spiritual formation and religious education opportunities

Care for worship, eldership, and ministry at Annual Sessions (current and proposed)
As part of the Sessions planning process, a worship coordinator provides primary attention to arrangements for care of worship, elders for speakers, “sacred space,” and memorial meetings at Annual Sessions, in partnership with the clerk of Ministry & Counsel, and in consultation with the Sessions Planning Clerk, Events Coordinator, Secretary, Presiding Clerk, and others with relevant responsibilities at Sessions. Recruit Friends with needed gifts and experience for particular service. Celebrate the fruits of Friends’ service in ministry at both Permanent Board and Annual Sessions.

Provide accompaniment for local meetings (proposed)
Appoint a small body of nominated Friends, and a clerk for this group, to walk alongside local meetings, and to encourage and support Friends in servant leadership roles with local meetings. Secretary and Presiding Clerk, along-with others as relevant, partner with this group to ensure appropriate attention and care for local meetings. Nurturing resilience and the thriving of local communities.

Resource groups to support Yearly-Meeting-wide discernment (current)
As needed, Permanent Board appoints “resource groups” to carry forward, support, and shepherd MM and QM discernment. RGs under the care of the Permanent Board, with integration, partnership, and support from relevant staff and volunteer leadership

Invite regular opportunities to hold the Yearly Meeting in prayer (proposed)
The Clerk of Ministry & Counsel would invite and encourage Friends, both generally and particularly, to pray for the whole body of New England Friends, both through sharing prayer requests and through invitations to gather for worship as led to hold the Yearly Meeting in the Light.

Encourage opportunities for “shop talk,” mutual sharing, and encouragement among friends called to ministry (proposed)
- Prioritize opportunities for Friends active in similar kinds of ministry, with prayerful eldership and oversight
- Focus on nurturing trust and intimacy, mutual accountability, personal faithfulness, humility, and gratitude
- Affirm that responding to—and growth in—a vocation of ministry is a spiritual discipline
- May take various forms, including invitation by Friends under concern and conversations hosted by monthly and quarterly meetings
- Nurture a culture and ongoing practice of these kinds of gatherings of Friends called to ministry, eldership, and oversight

Existing: Proposed
## New England Yearly Meeting
### FY2023 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed

*version #3-B 3/18/2022 approved by Finance Committee 3-26-22*

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<td>4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions</td>
<td>319,842.03</td>
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<td>General Fund Contributions</td>
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<td>4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions Total</td>
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<td>376,225</td>
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<td>4025 Unallocated Income</td>
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<td>4030 Organizations Contributions</td>
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<td>4050 Interest and Dividend Income</td>
<td>10,164.32</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
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<td>4070 Books &amp; Other Sales Income</td>
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<td>5,000</td>
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<td>7,346.61</td>
<td>47,000</td>
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<td>211,050</td>
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<td><strong>Expenses</strong></td>
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<td>5000 Staff</td>
<td>410,548</td>
<td>431,519</td>
<td>452,112</td>
<td>41,572</td>
<td>493,684</td>
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<td>5100 General &amp; Administration</td>
<td>410,548</td>
<td>431,519</td>
<td>452,112</td>
<td>41,572</td>
<td>493,684</td>
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<td>5110 Administration</td>
<td>410,548</td>
<td>431,519</td>
<td>452,112</td>
<td>41,572</td>
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<td>31,900</td>
<td>(9,900)</td>
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<td>2,500</td>
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<td>5140 Legal Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>5145 Infrastructure</td>
<td>5,000</td>
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<td>5,000</td>
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<td>5150 Liability Insurance</td>
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<td>5,100</td>
<td>5,250</td>
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<td>5160 Payroll Service</td>
<td>5,562</td>
<td>5,200</td>
<td>5,200</td>
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<td>5170 Recruiting Expense</td>
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<td>5180 Rent</td>
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<td>5190 Misc. Expense</td>
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<td><strong>Total 5110 Administration</strong></td>
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<td>67,550</td>
<td>68,700</td>
<td>(12,100)</td>
<td>56,600</td>
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<td>265</td>
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<td>1,250</td>
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<td>5240 Postage</td>
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<td>5270 Printing &amp; Copying</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

* Italics = affected by pandemic *
### New England Yearly Meeting
#### FY2023 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>FY2021 Actuals</th>
<th>FY2022 Budget</th>
<th>△ FY22 to FY23 Budgets</th>
<th>FY2023 Proposed Budget</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5200 Office</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>5290 Telephone</td>
<td>3,492</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>5295 Misc. Office</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total 5200 Office</td>
<td>39,105</td>
<td>37,015</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37,015</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| **Total 5100 General & Administration**       | 91,615         | 106,715       | (12,100)               | 93,615                 |

| **5300 Travel & Conferences**                 |                |               |                        |                        |
| 5310 Travel - Committee                       | 775            | 3,000         | -                      | 3,000                  |
| 5320 Travel - Clerk                           | 4,500          | 4,500         | -                      | 4,500                  |
| 5330 Travel - Programs                        | 60             | 3,700         | -                      | 3,700                  |
| 5335 Travel - Representatives Travel          | 150            | 6,700         | -                      | 6,700                  |
| 5350 Travel - Staff                           | 1,785          | 17,000        | -                      | 17,000                 |
| 5360 Travel - Ministries                      | 400            | 400           | -                      | 400                    |
| Total 5300 Travel & Conferences               | 2,770          | 35,300        | -                      | 35,300                 |

| **6000 Programs**                             |                |               |                        |                        |
| 6110 Sessions Room & Board                    | 181,140        | 186,850       | 6,100                  | 192,950                |
| 6112 Retreats - Room & Board                  |               |               |                        |                        |
| 6114 Room Rental                              | 575            | 20,000        | (3,980)                | 16,020                 |
| 6150 Food Expense                             | 434            | 18,000        | (15,930)               | 2,070                  |
| Total 6112 Retreats - Room & Board            | 1,009          | 38,000        | (5,480)                | 32,520                 |

| **Total 6125 Program Expenses**               | 14,507         | 38,300        |                        | 29,800                 |

| **5600 Program Support**                      |                |               |                        |                        |
| 6105 Honoraria - Speakers/Wkshp Ldrs          | 13,550         | 22,000        | -                      | 22,000                 |
| 6107 Honoraria - Volunteer Leadership         | 15,000         | 15,000        | -                      | 15,000                 |
| 6115 Equipment Rental                         | 600            | 6,000         | -                      | 6,000                  |
| 6121 Supplies and Other Expenses              | 957            | 9,300         | (2,000)                | 7,300                  |
| 6165 Pre-Sessions Expense                     | 1,000          | 1,000         | -                      | 1,000                  |
| Total 6125 Program Expenses                   | 14,507         | 38,300        | (2,000)                | 36,300                 |

| **Total 6130 Committee Expenses - General**   | 1,500          | 6,350         | -                      | 6,350                  |
| 6134 Childcare                                | 2,000          | 2,000         | -                      | 2,000                  |
| 6137 Committee Day Expenses                   | 0              | 0             | -                      | 0                      |
| Total 6130 Committee Expenses - General       | 1,500          | 6,350         | -                      | 6,350                  |

| **6160 Program Support**                      |                |               |                        |                        |
| 6163 Friends Camp                             | 1,561          | 2,220         | -                      | 2,220                  |
| 6167 Religious Education & Outreach           | 2,000          | 0             | -                      | 0                      |
| Total 6160 Program Support                    | 1,561          | 4,220         | -                      | 4,220                  |

| **Total 6000 Programs**                       | 18,576         | 270,010       | (1,380)                | 284,300                |

| **Total 6140 Books & Other Sales Expense**    | 0              | 0             | -                      | 0                      |
| 6142 Books                                    | 14,500         | 14,500        | -                      | 14,500                 |
| 6147 Consignment Sales                        | 0              | 0             | -                      | 0                      |
| Total 6140 Books & Other Sales Expense        | 14,500         | 14,500        | -                      | 14,500                 |
| **6200 Support of Other Organizations**       | 44,014         | 45,975        | -                      | 45,975                 |
**New England Yearly Meeting**

**FY2023 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed**

version #3-B 3/18/2022 approved by Finance Committee 3-26-22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>FY2021 Actuals</th>
<th>FY2022 Budget</th>
<th>Δ FY22 to FY23 Budgets</th>
<th>FY2023 Proposed Budget</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>6600 Publications</td>
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<td>6610 Yearly Meeting Minute Book</td>
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Notes:
1. Friends Mutual Health Group distribution of surplus, second part of two; first received November 2021.
2. Funding the priority for support of monthly meetings and ministries, $20,000 from unrestricted reserves; see note 4.
3. Funding the Honoraria Supporting Volunteer Leadership is being phased in over three years; for FY2022 the full $15,000 is coming from reserves; in FY2023 $10,000 and in FY2024 $5000 will come from reserves. The expense is being tracked in the new subcategory "Honoraria - Volunteer Leadership".
4. COLA increase of 6.3% + small merit increase. $20,000 to address the priority for support of monthly meetings and ministers by increased support staff (PB 21-89); this increase can be used in either 5130 Contracted Services or 5000 Staff Salaries & Benefits.
5. Amounts will remain flat between FY22-FY23.
### Nominating Slate

#### Permanent Board (50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>Bishop, Peter (Mtoby)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>Forsythe, Martin (Bhill)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Mair, Edward (Ames)</td>
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<td>McCandless, Jean (Burl)</td>
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<td>Taber, Will (Fpon)</td>
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<td>Warnock, Eleanor (Nham)</td>
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<td>Taber, Will (Fpon)</td>
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<td>Bishop, Peter (Mtoby)</td>
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<td>2025</td>
<td>Forsythe, Martin (Bhill)</td>
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<td>Quirk, Brian (Law)</td>
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<td>Crosby, Eileen (Mt Toby)</td>
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<td>David Eastman (Han)</td>
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<td>John Ridgeway (Mt. Toby)</td>
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<td>2030</td>
<td>Bishop, Peter (NHam), Recording</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**boldface** = new appointment | **boldface italic** = re-appointment | *clerk | **recording clerk**
Earthcare Ministry (15)¹
2023 2024 2025
MacKenzie, Reb (QCUn)
Wallis, Timmon (Nham)

Finance (10)
2023 2024 2025
Forsythe, Hannah (Bhill)
Stern, Roland (Well)
Maurer, Philip (Nham)
Sprogell, Sarah (Durh)
Wooten, Kathleen (Lawr)
Drysdale, Robert Scot (Han)*
Olsen, Kathryn (ESan)

Keith, Doug (Hart)
Corindia, Thomas (Han)

Treasurer (2023):
Murray, Robert (BHill)

Friends Camp Nominating (5; 3 named by YM Nominating; 2 by Friends Camp Committee)
2023 2024 2025
Burgin, Hilary (BHil)
Keefe-Perry, Kristina (FPon)

Legacy Gift Committee (9)
2023 2024 2025
Gant, Sarah (Bhill)
Link, Mary (Mt Toby)*
Reixach, Karen (Keen)
Christopher, Megan (Well)
Martin, Lori (NHav)
Isbell Shinn, Jennie (MVin)

Ministry and Counsel Clerk (job description is on the business agenda)
2025

Nominating Committee (15) (nominated by Permanent Board)
2023 2024 2025
McDonald, LouAnne (Hart)**
Stillwell, Jacqueline (Mon)*
Weiss, Conor (Han)
Taber, Will (FPond)
Goldberger, Judy (Bhill)
Woodrow, Honor (Put)
Morrill, Beth (Hart)
Lindo, Anna (Fram)
Smith, Sara (Con)

Puente de Amigos (9)
2023 2024 2025
Lopez, Felice (Fram)
Fogarty, Margaret (Dov)
Hopkins, Mary (Fpon)
McManamy, Martha (Ames)*
Stone, Carolyn (Well)*
Lindo, Richard (Fram)
Toomey, Marybeth (Well)
Kinsky, Deena (Matt)
Schmidt, Maxine (NHam)

¹ New members are not being appointed to this committee because it is currently under review.

boldface = new appointment | boldface italic = re-appointment | *clerk | **recording clerk
Sessions Clerk
2025
Veatch, Phillip (FPon)

Sessions Theme and Speakers Team (5)
2023

Supervisor to the YM Secretary
2023
Reuthe, Elizabeth (Vass)

Youth Ministries (6)
2023
West, Kim (Camb)
Matchette, Abigail (Bur)

2024
Eller, Jessica (Port)
Sanchez-Eppler, Karen (Nham)

2024
Dawson, Janet (Fram)

Representatives to Other Friends Organizations

American Friends Service Committee Corp. (4)
2023
Rhodewalt, Scott (Nkin)

2024
Steele, Rebecca (Port)
Woodrow, Peter (Port), convenor

2025
Barker, Mark (Conc)

Friends Committee on National Legislation (6)
2023
Drysdale, Robert (Han)
Weidner, Holly (Vass)

2024
Cazden, Betsy (Prov)

2025
Grace, James (BHil)

Friends General Conference Central Committee Representatives (8)
2023

2024
Hilles-Pilant, Carolyn (Bhill)

2025

Friends Peace Teams Project (3)
Claggett-Borne, Minga (Cam)

Friends United Meeting 2023 Triennial Representatives (8, appointed to serve until the 2026 Triennial)
Blood, Peter (Mtob)
Collea, Beth (Dov)
Fogarty, Maggie (Dov)

Olsen, Kathryn (Sand)
Weiss, Fritz (Port)

Friends United Meeting 2023 Triennial Representatives (8, appointed to serve until the 2026 Triennial)

Keefe-Perry, Kristina (Fpon)

Smith, Jennifer (Conc)

FUM General Board Representatives (3, appointed to attend 2023 Triennial and serve until the 2026 Triennial)
Martin, Frederick (BHill)

Keefe-Perry, Kristina (Fpon)

Smith, Jennifer (Conc)

**boldface** = new appointment | **boldface italic** = re-appointment | **clerk** | **recording clerk**
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Dear Friends,

This year I was blessed with four months of sabbatical rest. I remain deeply grateful to the Yearly Meeting and all who made this possible, including especially Nia Thomas and Sarah Gant—and their families—who rearranged their lives to carry the Secretary's responsibilities during the time I was away. In the quiet of winter, in the stillness of prayer, I felt called away from the false idols of expectations and endless “work” that had come to occupy my heart. In absence and solitude, I found my way home.

Returning, I feel a renewed call to the Way, to a life that is more available, more receptive to the gentle-yet-world-changing movement of the Holy Spirit. And I yearn to journey with others who are also led to embrace, in ways both ancient and ever-new, this endless pilgrimage of the heart.

This coming winter will mark ten years in my service as Yearly Meeting Secretary. As I look forward in prayer, I remain inspired by the hope, commitment, and leading shared by so many: to make more real the vision of transformative, witness-making local meetings across our region, nurturing a common life of faith practiced in the Friends tradition.

And yet I know that the prospect of this vision being realized in the time to come is by no means certain. I am convinced that our story unfolds will depend on how willing we are to be tendered and guided by the Spirit. On how clear we can be, with ourselves and with one another, about our essential commitments. And on the daily watchfulness that keeps our hearts clear and our hands available for what is truly ours to do.

This is a time, then, for nourishing the roots. The roots of the spiritual practice we have inherited. The roots of our testimony as Friends, and the deeper legacy of faithful people beyond memory who have sought—and been found by—the Friendship through which the world is overcome. And the roots of our local meetings, the crucibles of our common life, where the messiness and confusion of our lives find a home in faith. As Friend Elton Trueblood warned prophetically, a society that severs its roots—by choice or forgetting—lives a short life as cut flowers. We who have ears to hear, let us hear.

Much of my work is walking with those who serve. Since Sessions last gathered in person in 2019, I’ve accompanied Friends shepherding their meetings in times of joy, grief, rage, anxiety, and despair. As supervisor of the Yearly Meeting staff who serve Friends of all ages throughout the year, I’m deeply aware of the toll this time has taken—and continues to take—on these beloved servant leaders. I’ve borne witness to the burdens of Friends serving in volunteer leadership roles, who also face increasing expectations alongside fewer hands to share in the work. These faithful people have sought to hold us—and hold us together—in a scattering time. I’ve been blessed by the care, resilience, and courage so many of you have shown.

I give thanks for your dedication, sacrifice, skillfulness, creativity, humor, vulnerability, and love. I hope we will hold in our minds and hearts a recognition of this sacrifice and loving service on our behalf, Friends, now and in the time to come.

By many measures, New England Yearly Meeting of Friends is thriving. And this is a season of reorientation. In 2015, Sessions reaffirmed the essential purpose of the organization of the Yearly Meeting—institutional structures, programs, and services—to strengthen and nurture the common life and ministry of local Friends meetings across our region.

Since then, we’ve been learning more about how to do this. We’ve made many changes, large and small, to simplify, align, and integrate the work of the organization with this purpose. Together, we have gathered and crafted a wide range of useful and effective “tools” to help us do our work; the “shed” is filled with them. And now I believe it’s time to turn, with fresh energy and renewed commitment, to use these tools in the garden: nurturing the life and thriving of our local meetings.

Elsewhere in these advance documents, among so much meaningful sharing, I hope you’ll give particular attention to the updates on our work on inclusive leadership development and the recommendations for next steps in the yearly meeting’s support for ministry and spiritual life. I believe sustained attention to these ongoing aspects of our life as Friends is imperative for our service together, now and in the future.

I’m holding three prayers for us now:

In this time of polarization, may we protect—and if needed, excavate—the space to disagree with one another about things that matter deeply, trusting we can be brought into the essential Unity of the Ground and Spring.

In brokenheartedness, may we seek and abide in the Peace that comes, not from our own strength or virtue, but from the boundless grace and mercy of God, which is never earned yet always available to us, even when we reject or forget it.

When we feel the world coming apart, may we surrender—moment by moment—to the steady and relentless Love Who holds us fast. In the Light of this Love, may we see the next step. In the Light of this Love, may we know true healing. Together, in the Light of this Love, may we find our way home.

—NOAH MERRILL

Accounts Manager

As the pandemic continued last year, the Accounts Manager’s usual tasks were a bit easier in the summer of 2021 due to Sessions being online once again—and once again my time was spent instead on managing financial responses to the pandemic, including application for a second-draw PPP loan in concert with Friends Camp, and successful forgiveness of that loan in November. During the winter, Noah’s sabbatical meant some different responsibilities for different staff, including me—a healthy chance for refreshment and perspective for us as well. I was able to return to finishing up the funds recalculation project, put on hold at the start of the pandemic, and was also heavily involved in the payments-and-donations parts of our project to overhaul the Sessions registration website and database. We also began moving toward producing regular quar-
ttery statements, working with the revised Treasurer’s (and Accounts Manager’s) job descriptions, which call for a more oversight-focused, less time-intensive role for the Treasurer. Spring has brought more engagement with monthly meetings, a return to supporting Noah’s work, and preparations for in-person Sessions. As in past years, I hope to continue to provide a constant foundation of truth in the Yearly Meeting’s financial affairs.

With the arrival this summer, finally, of covid vaccines for small children, our family is looking forward to re-engaging with Quaker meetings—and the wider world—in person. I pray that this summer and in the coming year, we can all continue to reconnect and reengage with each other—as individuals, to each other in our local meetings; as Friends in meetings, with other meetings. And my job being what it is, I hope that the Yearly Meeting’s work will facilitate more such connections, leading to more love and more joy.

—FREDERICK MARTIN

Children and Family Ministries Coordinator

As covid continued to challenge us, we continued trying many ways of communicating care and connection to young people and their families, including:

- Three JYM and three JHYM retreats, half of which were in person
- Outdoor Local Teen Meetups for middle- and high school youth
- Two in-person JYM Family Days
- An all-NEYM Bread Day with Maggie Fiori and local Bread Starters
- Virtual Thursday night parent conversations with Harriet Heath
- Virtual teen art hangouts with Emily Edwards and Katey Baker-Smith
- Bi-weekly virtual Teen Racial Justice Group meetings with Anna Lindo and Wendy Schlotterbeck
- Almost 20 JYM Zoom Hangouts with Dave Baxter
- Monthly virtual JHYM Game Nights with JHYM Staff
- Several virtual Quaker Family Nights with local meetings sharing gifts and joy
- The JYM–JHYM newsletter published every 2 to 3 weeks
- Letters, postcards, retreat packages (the local post office knows me by name)
- Conversations with Friends at local meetings on supporting youth and families

Two-thirds of the children at the JYM Retreat in May had never attended a retreat in person. Many of them had never even met each other in person, but they knew each other as friends. It was grand! While the group has shrunk during covid, JYM feels vibrant and joy-filled.

The JHYM community has had a much more difficult time. We lost a significant number who, for a variety of reasons, did not participate on Zoom. Two in-person retreats we were miraculously able to hold this spring were full of joy, gratitude—and some grief, as we felt all we’ve been missing since February 2020. This beloved group will require deep care, love, and creative nurturing in the coming year, but I trust it will carry on.

I cannot imagine getting through the past 2 years with as much joy and creativity without having Maggie Fiori, Teen Ministries Coordinator, as my compadre. Our imagining, sharing, problem-solving, and friendship has been a huge gift. I hold enormous love and gratitude for the rest of the Yearly Meeting staff, too. We so love one another.

My stepping aside so that new leadership can step in has felt clear and held. I hold trust and gratitude to all the Friends who held pieces of the process. Kara Price (Storrs MM), the incoming Children & Family Ministries Coordinator, has been part of our youth programs for most of her life. She brings a longstanding Call to ministry, a degree and work experience in education, and youth ministry leadership experience. I am deeply grateful for Kara’s clear “Yes!” to carrying on the beloved ministry of this Yearly Meeting.

We have much to learn, to change, and to step into, and ask for your prayers, help, patience, and care. The collective wisdom and heart of this ministry is held by the circle of youth staff, Youth Ministries Committee members, young people themselves and families. I have faith that, grounded in Spirit, prayer, gratitude, trust, and joy, this ministry and community of Friends will continue to thrive and shine.

I am one of the luckiest people on the planet to be have been able to do what I’ve felt led to do for so many years with enormous love, patience, and affirmation from my family; with the love, support, grounded eldering, prayer, and salary from the Yearly Meeting; and with grace and Light from Spirit. I have truly loved it. Thank you from the bottom of my heart, dear Friends.

—GRETCHEN BAKER-SMITH

Events Coordinator

As part of my duties as Events Coordinator for the Yearly Meeting I submit a written report reflecting on the past year. In my past reports I’ve described my work with the Yearly Meeting as a scaffolding others can build on or a vessel to hold the work of Friends. I have quoted astrophysicists and science fiction. I have prided myself on having reports that were meaningful, humorous, and inspired.

In each of the past several Sessions reports some inspiration, some light, has shown the way; has given me the metaphor or words to describe my work. That has not happened yet this year.

The theme of this year’s Sessions is: This is the hour—how does the Spirit find you?

The Spirit finds me weary, tired, burned out, and exhausted. I honestly do not know if I have ever been as spiritually, mentally, and emotionally tired as I am in the lead up to this Sessions.

This year is different in a new way. We are attempting to return to an in-person gathering while also maintaining connections that have been nurtured online for the past two years. In the past I have talked about how in big events, like Sessions, the first year is about surviving, the second is about learning, and the third is about mastery. That third stage continues to be elusive. There is little ability to lean on in the work of the past almost five years, as neither what we had done in person or online alone is adequate to meet the needs of this year. Add to that the shifting Castleton schedule, the rise of new covid strains and the drum beat of uncertainty, as well as the cul-
tural fatigue and trauma many of us have faced the past two years, this year may be the hardest yet.

I have sorely missed the mid-year gatherings which are my fuel though much of the year and was grateful to see many Friends at the Ministry & Our Meetings gathering in Maine earlier this year. There have been times I questioned why I am doing this work. What started out as a job shepherding the logistics of Sessions and other Yearly Meeting gatherings has become a year-round effort almost exclusively focused on navigating Sessions.

I’m sure many of you have wondered “why” in your own work: Why am I clerk of my meeting? Why am I on the finance committee? Why am I a First Day School teacher? Why, why, why? We are compassionate and dedicated people and that is exactly why we ask why, because we care. Those muscles which usually propel us forward, are so weary from the lack of rest they are often breaking own rather than getting stronger.

You should be a little weary right now.
If you are, be grateful.
That is a good thing.
That weariness is confirmation that your heart is working properly.
It is your humanity responding to so much inhumanity around you.
It is evidence of your goodness still fighting to feel useful. (John Pavlovitz)

I hope that when we all come together in Vermont and online, I will once again rediscover the “why” of my work and that will carry me forward for another year. Already I am energized to once again be working with all the Sessions staff and volunteers who help bring Sessions together both on campus and online. There are so many things I love about working with Friends and working with the staff of the Yearly Meeting, I am hopeful that our time at Sessions will rekindle the flame of “why” as a statement of purpose rather than a cry of weariness.

—ELIZABETH HACALA

Friends Camp Director

We are so grateful! During the summer of 2021, more than 270 campers and more than 40 staff members together experienced a total of more than 7,300 “person days” at Camp. For the 2022 season, we are returning to our pre-pandemic session structure and camper capacities, with more than 400 campers experiencing at least one camp session. While operating Camp presents challenges during this pandemic, we are proud to have offered joy-filled in-person youth gatherings for campers desperate to be in community with peers. Our focus at Camp since the pandemic has been to help campers and staff heal from a challenging few years through community, the outdoors, Spirit, and joy.

Moments at Camp, little and big, have provided moments of grace for me as the Camp Director during these difficult few years: an 8-year-old first-time camper holding hands with her counselor on their walk to Vespers, a group of teens commenting on the sense of relief they feel without their phones at Camp, a spontaneous mid-dinner dance party on the field outside the dining hall, birds chirping during Meeting for Worship—held outside due to covid-19 protocols. The work of gathering in person has not been easy, especially working to make safe decisions in the absence of clear guidance from governing bodies. We have balanced different families’ needs and expectations, as well as the dual threats of covid-19 and of isolation for young people. We have hoped to increase access to Camp while also managing limited capacity requirements.

The covid-19 pandemic continues to impact Friends Camp in many ways. The staffing shortage across the United States has made it challenging to fill our staff roles. To encourage staff members we have increased pay modestly, added an extra day off between each session, and are offering a vocational discernment program in partnership with Beacon Hill Friends House. The costs for goods and services have increased, and availability of items we need, such as rental vans, lumber and property supplies, and food by delivery, has been limited. The most significant impact of the pandemic, however, has been the mental health challenges faced by our campers and staff, which have been exacerbated through the pandemic. We are seeking to support campers and staff as best we are able in the camp setting, and we feel concern about the state of teen mental health in and beyond our community.

I am extraordinarily grateful for the ways in which Friends across New England have helped to create the “nest” of Camp for our young people. Through volunteer stewardship, prayers, governance, and financial contributions, you have made the Camp experience possible. For 2022, more than 25% of campers report a Quaker affiliation. At a recent Young Friends retreat in Portland, nearly everyone in the room stood up during a “Big Wind Blows” frenzy when the question was asked “Have you ever been to Friends Camp?” Many staffers for JYM, JHYM, and YF programs first felt inspired by Quaker youth work at Camp. Our Camp is a vital and ongoing ministry for New England Yearly Meeting, and we are grateful to be a “garden” for Quaker community and leadership.

—ANNA HOPKINS BULLER

Office Manager

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matt 11:28, KJV)

I could almost re-run my report from 2021, but I do, in fact, have news to report.

As you know, Noah Merrill was on sabbatical from October to February, which gave me the opportunity to make some decisions on my own and to work more directly with other staff. I have truly enjoyed getting to know them better and I am in awe of the responsibilities they handle so gracefully.

I’ve been the contact person and sometimes the decision-maker for the changes we made for processing donations and payments, and the rebuild of our registration website and corresponding parts of our database. (I hope you found the registration site easier to navigate.) All the staff contributed, and I am grateful for their support as well as for the skill of our web developer and database consultant.

I also had to learn to use CampBrain (a website/database used by Friends Camp and many other summer camps), adapting it to collect information for Sessions. I just hope I remember what I’ve learned when I need to set up 2023 Sessions!

And all this work was done via telephone, Zoom, Slack, email, Airtable, and Asana, with very few in-person meetings.
This year has been more difficult than previous pandemic years. I have felt more isolated and less able to deal with challenges with grace. I need the energy that is present when we meet in person. I need my meeting community and my workplace community.

Thank you to the individual Friends who encourage and support me and to the committee clerks and local meetings who keep me informed and respond to requests. (If your meeting emails your newsletter and/or your business meeting minutes, please add office@neym.org to the mailing list. I really do read them all.)

I am planning a 4-week leave following the end of Sessions when I hope to regain equilibrium and patience, to “recharge the batteries” and find spiritual refreshment, and simply do something different.

—SARA HUBNER

Quaker Practice & Leadership Facilitator

As our meetings and our ministries are emerging from the first two years of the pandemic, we’re moving with new daily realities and new insights towards an unfamiliar future. Navigating the changed landscape, I prayerfully remind myself: When you notice something unexpected, be curious; when false alarms of urgency are going off, rediscover inner stillness first; when you don’t know which way to go, wait on your Guide. These standing invitations have served as anchors, steadied me through this full year.

About a year ago, as it became increasingly clear that there isn’t a near future with no threat of Covid, a focus across our programs has been learning to responsibly hold high-quality events that are not only Zoom-based but also in person and hybrid, so that we can better meet the needs of Friends across the lifespan. Much time was spent working alongside others to discover new ways of doing things such as how to hold a retreat, a Permanent Board Meeting, a Ministry & Spiritual Life gathering, or our Annual Sessions with adequate-yet-implementable layers of protection from Covid transmission, or how to design a program that provides a high quality experience for both participants gathered together in person and for those connecting via Zoom.

We owe many, many thanks to technology ministers and elders among us as well as Friends with public health expertise who have so generously shared their time and wisdom. Though the initial learning curve has been steep, we continue to learn and adapt as we (and our public health agencies) know better.

This has also been a year of generative partnerships. As I write, applications for the next offering of Nurturing Faithfulness are coming in. It has been life-giving to see the ways that NEYM, Woolman Hill, and the Beacon Hill Friends House have been able to partner with one another as well as core teachers Marcelle Martin and Hilary Burgin. This past fall we also collaborated with Friends Committee on National Legislation to host a conversation on grace in generational transition. Excitingly, this summer we will formally begin a partnership with New York Yearly Meeting to expand their thriving Aging Resources Consultation and Help (ARCH) Program into New England via hiring a Aging Resources Consultation and Help (ARCH) Coordinator for the New England region (application information at https://neym.org/aging-resource-consultation-and-help-coordinator-sought). Each of these initiatives has been a chance to better understand the unique gifts of other Friends organizations in our area (as well as our own), to sharpen our best practices, and hone our tools for collaboration.

I would be remiss to write this report without mentioning that this year our Yearly Meeting Secretary took a sabbatical leave, and for the first time in many years we had to figure out how to continue time-sensitive work in the Secretary’s absence. For about a third of the year, my workload shifted so that I could serve as Acting Secretary for Programs and Administration. Even more so than in my usual role, I frequently hopped between wide-ranging projects, initiatives, conversations, and decisions, and a lot of my usual work was intentionally put on the back burner in order to honor our (important, spiritually critical) commitment to the practice of sabbatical. In the annual cycle ahead (after we have gotten through our first hybrid/pandemic-conditions Sessions), I look forward to being able to pick back up projects that have been temporarily set aside during this especially unusual year.

As always, the foremost feeling I experience in writing these reports is gratitude. Thank you to those I’ve gotten to serve alongside this year: You are kind, energizing, grounded, insightful, and forgiving people. Thank you to those who have made it possible for me to serve, including those who have cared for my son while I work: my husband Rob and our son’s fabulous preschool teachers. And, to the One who’s gifts are at the heart of everything there is to be thankful for: Thank you for another year.

—NAIDWYNEN THOMAS

Teen Ministries Coordinator

Dear Friends,

Early last fall, I met with a small group of Young Friends online to build leadership amongst their peers. Part of this was learning how to name the spiritual condition of the community—listening for what feels deeply true in the group as a whole. To facilitate this, I gave the group a list of adjectives to choose from, like “grounded” and “lonely” and “hopeful.” One Young Friend went off script and named the spiritual condition of the Young Friends community as “needy.” This has stuck with me all year long. It so tenderly and truthfully named the condition not only of teens right now, but also me, and us.

All year, all pandemic really, I’ve been asking God (and my coworkers, my staff, my wife, my meeting, my therapist, anyone who will listen) how can I minister to those who are spiritually needy when my own soul is desperately in need of nourishment? I still don’t feel like I know, and I know so many of us are asking that same question.

I’ve learned that my job in this moment is to do everything in my power—and my power is often limited—to gather Young Friends together in person safely, and leave it up to God from there. I don’t need to have excellent program planned, I don’t need to have all the answers for if something goes wrong, I just need to carve out a safe, loving container for teens to flock to and take shelter in, and then see what happens. We hosted three successful in-person Young Friends retreats (including two overnight ones!) for the first time in two years, and they were lessons in trust and joy—trusting Spirit would show up, trusting my staff would keep the retreat moving, trusting all the layers of swiss-cheese-like Covid precautions would hold...
the virus at bay (they did). And I had to learn that the thing Young Friends needed most from our time together was joy—to find Spirit in one another and in the sheer visceral delight of being together in our bodies, playing games, laughing, dancing, singing, hugging, worshiping, walking together.

Two years of isolation and ongoing depression has left me in a position where it was very difficult to be the optimistic, forward-thinking, enthusiastic youth minister who I want to be, who has visions to lead Young Friends somewhere new. What I had to learn to do instead this year was to walk alongside Young Friends, letting Spirit lead us and trusting Spirit would provide whatever nourishment we all needed in each moment. I offered meetups and online gatherings when there was energy, and canceled them if there wasn’t. I planned activities loosely and left lots of space in the schedule for finding out what we needed and trusting we’d figure it out. I had to postpone a retreat by a month, the theme of which was, ironically, “don’t postpone joy.” I consulted often with Young Friends and families and staff in surveys and phone calls. I worked more closely than ever with Gretchen, leaning on each other when one of us couldn’t see the light ahead, and listening together for what was possible week by week. I have been so blessed by this partnership. It’s what made Bread Day possible! A day when we did what we thought impossible—gathering Friends of all ages into their local meeting communities, online and in person, during a pandemic, to find Spirit in the process of baking bread.

May we trust that we’ll receive our daily bread, prioritize joy, and allow God’s way to open.

In service and love,

—MAGGIE NELSON (SHE/HER/HERS)
Committee and Board Reports

Permanent Board

“The heart of Friends’ business process is the nurturing of spiritual openness and deep listening that allows the sense of the meeting to emerge. At times, there may be unanimous agreement that a proposed action should be carried out. However, when those gathered are not in simple agreement, careful consideration will be given to each speaker, and silent worship may be requested. If all in attendance draw on their disciplines of worship and stay mindful that the purpose is to seek the will of God for the gathered body, unity can be found and acted upon. Sense of the meeting is the understanding of where the gathered body is led and does not mean that every individual present is completely satisfied or in total agreement. Contrasting views and perceptions may be expressed and some disagreements may remain. The sense of the meeting emerges from the committed efforts of a loving community and strengthens its bonds.” (NEYM Faith and Practice)

Many of us around our Yearly Meeting have added a second “S” to our common acronym for the testimonies, “SPICES.” For some, this means service; for others, stewardship. For members of the Permanent Board, it means both.

We gather regularly, representing all the Quarters within our wider body, to carry on the work of Annual Sessions between sessions, to hear and hold concerns that we then bring to you, and to support the ministries of administration and connection, as members, one of another.

All of our approved minutes are available here: https://neym.org/committee-minutes/102

We also have care of several workgroups that further discern and hold concerns and include:

- The Israel-Palestine Working Group (https://neym.org/israel-palestine-working-group), which supports local Friends meetings across New England in responding to the Yearly Meeting’s encouragement to deepen our engagement with issues concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- The Right Relationship Resource Group, whose most recent report to the Permanent Board is included with this report
- The Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group (https://neym.org/noticing-patterns-oppression-and-faithfulness-working-group), whose practices we use regularly at our meetings, and with whom we debrief after every meeting
- The Ministry Transition Team, whose report is provided with recommendations for moving forward with ongoing care for ministry and the spiritual care of our community
- The emerging group from Earthcare Ministries, which is asking to be reformulated, and whose annual report is also included with this report.

We have also created a new Antiracism Consultation Work-

Committee and Board Reports

ing Group whose approved charge is here: https://neym.org/antiracism-consultation-working-group. This group will affirm and implement the commitment we renewed earlier this year to be an antiracist faith community.

This year, I would like to lift up the work of implementing the recommendations of the Clerking Structures and Practices Group, which we approved at Sessions in 2020. We use this roadmap to guide us: https://bit.ly/3I6ikAB

One gratifying part of my work is to be responsible for the distribution of the Funds for Sufferings, and this year we awarded Jay O’Hara of Portland Friends $4,217 for his on-going witness against the burning of coal, based on consultation with the Presiding Clerk and the Yearly Meeting Secretary.

We are grateful for the participation of so many in the work and witness of our faith family, for our dedicated staff and the leadership and accompaniment they provide, for those who hold the work of this Board in the Light and for the commitment of our community to live and grow together in faith. Even, perhaps especially, when it is challenging.

I welcome any questions or concerns you may have; please contact me at pbclerk@neym.org. Our next meeting is scheduled for September 17 and all are welcome. Our most recent meeting in June was a blended (or hybrid) meeting and we hope to continue to use both Zoom and on-site opportunities to listen together for the promptings of Spirit in our life as a community.

—LESLIE MANNING, CLERK

Right Relationship Resource Group

This report is an update on our process and progress in the task of delivering the Apology to Native Americans.

Many times this year we have felt the hand of grace hold us as new revelations came to us about our relationship with our Indigenous neighbors. We became aware of the depth of pain our Indigenous brothers and sisters were experiencing. It opened before us as a vast ocean which we barely touched with our toes, aware of how deep and wide it was, stretching back over the centuries. Our hearts were broken open again and again. We feel this Apology in our souls.

We came back again and again as we met monthly—how to present this small step of the Apology. We struggled each time to imagine how this would feel to them, a task that was so new to us in our White privilege that we caught ourselves up short. What held us up? Was it so hard to give up our White privilege? (Yes, it was.) We found ourselves, again and again, realizing we were centering ourselves, what we were doing, and by baby steps stretching ourselves to see this from a different perspective. How would it feel to be carrying that pain and be offered an apology?

As we took concrete, albeit baby steps, more of this was opened to us. We set about building a database of Indigenous communities, becoming aware that some use the word tribe while others prefer band or people. Our goal was to find what they called themselves, address them by that name, and know who their leaders were. In the end, we realized that trying to include all the names on the Letter of Apology was fraught with potential errors and hidden enmities. It was less than perfect, could not be perfect. We decided to refer to all of them by
the umbrella term of Algonquin people. We will send letters to each of the Indigenous communities we have identified. We realized we were not ethnologists or any other kind of expert. Finally, we realized that we were the ones called to this moment, because we were here, right now. There is no one else to pass this to.

We spent a long time planning an introductory cover letter for the Apology. Again, we had to de-center ourselves, strip away extraneous thoughts, and redirect ourselves to our true goal. We realized we could only offer the Apology, and offer to apologize in person. Where some tribes might be willing to receive us, others might not. This was not something we could impose. We asked humbly for them to name how to present it, knowing that any ideas we offered would again seek to center us.

At this point we realized how cold and distant it would be to just receive this in the mail. We thought of how when different groups want to meet, they send emissaries to negotiate how to meet. We asked people in the Yearly Meeting who had established some kind of relationship to come forward and then open a dialogue about what would work to present the apology. Many people came forward, though some groups may not be represented. In that process we uncovered the reality that this was not a good time for some groups to engage with this. We put a halt to distributing it so we could assess how to handle this. We struggled to understand whether we were disempowering the Indigenous people by interpreting for them how to proceed. We realized we needed to reach out to Shirley Hager and gkisedtanamoogk and build on those relationships to help us know how to proceed.

At this writing, we expect that by the time you read this, the letters will have gone out to most indigenous bodies in our area. We will report in person at Annual Sessions on any further developments.

We ask you to continue to hold us in the Light as we take these small steps toward Right Relationship. This is a journey that has no end.

—THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIP RESOURCE GROUP: DON CAMPBELL, ANDREW GRANT, SUZANNA SCHELL, SARA SMITH, KIM WEST, BRUCE NEUMANN (ex officio)

Earthcare Ministry

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.

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 Sessions. Reports from those two meetings are appended to our annual report posted at https://neym.org/committees/earthcare-ministry.

The Presiding Clerk and Secretary of the Yearly Meeting 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.

—KIMBERLY STONER AND GAIL MEILX, CO-CLERKS

Archives & Historical Records

The Archives Committee has continued, as before the pandemic, to meet regularly on Zoom.

Continuing in our role as an interface between the monthly meetings and SCUA (UMass Special Collections and Archives), our committee held a Saturday morning workshop via Zoom called “Preserve Your History: Maintaining Your Quaker Meeting’s Historical Records & Archives.” Elise Riley, the Outreach Archivist, and members of the committee led presentations and sharing among participants. Approximately 20 participants from 15 meetings participated as well as the committee members. We covered topics such as why we would want to preserve documents, records management within the meeting, how to donate records, and how we can locate them once they have been donated. We are working with some of the recordings of presentations available on the Archives pages of the NEYM website.

We came away with two important areas for the committee to focus on:

• As a committee we hope to facilitate making records management and retention practices less of a mystery by providing retention guidelines and sharing good practices used in monthly meetings today.
• We hope to work with meetings in Maine in particular to ensure that the records from Maine quarterly meetings are now acknowledged as part of the NEYM Ar-
chives. We have many questions and hope that perhaps those who participated in our workshop might join us in this work.

During the year, Elisa also reports the following activity:

Since last spring, as NEYM’s Outreach Archivist I have coordinated several donations to SCUA. The donations included records from Northeast Kingdom and Mt. Toby meetings, totaling 945 documents, as well as papers of Laurel Sakaraisan, a UU minister who served at Smithfield Meeting in Woonsocket, RI, in the 1970s. I consulted with several Quakers about managing their personal records. I also visited New Bedford Monthly Meeting to survey their materials stored in their meetinghouse.

—CAROL FORSYTHE, CLERK

Board of Managers

In the midst of the appearance of the COVID-19 virus and the resultant financial uncertainty, the Board of Managers of Investments and Permanent Funds presents its 2022 Annual Report to New England Yearly Meeting. The Pooled Fund is a professionally managed investment fund which NEYM offers to its member meetings. As of March 31, 2022, 36 meetings and Quaker-based organizations have total investments of $13,921,638.93 in accounts ranging from under $10,000 to over $1,000,000.

In Fiscal Year 2022 ending on March 31, 2022, annual income distributed to constituents from the Pooled Funds was $0.196357 per unit paid in quarterly installments for an annual return of 3.77%. The unit value increased from $5.414680 to $5.556868 or 2.63% over the year. When combined with the distributions, this resulted in a total return of 6.40% for the year. A history of the performance of the Pooled Funds including income and capital appreciation is attached to our report posted here: https://bit.ly/3c9pzNT.

Income distribution is based on a 3-year average of unit value so the distribution for FY2023 (April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023) will increase slightly to $0.200592 per unit. It will be paid at a rate of $0.0501479 per unit each quarter.

Total expenses during the fiscal year amounted to $103,218 and Quaker-based organizations have total investments of $13,921,638.93 in accounts ranging from under $10,000 to over $1,000,000.

The Board of Managers reviews each company proposed for investment option have the best data available to compare to other investment options.

—ERIK PHILBROOK, CLERK; AND SHEARMAN TABER, TREASURER

Coordinating and Advisory

While the Coordinating and Advisory committee’s purpose is to “shepherd the work of the Yearly Meeting,” this body also serves as mutual support for those in leadership positions. This latter part was a not-insignificant role for this body this year, as Noah departed for 4 months on sabbatical, and Nia Thomas and Sarah Gant each took on pieces of his work. While individually and together they did an outstanding job, C&A meetings as a body, along with smaller meetings including C&A members, provided the sense for Nia and Sarah that they were not on their own.

For those not familiar with this body, all the members are ex-officio: Yearly Meeting Secretary (Noah Merrill), President Clerk (Bruce Neumann), clerk of Permanent Board (Leslie Manning), Interim Clerk of Ministry and Counsel (Jeremiah Dickinson), clerk of Finance (Scot Drysdale), Treasurer (Bob Murray), clerk of Nominating (Jackie Stillwell) and the Supervisor to the YM Secretary (Elizabeth Reuthe). In years when there is a rising clerk, that person (Rebecca Leuchak) is included.

One ongoing responsibility is some oversight of committees. Are they functioning well? Continuing to serve a role in the Yearly Meeting structure? “We need to learn to let things go” was a sentence in the report from the Clerking Structures working group in 2019. To that end we are bringing recommendations (through Permanent Board) to lay down three committees.

We heard regular reports from the Ministry Transition team, weighing in with some thoughts, particularly around the need for pastoral care for monthly meetings (see the recommendations to support spiritual life and ministry, “Progress Report and Recommended Next Steps: The Nurture of Ministry, Eldership and Spiritual Life” on page 16).

We checked in periodically on the laying down and property disposition of Fairfield Meeting; inquired about progress of the working group exploring an antiracist consultation; heard about the work in establishing new procedures for dispensation of the Freedmens’ Fund.

We gave enthusiastic support to Nia’s first presentation about subsidizing children’s fees this summer, and reflected on...
Faith & Practice Revision

The Faith and Practice Revision Committee continues to meet with its usual schedule of seven day-long meetings on Zoom and two weekend retreats in person. Our meetings on Zoom save us both the time and the energy of long drives. We have been very grateful to meet in person for our two retreats, with some gathering a day or two beforehand to work and enjoy time together. We have gratefully welcomed one new member, but our numbers are still fewer than the intended 16 Friends and we do not reflect the demographic diversity of the Yearly Meeting.

In October 2021 the committee sent a chapter on Ministry and Counsel to the monthly meetings. As some have commented, it is indeed a long chapter. It is designed as a resource document for the work of Ministry and Counsel. The committee worked diligently to respond to the request from many of our meetings to thoroughly lay out the work of M&C and to describe the normal procedures and processes available to carry out that work. In their responses to the text, several meetings have requested the role of elders be covered in this chapter. This topic is being drafted as part of the section Witnessing to Our Faith.

At Sessions 2022, the committee will bring the rewrite of the Marriage text for preliminary approval. The committee received many requests to include a section on sexuality in the Marriage chapter and the committee did add some material. Further text on sexuality and on committed relationships will be included in The Lifelong Journey, a document on faithfulness in our personal lives and relationships which is currently being written.

The committee has begun work on another new text: Responding to the Promptings of the Spirit. This text will be part of a section on witnessing to our faith in our meetings and in the wider community.

Three members of the committee continue to meet regularly with Yearly Meeting staff to coordinate communication and to begin planning for the eventual publication of the book. In addition, the committee regularly places articles in the monthly newsletter informing the Yearly Meeting of the recent work of the committee.

With the collaboration of the Yearly Meeting office, we are reorganizing the material on the website so that our work is more easily available. We remind Friends to use the Interim Faith and Practice and those chapters that have received preliminary approval. As you use them, please give feedback to us based on your experience.

Friends often ask how long it will be until the book is finished. We have learned not to make predictions, based on the process and our experience with the Yearly Meeting. We are encouraged that the committee has a good deal of material already drafted on the remaining topics.

We continue to be open to the movement of the Spirit in this work with the Yearly Meeting.

—PHEBE MCCOSKER, CLERK

Finance

As usual, the major item of business for the Finance Committee was creating and recommending the budget for FY23. In doing so we took into account the funding priorities specified by the Permanent Board. A Budget Subcommittee met twice to discuss and modify a preliminary draft budget created by
the NEYM Secretary and Accounts Manager. The committee as a whole further discussed the budget and forwarded it to the Permanent Board. The Permanent Board had no suggestions for changes.

The proposed budget is included in the Advance Documents for this year’s Sessions. Sessions will be asked to approve this budget.

Other items that the Finance Committee worked on this year include:

1. We worked with Nia Thomas on a workshop designed to help local meetings deal with finances. This workshop included a presentation from Everence, a Mennonite company that assists churches and meetings with monetary issues.

2. Over time, the Finance Committee has come to feel that it is not the appropriate committee to decide which organizations NEYM should support (and why) and how much money should be given to each. In the spring of 2021, the Finance Committee requested that the Permanent Board convene a working group to discern these issues. The working group’s recommendations were submitted to and discussed by the Finance Committee and will be presented and discussed at Sessions.

3. We approved forwarding new grant-making guidelines (for committees that give away money as grants) to the Permanent Board.

4. The Anna Brown Fund is an endowed fund “for the education of children of farmers.” We approved the Treasurer sending this year’s income from that fund to the New England Farm Workers’ Council (NEFWC), who offered to find appropriate children of farmers to support.

5. The Friends Camp (FC) Director, the FC Treasurer, the NEYM Secretary, the clerk of Finance Committee, and the NEYM Treasurer met several times to discuss the proposed Friends Camp Finance Handbook. During these meetings, the FC Treasurer noted several places where the proposed FC Finance Handbook was in conflict with the NEYM Finance Handbook.

Current and previous versions of the NEYM finance handbook were focused on Operating Division finances, not Friends Camp finances. The Finance Committee decided that because running the Camp is very different from running the NEYM Operating Division, that these differences were appropriate. We approved a minute modifying the current NEYM Finance Handbook to say that the NEYM Finance Handbook governs NEYM Operating Division finances, and that Friends Camp has its own Finance Handbook to govern its finances. This minute was forwarded to the Permanent Board.

6. The YM Secretary shared the document “Proposal: Endowments to Carry Vision, Nurture Mission” with the Finance Committee as part of a larger discussion of fundraising for NEYM. The committee discussed this document and suggested changes. We and C&A will see and discuss future versions of this plan.

—SCOT DRYSDALE, CLERK

Legacy Gift

This past year continued to be a year of shifting and adaptations for Legacy Gift Committee. While we still have been honored to make grants from Witness and Ministry Funds, we have also faced the challenge of having expended the Future Fund—thus limiting the scope of what could be funded. We continued to deal with the constrictions of Covid while looking for openings to move forward. For the first time in a couple of years, we welcomed new committee members, with gratitude for the service of those who are rotating off the committee this summer. We continued to meet and conduct grant reviews virtually and look forward to being together in person again when possible. We have begun planning in anticipation of our 2024 review and recommendations. Finally, we have been exploring proposals for taking on the administration of new or existing funds that other NEYM bodies are seeking help in managing. These proposals have come at a propitious time as the Future Fund has been expended and we look to 2024.

We embraced a new financial arrangement allowing unexpended funds to carry over at the end of the fiscal year, rather than being returned to the principal. This resulted in more funds being available than otherwise would have been for the fall 2021 grant cycle. We were able to award a total of $29,937 in grants to four Friends to follow Spirit’s Call in their individual ministries in September 2021.

In January 2022 the Committee approved re-funding Time-Sensitive Grants with $6,000 and in February we received three requests for supporting Friends traveling to Cuba Yearly Meeting. Due to changing Covid-related circumstances, this opportunity opened up with very short notice and insufficient time for funds to be fully raised as they usually are via the Puente Committee and others. We were glad to have Time-Sensitive funds available to respond to this urgent need and provided $2,000 towards this travel and bridging ministry with Cuban Friends.

The Ministry and Witness Fund has always tended to receive fewer applications than the Future Fund; still, we were surprised to experience our first cycle with no applications in the spring cycle of 2022. We reviewed our outreach efforts, considered the challenges related to Covid, and explored conversations with other Friends’ funders in which we learned that they have also experienced a reduction in applications. We encourage meetings and support committees to be attentive to Friends’ spiritual leadings that may benefit from grant support and make them aware of Legacy Funding opportunities.

Having had a successful workshop last year on the role of oversight committees in supporting ministries, we are planning a workshop for this fall on how we, as individuals and as a corporate body, value and financially support individual ministries. Watch for an announcement in the Yearly Meeting newsletter.

We received a request from Salem Quarter to manage their grant funds on a temporary basis for two years so that the funds can still be made available while the quarter takes a sabbatical from business. We approve doing this and propose using Salem Quarter’s funds to reinvigorate the Legacy Future Fund during that time period. This request seems timely for the Legacy Committee as well as the Quarter, feels rightly led, and will be brought to Annual Sessions for your approval.

For Sessions 2021 Legacy was invited by the Presiding Clerk to provide inspirational speakers from among our grantees to help draw the meetings for business into the Spirit. Andy Grant shared his individual leading and Beth Collea spoke about Dover Meeting’s corporate ministry. We are looking for ways to continue sharing the joy of supporting the life of the Spirit among us again at Sessions this year.

—SUE ROCKWOOD AND MARY LINK, CO-CLERKS
Update from Ministry & Counsel

Our experiment continues. Over the past two years, in the space created with the setting aside of the Ministry and Counsel committee, we have explored new ways of nurturing and supporting life and ministry in the Spirit. There were three gatherings—the nourishment of spiritual life in our meetings, the varied experiences of ministry, and the relationship between the meeting and minister. There has been extensive listening and consultation, seeking to further understand the needs and yearnings present among us. From this have come initial understandings and recommendations. They are presented elsewhere in these documents and will be brought to the floor at Sessions.

This is not the end of the process but a step along the way. It is a time to reflect on what we understand to this point and to give some form to these understandings. We know, if we are faithful, even these understandings and these forms will themselves change in time. And, again if we are faithful, we will allow this to unfold in God’s time, knowing that it is less about any particular structure than it is about our culture—our way of seeing and our way of being, together.

While I look forward to continuing this journey with you, I am clear at this time to lay down my role as Interim Clerk. It has been a privilege to serve Friends in this capacity. I am deeply grateful for your participation in this work, through prayer, accompaniment and attendance at gatherings. Thank you.

—JEREMIAH DICKINSON, INTERIM CLERK

Nominating Committee

In August 2021 Annual Sessions approved a new Purpose, Procedures & Composition document for the Nominating Committee that integrated NEYM Nominating Committee, Permanent Board Internal Nominating, and Clerks’ Table Nominating. The 2019 report on Clerking Structures and Practices along with our new PP&C guided our priorities this year.

This first year of integration has been an opportunity to learn new ways of doing our work together. We began as a team of 15, but lost 5 members along the way. The remaining 10 focused on faithfully finding the right Friends with the right gifts for each role, while creating new systems to do this work. Nominating in its entirety includes:

- visioning and identifying what’s needed
- noticing patterns, naming and nurturing gifts, leadership development
- building capacity for both people and systems
- nurturing a culture of healthy feedback and evaluation
- gratitude and recognition for faithful service in many forms

We recognize our work as both nominating Friends with the gifts and skills needed to serve in a wide variety of volunteer roles on behalf of the Yearly Meeting, and seeking to remove barriers to the full expression of the spiritual gifts and skills given through each Friend, for the building up and thriving of local Friends meetings. We set up sub-groups to focus on distinct areas and shepherds for each committee and position in our care. In March we facilitated a consultation open to everyone in the Yearly Meeting on Best Practices in Nominating.

The over-abundance of work has been balanced with a healthy practice of gratitude for what we have accomplished, clear focus on next steps, and letting go of some exciting opportunities until the future. We are enormously grateful to staff for the support with record-keeping, planning events, and introducing new Friends to us to cultivate gifts. We have made progress using Airtable, organizing our integrated filing system, and beginning a handbook. Nominating resources for individuals and monthly meetings are posted on the NEYM website.

Shepherds have supported committees with special attention to planning for clerking transitions and inclusive leadership. We are learning what barriers to service individuals face and beginning to imagine ways to meet them. Individuals stepping down from service are celebrated, appreciated, and supported in discerning next steps—including the possible call for sabbatical before stepping into something new.

Writing a description for each opportunity of service that includes the job description, current situation, and gifts desired has provided clear communication to support us in raising up names, and for individuals in seeking clearness to serve. We hope this practice will ripple out to everyone who has not yet discovered it.

Thank you to each of you for sharing your gifts. We look forward to connecting with you and growing together during the coming year.

With Light and Love,
—JACQUELINE STILLWELL, CLERK

Committee for Nurturing Friends Education at Moses Brown School

In the words of Rising Clerk Rebecca Leuchak, who serves on the MB Board of Trustees: “The Quaker membership of the Board is the most engaged and participatory group of individual Friends that I have experienced in the many years of my service there.”

Despite the challenges brought by Covid and conflicts in our larger world, the Moses Brown Friends community has been increasingly active and engaged. Upon the announcement that Matt Glendinning would conclude his 13-year tenure in June 2022, Friends Coordinator Dawn Tripp was appointed by the MB Board of Trustees to serve as the clerk of the search committee. (To read more about the Head of School search please visit https://www.mosesbrown.org/search/.)

At the fall 2021 Board of Trustees retreat, Jennifer McFadden, in partnership with co-clerk David Bourns and other members of the committee, led a comprehensive session on Friends decision-making. Slides and salient points from that retreat session have been engaged with throughout the school year at the MB Governance Committee and in other forums to share with the broader MB community a deeper, common understanding of Friends process.

The position of liaison between our committee and the MB Governance Committee to facilitate nominating work is being detailed and codified. In practice, in recent years the current Friends Coordinator has served in the role. This year the Friends Coordinator has been working with the clerk of the Governance Committee to build a calendar for nominating work that will create a more seamless and effective process for committee recommendations of Quaker Trustees and Quaker Board Committee members.

After discernment, our committee recommended three Friends to serve as incoming Trustees: Valerie Reischuk, Frederick Dettmer, and Bruce Shaw. Both Permanent Board and
the Moses Brown Board approved. As soon as this process and calendar are finalized and approved by both the Governance Committee and our committee, we will submit it to Moses Brown Permanent Board. Ideally, we can develop more deliberate and thoughtful opportunities between Moses Brown and Yearly Meeting around process, communication, and shared hopes and concerns.

One focus of our work this year has been increased and intentional partnership with the new MB Director of Diversity Equity and Inclusion, Luke Anderson. We will continue to explore how our collective work and care around DEI (and the Moses Brown Strategic Plan for DEI) dovetail explicitly and in practice with our identity and mission as a Friends school. A former graduate of and teacher at Germantown Friends School, Luke has a profound understanding of Friends faith and process and is deeply skilled at listening and discernment. He has attended our committee meetings this past spring.

Additional areas of work this year (and moving into next year) are noteworthy. First, it became clear that in comparison with other Friends Schools of comparable size and scope, Jennifer McFadden does not have ample time to teach Quakerism to Moses Brown students. The committee agreed that ways might be found to increase the Director of Friends Education’s time, as well as the time other faculty have, to teach Quakerism to K-12 students.

The other focus of our work throughout this year has been to explore the scope and sequence for Friends education and Friends decision-making at Moses Brown. In that work, we have studied how Friends practices are taught from K-12 at other Friends schools and how they are currently taught—explicitly and implicitly—at Moses Brown. We are exploring how we, as Friends, might continue to support a broader and more fluent understanding of Friends practices throughout Moses Brown: with students of all ages in the classroom; with faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees; and in the larger MB community.

In the Light,
—DAVID BOURNS AND DAWN TRIPP, CO-CLERKS

Moses Brown School Report

Matt Glendinning is preparing to lay down his 13-year leadership of Moses Brown School in June and take the helm at Hopkins School in NJ, leaving a legacy of new structures, programs, and commitments. From the Woodman Center for Performing Arts to the state-of-the-art Y Lab maker space, our expanded financial aid and scholarship opportunities, our comprehensive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Action Plan, and the long-awaited renovation of the Lower School—completed last month as the final component of the capital campaign—Matt Glendinning has led the school toward a better future. We have much to look forward to.

MB’s third year of pandemic-affected teaching and learning often looked and felt close to normal—a product of our institution’s enormous privilege in the face of this global challenge. Athletics, service, performing arts, and limited travel could safely resume, and all students had daily in-person classes. Still, the school had to cope with rolling waves of staff and student absences, and our Wellness Department worked tirelessly all year to dispense and process tests, track community infections, issue quarantine and isolation guidelines, and maintain safety protocols throughout the school. The scars of pandemic life are only starting to be understood, particularly as they affect the academic, social, and mental health of our students.

A highlight of 21–22 was a school-wide commitment to basic training on the Friends decision-making process, which had lapsed in recent years. In early fall, Friends from the Yearly Meeting and MB’s Nurturing Friends Education Board Committee provided training for Moses Brown Trustees on clerking and corporate discernment. The presentation was also shared with all staff in all divisions and departments, as well as with members of the Parents Association. The effort has been well received, and many in the community have expressed interest in continued learning about Friends’ unique process. A long-term goal for the Director of Friends Education is to develop community knowledge so that each student leaving MB will have practical exposure to sense-of-the-meeting discernment and some facility with basic clerking skills.

This year brought a return to divisional gatherings, a resumption of in-person Meeting for Worship, and a renewed opportunity for guests on campus. A number of Friends (and friends) visited MB to share their experiences and commitments as social activists. Students heard accounts of connecting across difference, speaking truth to power, living witness, making “good trouble,” and coping with the consequences of civil disobedience, resistance, and hard choices. After the isolation and separation of the past two years, opportunities for MB students to meet and learn from Friends were deeply appreciated.

Next year promises several opportunities to deepen the school’s commitment to its Quaker values and practices. One is the planned fall opening of the Bayard Rustin Center for Peace and Belonging, a shared space intended to house the Director of Friends Education; Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; and Director of Health and Wellness as they work with students and colleagues across three divisions. The large community space, called for in MB’s institutional DEI plan from 2021, will be used for gatherings, collaborations, and special programs related to our mission and values as a Friends school. In the coming school year, MB hopes to send a cohort of four teachers to participate in Friends Council for Education’s Spirited Practice and Renewed Courage program, a two-year professional development opportunity modeled on the work of Quaker educator Parker Palmer. The cohort hopes this experience can enrich the spiritual and pedagogical life of the MB community, and if interest is sufficient, aims for a biannual commitment to the program. Finally, this year saw the piloting of an All-School Quaker Life Committee, a collaboration that can bring together people from all parts of our community to reflect on the connections between our values and our actions, as individuals and as a Friends school.

The Board’s search process for a new Head is underway (clerked by Friends Coordinator Dawn Tripp [Allen’s Neck]) and a hire is expected in the fall. During 2022–23, MB will operate under the interim leadership of Ron Dalgliesh, who has served the school for 14 years, most recently as Assistant Head of School for Institutional Affairs and Director of Community Engagement. I look forward to supporting him and ask Friends to hold Ron in the Light as he leads our school next year.

—JENNIFER MCFADDEN, DIRECTOR OF FRIENDS EDUCATION
Puente de Amigos

The Puente Committee works to maintain and strengthen the bridge of love between Friends in Cuba and New England. This effort has been complicated by the pandemic and the grave scarcity of food, medicine, and fuel in Cuba. The Puente Committee looks for ways to support our Cuban Friends spiritually, monetarily, and with goods. We share news and spiritual support with a WhatsApp group called Cuaqueros en la Luz.

Cuba was hard hit by the pandemic in 2021, and monthly meetings were shuttered for months. The ongoing effects of the embargo against Cuba were intensified by the previous administration which named Cuba a “state sponsor of terrorism.” This made it more difficult to get medications and food into the country.

Cuba developed a vaccine by June and quickly vaccinated the population so that by September many meetings had begun to re-open. In late November the Puente Committee met and included Jorge Luis Pena (presiding clerk of Cuba Yearly Meeting) and Kenya Casanova (assistant clerk) by WhatsApp. Jorge Luis told us that Cuba Yearly Meeting planned to meet in person in February 2022 for the first time in three years. Only three representatives from each meeting would be present due to Covid, but they invited visitors from abroad. The Puente committee began to plan a delegation.

We were blessed to find three delegates clear to travel. They were Rebecca Leuchak (Rising Presiding Clerk of NEYM), Mary Hopkins, and Christel Jorgenson. Normally Puente advises groups to take nine months to plan a trip to Cuba. Achieving this work in just over three months was quite challenging. The cost of travel to Cuba has doubled since our last visit pre-pandemic. Air travel is less frequent and more costly. The cost of room, board, and travel within Cuba have risen with inflation and shortages there. Travelers had to take enough money to pay for ten days’ room and board in the event they had to quarantine in Cuba due to Covid. Due to the generosity of individuals, meetings and other groups in New England, the funds were raised, and a tremendous amount of medicine and goods collected. Each delegate carried two 50-pound bags of supplies. Puente sent a donation from the Puente contributory fund to CYM. Our delegates brought CYM a certificate in honor of 30 years of the Bridge of Love, and they received one in return. While there they gave workshops during sessions and visited several Meetings. It was a full and fulfilling week.

Currently a group from Portland and Durham Meetings plans to attend Cuba Yearly Meeting and to visit their sister Meeting, Velasco, in February 2023. Other Friends have indicated interest in future travel as well.

Other activities included a memorial meeting for worship on Zoom for Cuban Friends who have died of Covid. The Puente contributory fund sent funds to CYM at Christmastime via two Friends from Pacific Cascades Meeting.

We are joyful that travel is now possible, and we grieve for the harsh conditions in Cuba.

—CAROLYN STONE AND EM MCMANAMY, CO-CLERKS

Sessions

After two years on Zoom we are planning to return this August to Castleton University for in-person Sessions, and will also continue to offer on-line access to Sessions via Zoom. This year is going to be a real experiment in gathering in two different modalities. We will be learning how to be together remotely and in person and create the same strong community that we long for.

As in previous years, planning for this year’s New England Friends gathering began right after we said goodbye in last August. This year we have been using smaller, more focused teams for the work following the procedures approved last fall by the Permanent Board.

The guiding concerns for our planning were intergenerational worship opportunities and community building, and a deep concern for accessibility. We worked closely with the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group to remove barriers to participation, regularly using the following queries in our planning:

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

In September the Coordination Team, the Theme and Speakers Team, and some other invited Friends met to consider the Sessions just past. The vital inputs were the evaluation forms that you all filled out. (Thank you for sharing your responses! And please keep it up!) What went well? What challenges were there? How was the spiritual life of Friends in New England nourished and encouraged? How was the life and experience of monthly meetings considered and supported? This has led to changes that you have seen this year.

It became clear this past September that we are hungry for an in-person gathering. At the same time, the pandemic situation seemed to be significantly shifting to a less threatening level. Thus, the planning has proceeded with an in-person reunion at Castleton University as a priority, albeit keeping ourselves ever-responsive to changing health recommendations and to the possibility of a necessary pivot away from gathering in person. Our concern for all Friends’ personal safety continues to be our priority above all.

Following this initial meeting, the Theme & Speakers team, a group which represents diverse voices from our wider community, began to consider their sense of the spiritual condition of the body of Friends who attended (informed by the meeting described above), their sense of how Spirit is moving (or impeded) in the wider body, and wider input on both potential theme and suggested speakers. This team distilled that sense into the theme for NEYM Sessions 2022: “This Is the Hour. How Does the Spirit Find You?”

This team then considered what guests should be invited to speak to the gathered body and were delighted to receive enthusiastic acceptance from Regina Renee Ward from Pueblo, Colorado, a member of Ujima Friends Meeting, as our Bible Half Hour presenter. Regina Renee identifies as a Christian Friend and is someone for whom the Bible is not just a foundational document for our faith tradition, but is a living, breathing, guide to daily living. Our plenary speaker, Emily Provance (New York Yearly Meeting) carries a particular concern for the spiritual benefits of intergenerational opportunities and how to move from aspiration to practice.
The most important aspect of planning is the discernment of Friends with gifts for the many volunteer and staff roles in running the week of events. With the many opportunities for worship, for learning, for meeting to conduct business, for sharing and relationship building, for performance, celebration and play, spanning all age groups, it really takes a village to make Sessions happen.

Here’s just a snapshot of the many groups involved:

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

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

The Youth Programs Team consists of the Events Coordinator, the Children & Family Ministries Coordinator, the Teen Ministries Coordinator, and the Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator.

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

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

We have been busy! And we are so excited to see you all, to be together again. We are doing something important, something that can only be done in community. As individuals we can live faithfully, but it is only in community that we can live in the peaceable kingdom.

—REBECCA LEUCHAK, CLERK SEPT 2021 TO JAN 2022; AND PHILLIP VEATCH, CLERK FROM FEB 2022 ONWARD

Young Adult Friends

Young adult Friends have deeply been impacted by the pandemic, especially as many transitioned into or out of college, navigated classes or work spaces that were newly online in or in different formats, experienced a change in jobs, or moved into and out of living situations while negotiating health and safety concerns. During all this uncertainty and hardship, staying connected with other Quakers has been a challenge for many as schedules are in flux and more on-screen engagement tips the scales of Zoom fatigue. And yet, some young adult Friends have found small and creative ways to maintain connections with each other, finding joy and mutual support during the pandemic.

At Sessions last year, young adult Friends were low in attendance and energy for online programming, but had a good turn out for an in-person picnic with Northampton Friends at Child’s Park, sharing refreshing watermelon in the heat of early August. Western Massachusetts and Cambridge/Boston area YAFs collaborated in some ways to host sibling events such as a Plenary watch party, held separately but together in spirit.

The spike in COVID cases over the fall and winter kept retreats from happening for the rest of the 2021 year and into 2022. Some YAFs attended virtual spiritual deepening programs like Marcelle Martin’s Spiritual Practices course, held weekly online for three months.

At the end of April, YAFs had their first retreat since the onset of the pandemic, “Nurturing Spirituality and Spiritual Connection,” held at Woolman Hill in Deerfield, MA. The retreat had 24 participants total, with 14 first-timers and a new co-coordinator! It was a joy to reconnect, and the weekend had a sense of energy and hope for continued connection and deepening. There was clear eagerness for being with one another and full participation in activities. Highlights included programming offered by alumni from the Nurturing Faithfulness program—worshipful discussions about discernment and leadings, guided by some brief text excerpts, and also “trying on” faithfulness groups. Unprogrammed time after dinner on Saturday allowed for sharing laughter over games, teaching each other some dances, and a new moon walk on which YAFs sang under the glorious stars as they strolled down the road together in the rich darkness.

Overall, this is a challenging time for young adults. In addition to general life-stage transitions amidst the pandemic, we grapple with the weight of the changing climate and what our futures hold for us; witnessing and experiencing violence, systems of oppression, and death, and engaging in social change movements; navigating student loans, ever-growing wealth gaps, and finding affordable housing; and managing our mental and physical health throughout it all. We carry the responsibility of meeting our basic needs while also shifting culture and securing our futures. If you wonder where YAFs are, if you don’t always see younger faces at Quaker meeting on Sunday morning, we are still here, living our faith through social activism, daily choices, and our own rest and healing.

—EMI LINK, COORDINATOR

Youth Ministries

The theme of the past year for NEYM youth work has been transition. Working through a worldwide pandemic for the past two years has forced NEYM staff and committee members to find new ways to reach our youth and families. As we transition back to in-person gatherings, we are considering the lessons learned and how to apply them as we move forward.

One theme we have heard from a number of monthly meetings is that they are shifting away from separate programs for children and seeking ways to include children and youth in the life of the meeting, whether that is Meeting for Worship or other programs and events. While some of this shift was a result of the limitations on in-person gatherings, some occurred before the pandemic. It seems to be a shift that is life-giving for everyone, and we look forward to exploring and supporting this in the coming year.

Gretchen Baker-Smith’s leading to leave her position as Children and Family Ministries Coordinator at the end of August was a transition that the committee has tended for much of the year. We are grateful for the countless gifts that Gretchen has brought to the position. YMC is working to ensure that the next person in this role can sustain the spiritual community Gretchen has fostered while opening new possibilities for youth and family connection. Youth Ministries Committee supported the search committee, which included Karen Sanchez-Eppler as YMC’s representative and gathered information from Friends in monthly meetings about how the new person could best support their youth programs and the young people and families in their meetings.
After an in-depth search process and prayerful discernment, the search committee called Kara Price to the position. Kara has been involved in NEYM youth programs most of her life as a participant, staffer, and parent, has a background in education, and brings a Spirit-filled joyfulness to the position.

The process of staff transition has brought into focus how grounded the position of Children and Family Ministries Coordinator is in relationships with Friends across the Yearly Meeting. We hope to help foster these connections in formal and informal ways as we support Kara in her new role.

As the school year ends, more monthly meetings are opening their doors to worshipers once again, youth retreats have recently returned to being in person, and Friends Camp is preparing for a second summer of greeting many more campers than was possible in 2021. We look ahead to a year of joyful transition, drawing on the lessons we have learned about keeping our connections strong in a variety of circumstances.

—Janet Dawson, Clerk
Reports of Representatives to Other Quaker Organizations

American Friends Service Committee

Two Corporation meetings in 2022, instead of one, indicate change is afoot in the American Friends Service Committee. In addition to our Yearly Meeting’s three appointees, four at-large members from Cambridge, Concord, Durham, and Wellesley Monthly Meetings ground AFSC spiritually, as members of the Corporation—the body that represents this country’s Quakers to AFSC.

Spirit-led discussion during April and May meetings contrasted with the Corporation’s pro forma pattern of doing its required business in most years. Subsequent listening sessions and the late spring Board meeting signal how AFSC plans to pursue the Strategic Plan focused on Just Migration, Just Economies, & Just Peace. (https://www.afsc.org/key-issues)

In June, the Board approved formation of a Global Cohesion Division that will bridge international and domestic programs, advocacy and learning. United States staff representatives are making progress towards revised structures for implementing the strategic plan. Also, an expanded Board Working Group continues to seek unity regarding changed governance bodies.

To connect with AFSC, your monthly meeting might:
• Appoint a “communicator” to nurture Quaker connection by joining the Meeting/Church Liaison Program
• Recruit youth for the Emerging Leaders for Liberation Program
• Recommend a Friend to serve as new presiding clerk of the Board/Corporation

—SUBMITTED BY SCOTT RHODEWALT

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Guided by its Legislative Priorities for the 117th Congress, FCNL staff and volunteers relentlessly lobbied this past year on issues of deep concern to Friends. Among these were: providing non-violent support for the Ukrainian people, nuclear war prevention, supporting Native American tribal violence prevention programs, ending U.S. complicity in the Yemen war, transforming the criminal justice system, implementing just immigration policies, enacting universal gun background checks, supporting renewable energy, and passing the historic climate and economic bill.

This spring, FCNL solicited recommendations from monthly meetings for FCNL Legislative Priorities for the 2023–2024 Congress. Following careful discernment by the Policy Committee, agreement on the new priorities will be sought at the November 2022 General Committee meeting.

After 10 years of faithful service, Hartford Monthly Meeting member Diane Randall retired as FCNLs General Secretary on January 31, 2021. Diane’s legacy includes FCNLs growth to a staff of 63, along with the addition of Friends Place on Capitol Hill (the former William Penn House). Diane’s success with involving young adults in FCNLs advocacy work throughout the nation, has been remarkable.

Diane was succeeded by Bridget Moix, long-time peace activist, former FCNL staff member, and former clerk of the FCNL General Committee. As a lobbyist at FCNL, Bridget developed FCNLs peacebuilding program and co-founded the Prevention and Protection Working Group, a coalition of more than 250 human rights, anti-genocide, and peace groups that FCNL still coordinates. All who know Bridget are thrilled by her appointment.

—BETSY CAZDEN, SCOT DRYSDALE, DONN WEINHOLTZ, AND HOLLY WEIDNER, REPRESENTATIVES

Friends Peace Teams

Friends Peace Teams trusts the Living Spirit’s power. FPT develops relationships with communities in conflict around the world. We work for justice and healing to insure enduring peace.

Mainstream media pummels our ears with hate crimes. You hear the militaristic actions of the Proud Boys and Patriotic Front. However, focus on those who hunger for justice. How can FPT help to embody the Living Gospel today? One example: FPT trauma healers work in refugee camps in Congo.

FPT started in 1993. We currently are in 20 countries such as Philippines, Columbia, Russia, Rwanda, and Indonesia. Recently we lost intrepid Nancy Shippen, who raised money tirelessly for our $305,000 budget.

Two programs among FPT’s delectable projects https://friendspeaceteams.org/
1. Please join Towards Right Relationship with Native Peoples. Can Quakers on Turtle Island take action on our complicity in indigenous boarding schools?
2. Peace libraries in Rwanda and Indonesia hum with children. Guatemala opened their first library. Youth offer programs for children. Most children don’t have shelves of books at home. Countries discuss stories of compassion during the Ukrainian war. See new Ukraine, Palestinian, Russian stories https://friendspeaceteams.org/stories/#storycollection We work hard to be accessible, translating stories in 8+ languages.

The media broadcasts fires in California, floods in Montana. Remember the good news—envision a mighty flood of justice, a river of righteous (Amos 5:24).

Lucretia Mott asks “Are you doing your part to make glad tidings of great joy to all people?”

—Minga Claggett-Borne

Friends General Conference

As a first-time representative to Friends General Conference (FGC), I’m on a learning curve. New England Friends are prominent on this year’s Gathering Program as offering workshops, giving a plenary address, and leading the Bible Half Hours. NEYM is low, however, in its participation in governance. A few others with ties to NEYM are active in FGC but I have been the only official rep this year. Some YMs sent as many as nine representatives to October’s Central Committee weekend.

Some highlights:
Spiritual Deepening, Ministry on Racism, Youth Programming at FGCQuaker.org

FGC's new website, launched this spring, is a welcoming place for our meetings to find resources on spirituality, all-ages' education, events and witness. It also continues vigorous outreach: 80,000 visitors a year search newcomer pages.

Gatherings 2022 and 2023

Young Friends were adamant that a third year without an in-person Gathering would have long-term effects, particularly as few high schools attended virtual Gatherings. Leadership consulted with Executive Committee about the obstacles to holding a traditional event and made the determination to limit this summer's in-person Gathering to families and young people, with a parallel virtual Gathering for all. Hope is high for an all-ages Gathering in Oregon in 2023 that will also offer virtual participation.

Institutional Change & Campaign

FGC is discerning how to move ahead in becoming an actively anti-racist organization, and how to operate with a diminishing volunteer base. Fundraising to strengthen FGC's capacity has begun via the new Gathering Together Campaign, still in a successful quiet phase.

—CAROLYN HILLES-PLANT, REPRESENTATIVE

Friends United Meeting

Greetings Friends from the representatives to the Friends United Meeting from NEYM. This report is an update on our work towards the charge coming out of last year's Sessions as well as a brief overview of the work and health of the organization that is FUM. We hope that, as background to this report, Friends can reacquaint themselves with Minute 2021-35, which gives a concise overview of the history of NEYM's foundational role in FUM and ongoing involvement.

At Sessions 2021, the Body charged us with the task of supporting the Presiding Clerk's correspondence with FUM, “expressing our sense of dismay at the continued existence of the offensive portion of the personnel policy and our understanding of the Light in all.” In addition, the Representatives were charged with the larger task of, “work towards changing this policy, remembering that it is Spirit that changes hearts, not our own efforts. We also recognize the need for Friends in New England to continue to examine what faithfulness and integrity require of us.” A portion of that work is specifically bringing together representatives from other yearly meetings for support, encouragement, and conversation—as well as to begin the long-term work of intervisitation.

While the COVID pandemic prevented “hand delivery” of a letter to the FUM Board, the Representatives did support the Presiding Clerk as he wrote a letter to the FUM Board Clerk in December of 2021. The Representatives followed up with their own letter in February of 2022 communicating, “We are prepared to continue to reach out lovingly and would ask that the Clerks grapple now with how to plan real dialogue across this divide.” Because of this ongoing epistolary conversation, the matter was raised in June 2022 Executive Board Meetings. From that came a promise of a conversation between the Clerk and Assistant Clerk of the North American Board and the Presiding Clerk plus Reps from NEYM to FUM. Arrangement of that meeting is in progress as of this writing (June 22, 2022). The General Secretary of FUM, Kelly Kellum, will be visiting Castleton—available for conversations with Friends from NEYM.

During the June meeting of the FUM General Board, NEYM representatives had personal conversations with Friends from other YMs. In addition, there was a sit-down with the General Secretary that was joined by representatives of at least three other YMs. We expect that further efforts on our part will lead to more conversations with a wider variety of FUM Friends, seeking for how the divine spirit can lead us.

Meanwhile, the organization is stable, and they will end their fiscal year without debt. This is also true of Ramallah Friends School—a project that is dear to many in NEYM. The African Ministry Office in Kisumu has been reconfigured—projects are being managed by an all-African team! There is faithful work about which we are excited to talk with you! Please find us, Nikki, or Kelly during Sessions to ask us questions!

In Faith and Friendship,

—FREDERICK MARTIN (BEACON HILL), JENNIFER SMITH (CONCORD), KRISTINA KEEFE-PERRY, (FRESH POND/THREE RIVERS)