

Proposed Agenda for Permanent Board Meeting of 9/17/22

9 AM Opening Worship

9:30 Welcome, Roll Call

Noticing Patterns introduction

Approval of Board Minutes from June

Approval of Sessions Minutes (Bruce to clerk)

Presiding Clerk's Report

Secretary's Report including Sessions Update

11 AM Request from EarthCare (time is confirmed)

Friends Camp Director's Report and Budget Approval

Report from Right Relationship Resource Group

Report from Nominating Committee

Priority Setting for the Board

**Permanent Board Meeting
Held at Friends Meeting at Cambridge and over Zoom Video Conference
June 4, 2022**

**Permanent Board Meeting
Held in person and over Zoom Video Conference
June 4, 2022**

PB 22-35: Opening Worship

Friends opened with a period of worship.

PB 22-36: Clerk's Welcome

The PB Clerk provided updates on the health of several Yearly Meeting Friends, inviting prayers for their health and welfare.

PB 22-37: Roll Call

The recording clerk called the roll: (*underline signifies present at Friends Meeting at Cambridge*) Leslie Manning, PB Clerk, Susan Davies, PB Recording Clerk, Travis Belcher, Hannah Zwirner Forsythe, Martin Zwirner Forsythe, Chris Gant, Beth Hansen, Ian Harrington, Frances Lightsom, Christopher McCandless, Jean McCandless, Bob O'Connor, Carole Rein, John Reuthe, Aaron Sakulich, Martha Schwope, Sara Smith, Elizabeth Szatkowski, Will Taber, Diane Weinholtz, Donn Weinholtz, Kathleen Wooten, Mary Zwirner

Ex-Officio: Jeremiah Dickinson (M&C Clerk); Scot Drysdale (Finance Clerk); Noah Merrill (YM Secretary); Elizabeth Reuthe (Secretary's Supervisor); Robert Murray (Treasurer)

Regrets- Bruce Neumann (Presiding Clerk), Rebecca Leuchak (Rising Presiding Clerk), Morgan Wilson, Peter Bishop, Ed Mair, Nia Thomas, Kimberly Allen, Darcy Drayton, Gina Nortonsmith

Visitors: Susanna Schell (microphone spacer), David Coletta (Technical Support), Polly Attwood, Melody Brazo, Elizabeth Hacala, Mey Hasbrook, Janet Hough, LVM Shelton, Jackie Stillwell, Diana White, Honor Woodrow, Kim West, Sarah Gant, Kristina Keefe-Perry

PB 22-38: Approval of April 2, 2022 PB Minutes

The minutes from the April 2, 2022 meeting were distributed in advance documents for review.

Friends approved

PB 22-39: Report from the Naming Committee (report appended)

Donn Weinholtz, Co-clerk of Naming Committee brought the first reading of three names, to serve on the YM Nominating Committee as members of the class of 2025:

- Beth Morrill (Hartford Meeting)
- Anna Lindo (Framingham Meeting)
- Sara Smith (Concord Meeting)

The second reading will take place at YM Sessions 2022, for final approval at Sessions.

PB 22-40: Nominating Committee Report to Permanent Board (report appended)

Jackie Stillwell, clerk of Nominating Committee, brought the Sessions draft of YM committee nominations, and committee openings; and brought one name to Permanent Board for approval, to begin immediately:

- 2nd Reading – Michelle Wright Putney Meeting), for Clerk's Table Reading Clerk
Friends approved

PB 22-41: Noticing Patterns Debrief Report from April 16, 2022 (written report only, appended)

PB 22-42: Presiding Clerk's Report (written report only, appended)

PB 22-43: Coordinating and Advisory Recommendations (report appended)

Noah Merrill, YM Secretary presented the report on three recommendations to Permanent Board from Coordinating and Advisory (C&A). The Presiding Clerk's written explanation of recommendations is appended. Noah explained that processes pertaining to these recommendations have been underway for a long time and they have been affirmed by Friends involved. Comments from Permanent Board members and visitors included questions about YM's oversight of self-organized resource groups of Friends but who are not recognized as representatives of YM. Noah Merrill explained C&As reasoning that it is helpful to clearly distinguish those entities that do represent YM from those groups of Friends that do not.

- **PB 22-43.1:** Recommendation to lay down the Development Committee, with the appointment of an *ad-hoc* Development Advisory group, which will be available as needed for consultation with staff. **Friends approved**
- **PB 22-43.2:** Recommendation to lay down the Racial Social and Economic Justice committee. **Friends approved**
- **PB 22-43.3:** Recommendation, to be effective in 2023, to lay down the Earthcare Ministries committee; and that C&A will consider concerns raised about public activity of self-organized groups of Friends who are not representatives of YM, to report and bring recommendations to a subsequent meeting of Permanent Board. **Friends were not clear to approve laying down Earthcare Ministries at this time.**
- **This recommendation will return to Coordinating and Advisory.**

PB 22-44: YM Secretary's Report and Recommendations for Friends Camp

Noah Merrill, YM Secretary, expressed solidarity with those who have struggled with or succumbed to COVID. He has been ill with it for over 10 days. He acknowledged that though our hearts are broken by news of the world, yet there is an infinite Presence of Love that can hold us, and help us to know our own place, our own next steps, and how we are led.

Noah requested Permanent Board approval of the recommendation of the Friends Camp committee, the PB Clerk and the YM Secretary to appoint Mary Olin as Acting Friends Camp Director, in preparation for Camp Director Anna Hopkins' September 2023 sabbatical.

Friends Approved

PB 22-45: Budget Approval (2nd Reading)

Scot Drysdale, YM Finance Committee Clerk, brought the YM budget to be presented at NEYM Sessions 2022 for a 2nd reading. The Finance Committee has received no suggestions for changes, and no concerns have been expressed after 1st reading (PB 22-25, April 2, 2022 PB meeting).

Friends accepted/ approved the budget to be sent to 2022 Sessions

PB 22-46: Ministry Transition Team Report and Recommendations (report appended)

Jeremiah Dickinson, Interim Clerk of Ministry & Counsel, reported for the Ministry Transition Team (MTT), on a three-year process of discernment, as requested by the Permanent Board in November 2020, at the direction of Annual Sessions (NEYM Minute 2019-46) 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.”

Jeremiah introduced the guiding principles behind the MTT report and Noah Merrill, YM Secretary, summarized the detailed recommendations enumerated in their appended report. Pending approval of Permanent Board, the recommendations will be brought to Annual Sessions 2022 for approval.

In their report the MTT offered the following extract from Douglas Steere to introduce their key learnings and insights:

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

Friends expressed gratitude for the faithfulness of the work. A Friend expressed concern about whether the recommendations for “new forms” for M&C were not, in fact, simply re-stating the traditional roles and responsibilities of M&C. Others inquired whether, with such a fundamentally different clerking role might it not then be important to change the name, “Clerk of Ministry and Counsel” to something different. The YM Secretary responded that if PB approves the recommendations in their appended report then the description of the role of M&C clerk would be revised prior to Sessions. He stated that the MTT views the process as an evolving direction, and it will be necessary to live into the changes. They envision the M&C clerk to be holding an eldership role for the wider Body as the transition evolves. Jeremiah Dickinson has asked to be released from his work as Interim Clerk of Ministry & Counsel.

Friends approved the MTT recommendations

PB 22-47: Salem Quarter Report and Proposals (report appended)

The report from the Salem Quarterly Meeting (SQM) presents the discernment process, background SQM minutes, and request for PB approval of two items pertaining to the Quarter’s proposed period of Sabbath.

- **PB 22-47.1** PB approval is requested regarding the SQM proposal for the NEYM Legacy Gift Committee to administer grant funds that have been held and distributed by SQM, for a Sabbath period of 1 to two years, as described in the appended SQM report.

Friends approved

- **PB 22-47.2** Additionally, during the Sabbath period, SQM requests approval from PB that the following essential functions of SQM be overseen by the Permanent Board:
 - receiving and endorsing travel minutes;
 - lifting up and laying down meetings in the Quarter;
 - discerning and recording gifts of ministry brought by monthly meetings of SQM. In the case that a SQM monthly meeting clerk wishes to put forward a Recording of Ministry, the initiating monthly meeting clerk will contact the clerks of the constituent meetings of their Quarter, initiate a Called Meeting for Clearness to discern wider acknowledgment of the individual’s gifts in the ministry, and if approve, the ministry will be recorded. This process will be under the care and oversight of the Permanent Board.

Friends Approved

PB will bring these requests from SQM to Sessions 2022 for approval.

PB 22-48: Travel Minutes (Travel minute appended)

- **PB 22-48.1:** The PB Clerk requests that PB unite in endorsing a minute for Callid Keefe-Perry, for travel outside the YM, brought to PB by Becky Phipps and Sarah Bansen, Co-Clerks of Fresh Pond MM. This minute is coming to PB directly. It was not brought forward to Salem Quarterly Meeting.

Friends approved

- **PB 22-48.2:** The PB Clerk requests that PB unite in endorsing a travel minute for Kathleen Wooten. Kathleen's travel minute has been endorsed by Ralph Gentile, Clerk, on behalf of Lawrence/Andover Monthly Meeting. This minute is coming to PB directly. It was not brought forward to Salem Quarterly Meeting.

FRIENDS APPROVED

Following this approval, a Friend noted that PB just approved two travel minutes that did not go through the Quarter—yet the previous item of business (PB 22-47) affirmed that PB did not have sole authority over changes to Quaker process in Salem Quarter and those Salem Quarter procedures should go through Sessions for approval. The PB Clerk responded that these travel minute approvals represent PB's endorsements of the work of the monthly meetings, even though it may not seem to be in "good-order" to be assuming this responsibility. Another Friend noted that a PB working group was appointed some years ago to look at the YM process for approval of travel minutes and there is precedent for PB to receive these directly from MMs.

PB 22-49: Connecticut Valley Quarter Minute on Ending War in Ukraine

Minute is appended.

PB 22-50: Right Relationship Report (report appended)

Sara Smith reported for Right Relationship Resource Group. Their report is appended. Friends expressed appreciation for the tender attention and humility being brought to this work. A pattern of faithfulness within the resource group was noted, as well as acknowledgement of the long pattern of oppression by those of us who are complicit in the colonizing culture.

PB 22-51: PB Clerks Report and Updates (report appended)

The PB Clerk expressed gratitude and appreciation to YM Presiding Clerk, Bruce Neuman, whose service will conclude at the end of Sessions 2022. The PB Clerk also expressed gratitude for the service of several Friends whose term of service on PB is ending.

The PB Clerk reported that the Fund for Sufferings has made a distribution to support the costs of legal fees and fines incurred by "a Friend causing good trouble".

PB 22-52: Proposed Charge for Anti-Racism Consultation WG (report appended)

The PB Clerk noted the charge in the attached report—no questions were raised.

Friends approved the charge for the Antiracism Consultation Working Group as presented.

PB 22-53: Cuba Delegation Report (report appended)

Mary Hopkins reported for the delegation to Cuba.

Friends expressed gratitude for Mary's faithfulness to Cuba Friends and NEYM.

PB 22-54: Memorial Minutes from Quarters (Memorial minutes from three quarters are appended)

Memorial minutes for the following Friends were distributed to PB in Advance Documents:

Falmouth Quarter -Anne Harwood, Portland Friends; Arthur Fink, Portland Friends; Linda J. Lyman, Southern Maine Friends Meeting, Edward Anthony Robinson, Portland Friends

Sandwich Quarter- James Gould, E. Sandwich Preparative Meeting;

Southeast Quarter- Jeanne Theis Whitaker, Providence Friends; Susan Sayer-Crew, Westerly Friends

Friends approved forwarding all submitted memorial minutes to Sessions (they were not read aloud.)

The PB clerk expressed it is unlikely it will be necessary to meet in July 2022 or at Sessions. It is all so different, but all so good. We have traversed some challenging places and we have made it together.

PB 22-50: Closing Worship

Friends closed with a period of worship.

Next scheduled meeting: September 17 2022

Sessions Minutes for approval by Permanent Board September 17, 2022

Below are minutes from the 2022 Annual sessions, which need Permanent Board

Approval. A few notes:

- Most of these are reporting of things that happened, (epistles being read, reports given) and, while an important part of the record, are less significant that they capture what happened perfectly. Others are minutes that record decisions or important discussions.
- Minutes below which are in red and larger font I'd like to suggest we consider and approve individually. All others I think we can treat as "Unity agenda." Meaning that if you have some concern we can "pull it out" of the unity agenda and consider it separately. Otherwise we will approve them as a block.
- Note there are minutes which were approved at sessions, these are not included. • If you have questions or concerns about any of these, please let me know at brucethequaker@gmail.com
- Note also, if you have minor edits for spelling, grammar and such, please send those to me, (brucethequaker@gmail.com) we don't need to use valuable PB time on "dots and commas." • Don't be concerned with the numbering – these will be updated by Sara Hubner as she does final layout and editing.

NEYM Sessions 2022 Draft Minutes

2022-203 Introduction of Bible Half-Hour speaker and elders

Jen Higgins-Newman (Beacon Hill) introduced our Bible half-hour speaker, Regina Renee Nyégbeh [Ward], as a Christian Friend for whom the Bible is not just a foundational document for our faith tradition, but a guide to daily living. Regina Renee joined us by video-conference.

Regina Renee works as a librarian and has taught in public schools. She is passionate about social justice, intellectual freedom, reading, and building community. Her work with Friends and racial healing was born at the intersections of life both as a woman of African descent and a Christian Quaker. She is the Clerk of Ujima Friends Meeting in Philadelphia.

LVM Shelton (Plainfield), Lee Andrew (Ujima Friends Meeting), Polly Washburn (), Jennifer Higgins-Newman (Beacon Hill), and Ryan Higgins-Newman (Beacon Hill) were present as her elders.

Regina Renee pointed out how speaking slowly and clearly would help the Spanish interpreters and she reminded us of the term "language justice." She opened by offering a very clear road map for the message she had been given for NEYM

Sessions. Her timely and constant reminder using the Sessions' theme provided a clear focus on the urgency of the work of listening, transformation and engagement,

Each day, she finished her presentation seeding our waiting worship with queries, all framed by the urgent reminder: “This is the hour ... How does the Spirit find you?”

A recording of the Bible Half-Hour presentation will be available on the NEYM website. [\[provide link\]](#)

Sunday Evening

2022-301 Welcome and introductions

Presiding clerk Bruce Neumann (Fresh Pond) welcomed those present in the hall and on Zoom. He again introduced the rest of the Clerks' table, and our lead tech person, David Coletta (Fresh Pond and Three Rivers), who introduced the rest of the tech team: Becky Ray, (Beacon Hill), Bob O'Connor, (Vassalboro), Bre-anne Brown (East Sandwich), Cornelia Parkes (Cambridge), Emily Neumann (Cambridge), Jan Nisenbaum, (Cambridge), Jen Higgins-Newman (Beacon Hill), and Jennifer Swann (S. Berkshire).

The clerk also introduced the Rising Clerk, Rebecca Leuchak (Providence), and the Interpretation Team: Mary Hopkins (Fresh Pond), Judy Goldberger (Beacon Hill), Richard Lindo (Framingham), Chris Jorgensen (Cambridge), Maggie Fogarty (Dover), and Abigail Adams (Storrs).

Through the week the following Friends served as elders for our Business sessions: Richard Lindo, Callid Keefe-Perry, Jackie Stillwell, Maggie Edmonson, Kathy Olsen, Karen Sanchez Eppler, Janet Hough, Kristna Evans, Fran Brokaw, Robert Dove McClellan, Mary Chenaille, Ben Warner, , Hannah Zwirner-Forsythe, Wendy Schlotterbeck

2022-303 Approval of Acting Recording Clerk

The clerk presented the name of Benigno Sánchez-Eppler as the acting second Recording Clerk for this year's Sessions. **Friends approved.**

2022-305 Introduction to Noticing Patterns

Polly Attwood (Cambridge) introduced the function of the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group, and invited Friends at any time to interrupt harmful behavior.

The Group is committed 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, they are called to lift up patterns of faithfulness and practices that move us further into being a Spirit-led community.

This year in business meetings all Friends are invited to share what they are noticing, or ask for a time of noticing. The Clerk will also call for noticings as he is led.

Polly reminded us to use 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 as a body how we are experiencing our

community.

Members of the working group are available in person and via Zoom for questions, support, and discernment for all engaging in this process: Polly Attwood (Clerk), Melody Brazo (Fresh Pond), Melissa Foster (Framingham), Lisa Graustein (Three Rivers Worship Group), Janet Hough (Cobscook), Becky Jones (Northampton), Anna Lindo (Framingham), Richard Lindo (Framingham), Heidi Nortonsmith (Northampton), L.V.M. Shelton (Plainfield), Pamela Terrien (Westport).

2022-306 Welcome Visitors

Through the week the following visitors were welcomed and invited to introduce themselves: [Names to be inserted]

2022-307 Budget Proposal

Scot Drysdale (Hanover), NEYM Treasurer, presented the proposed NEYM budget for FY 2022-23, included in the Advanced Documents, and explained the particulars of the six footnoted items.

Friends were invited to bring their concerns about the budget to a Finance Committee listening session on Monday.

2022-308 Noticings

The Clerk opened a period for noticing.

A Friend wondered...

- ...how Friends get recognized to speak from the floor of the business meeting.

Friends noticed...

- ...faithfulness in the presentation of work in the Advanced Documents.
- ...faithful production of Recorded Advanced Documents
- ...faithful provision of stipend for volunteers who work for Yearly Meeting many hours in which they cannot earn money they would need.

A Friend suggested...

- ...noticings don't all require a response from the Clerk.

This was our first opportunity to try to practice noticings as a body and in the middle of discernment.

2022-309 Faith and Practice

Phebe McCosker (Hanover) presented the Faith and Practice Revision Committee's draft chapter on marriage, which will come back on Wednesday for preliminary approval.

The committee has revised the chapter, keeping in mind the responses it has received since 2019.

In comments from the monthly meetings, the committee had been asked to include more about sexuality, and discerned that the Marriage chapter would only address sexuality as it is manifest in a marriage. A fuller discussion of sexuality will appear in the section on "Living a Faithful Life," currently under development. Divorce will also be part of "Living a Faithful Life" rather than in the chapter on Marriage.

There was a strong feeling that the chapter should do more to emphasize marriage under the care of the meeting, and marriage as a leading of the Spirit the couple feels and lives into.

Several monthly meetings also asked for guidance on how to address requests for marriage under the care of the meeting that fall outside of what is described in our Faith and Practice. Our calling is to name where the Yearly Meeting is at this time, while still being guided in discernment by the movement of the Spirit, even as social norms related to sexuality and marriage continue to change over time.

Friends were encouraged to attend the listening session during Sessions. The chapter on Marriage will come back for preliminary approval toward the end of the week.

2022-310 Nominating

Jackie Stillwell (Monadnock) invited everyone to take a deep breath, then spoke about living into the new purpose, procedures, and composition for the Nominating Committee.

“There has been a shift in the focus of our work towards visioning and identifying what's needed, noticing what's working and not working, naming and nurturing gifts, and raising up new leadership to stretch beyond the people we already know.”

Jackie pointed to open spaces and opportunities on the nominating slate. The Committee continues to identify barriers to service and to the full expression of individual gifts, and endeavors to find ways to overcome those barriers. “Our efforts include writing a job description for each opportunity of service and the gifts or the skills that we're hoping will rise up to meet the need. We invite anyone at Sessions, even if it's your first year, to let us know if you are interested in serving on any committees. We need people who are creative and can think together and don't need all the rules laid out ahead of time.” The Nominating Committee can be reached via email at nominating@nevm.org.

The only change in our nominating slate is the addition of one name, Megan Jensen (Monadnock) for recording clerk to begin next year. This name will come back for approval on Wednesday afternoon.

2022-311 Unity Agenda

The Clerk referred to the components of the Unity Agenda included in Advanced Documents,

and asked whether any of the items required separate consideration. Hearing no request for separate discernment, the Clerk proceeded to ask for approval and acceptance of the items listed below:

- Approval of Bank Resolutions ("Advanced Documents," p.10).
- Approval of Minute to Authorize Edits and Corrections (p, 10).
- Approval of Sessions Planning Purposes, Procedures, & Composition (p. 10).
- Acceptance of board, committee, and representative reports (p. 36).
- Acceptance of Memorial Minutes (as prepared by monthly meetings, and reviewed and approved by quarterly meetings and the Permanent Board). See link to Memorial Minute Booklet at the end of these Minutes.

Friends Approved the Unity Agenda.

Monday Morning

2022-501 Epistle from Canada Yearly Meeting

Friends heard the epistle from Canada Yearly Meeting which met under the weight of recent disclosures about death and ill-treatment of indigenous children in residential schools. Canadian Friends reconsidered to what extent Quaker practices contribute to patriarchy, colonialism, and violence, and expressed that if our Quaker practices do not transform us, we cannot transform the world.

2022-505 Report on Middlebury Monthly Meeting's response to the Call to Urgent Action for the Earth and her Inhabitants

Ruah Swennerfelt (Middlebury) reported on her meeting's actions over the past year. They have purchased a solar array for the Clemens Family Farm, a black-owned center that promotes black artists, and also supported the Pollinator Pathways Project, creating a corridor of gardens for pollinators that travel long distances. This work is a lifelong undertaking that requires prayer and faithfulness.

2022-506 Report on New Haven Monthly Meeting's response to the Call to Urgent Action for the Earth and her Inhabitants

Kim Stoner (New Haven) told us about her meeting's work supporting businesses that are black owned or serve a primarily black community and are involved with issues related to climate change. They have supported Friends of Kensington Park, Gather New Haven, Emerge, and Solar Youth in projects around the city.

Because the meetinghouse was closed during the pandemic, the meeting was blessed with large contributions to support these projects. It is unclear how much money will be available next year.

2022-507 Permanent Board Report

Preparing to present a series of reports and recommendations from Permanent Board, Leslie Manning (Durham) read from Faith and Practice to remind us to draw on our experience of

worship to find unity not just with each other, but with the divine will.

2022-508 Recommendation from Permanent Board to lay down the Development Committee

The Permanent Board recommended the laying down of the Development Committee. We give thanks for those who have served on this committee, and realize that much of the ongoing annual work of development is best accomplished by staff, with regular input from Friends with specific knowledge and experience. An *ad hoc* Development Advisory Group has been established to consult with staff as needed. This group does not require nominations, and The Permanent Board will work closely with our Yearly Meeting Secretary for appointments to this group.

Friends approved laying down the Development Committee.

2022-509 Recommendation from Permanent Board to lay down the Racial, Social, & Economic Justice Committee

Permanent Board also recommended laying down the Racial, Social & Economic Justice Committee, with our thanks to the many who have served over the years. The Permanent Board considered that in recent years, as the Yearly Meeting has engaged more deeply and widely in understanding our complicity in structural racism, and how we can work to challenge it, we are doing more of this at every level of Yearly Meeting discernment, and at the local monthly meeting and individual level.

One of the functions of RSEJ over the years has been the distribution of scholarships to African American students from the Freedmen's Fund. A new procedure has been developed by the Permanent Board for the management and transfer of these funds. This procedure directs the Treasurer to distribute the available income in the Freedman's Fund to four Historically Black Colleges and Universities, in the Southern United States, that have schools of education.

After hearing strong and heartfelt opposition to the laying down of RSEJ from Friends at Sessions, the Clerk determined that we are not in unity with the recommendation of the Permanent Board. The clerk suggested that Friends interested in working on racial justice concerns contact the nominating committee.

2022-511 Noticings

Friends noticed ...

- ... a profound restlessness in the gathering faced with the expressions of pain by an African American Friend.
- ... individual love and concern for the distressed Friend, but also expressions of frustration and the desire to move on.
- ... that more understanding is needed.

Plenary, Monday afternoon

2022-601 Plenary Speaker

Nia Thomas (Northampton) introduced the plenary speaker. **Emily Provance** (15th St Meeting, New York Yearly Meeting) travels in the Ministry widely carrying a concern for intergenerational activities that sustain community. Many Friends in New England are familiar with Emily through her attendance at previous annual sessions, her blog, or her Beacon Hill Friends House Weed lecture.

Playful and serious at the same time, Emily used fairy tales, songs, and stories from the Bible to explore themes of love, fear, goodness, and mercy. She led Friends of all ages to struggle with questions, to unravel difficulties, and to enjoy the fellowship of joint discovery.

The Bible, she pointed out, tells us we are forgiven not because we deserve it, but because God is merciful. "Not only am I worthy of forgiveness no matter what I do, but my sibling is also worthy of my forgiveness no matter what they do."

She closed bringing to our attention the context for the theme of this year's Sessions, Mary Dyer's words on the way to her execution:

This is to me the hour of greatest joy I ever had in this world. No ear can hear; no tongue can utter, and no heart can understand the sweet incomes and the refreshings of the spirit of the Lord, which I now feel.

Emily asked us: Can we find joy in granting mercy, even when we would rather do otherwise? She sent us into the rest of the week with her blessings, and with the charge to find joy wherever we may be.

Tuesday Morning

2022-801 Epistle from Uganda Friends Church (Quakers)

Ugandan Friends prayed: "Let us draw near to God with sincere hearts, fully trusting in Him." Hebrews 10:22. They recognized the blessings of living and having to care for a fragile ecosystem, and discussed the Christian family, environmental conservation, the generation gap, AIDS, COVID-19, stewardship, and finance. They thanked God for the message sent to them through Marion Baker (NEYM) who spoke about the Samaritan woman Jesus met at the well as one of the first Gospel ministers carrying the Good News to her own people.

After the reading of the Epistle, Reading Clerks reminded us to keep Kenya in our prayers as

they hold national elections today.

2022-803 Appreciation for the Tech Team

The Clerk spoke about difficulties with electronic communications experienced at the beginning of the business meeting, and of the loving and effective work of the tech team that brought us back on line. The Clerk also thanked the Spirit for the message given through Regina Renee Ward about Spiritual Speed Limits which he felt specially moved to practice.

2022-804 Report from the Noticing Patterns of Oppression & Faithfulness Working Group

Members of the Noticing Patterns Working Group spoke after they held a meeting to carefully consider what they had noticed during Monday's sessions.

They noticed that we heard powerful words of pain, but we did not pause to take in what had been said and did not honor the pain nor the experiences that were shared. By not stopping to listen, we erased a Friend and invalidated the trust.

The Working Group, meeting with more time, was able to perceive that we as a body were harmed beyond anyone's individual experience of the pain.

They felt grateful for Regina Renee Nyégbeh's faithfulness in noticing and speaking to the pattern of not listening.

They asked: Can we let love be the first motion? Can our relationships with individuals and communities ground our work allowing us to be God's hands and feet?

They advised: Attend to the feelings that these noticings lift up in you, and hold these noticing now in silence; later, as the rest of the day is given, talk with each other about how you feel them.

2022-807 Report of Ministry of Brianna Halliwell

Brianna Halliwell (Vassalborough) spoke to Friends about her "School Bus Ministry," which is supported by the Legacy Grant Fund.

Her ministry began with a dream in which Great Spirit in the form of a silhouette of Jesus Christ told her, "Love all there is to love, be all there is to be, so that truth may come."

Righteous anger after the murder of George Floyd led her to go to the front lines to protect black protesters from white counterprotesters, and in that experience she realized that human rage does not accomplish what God desires. Since then she has tried to dismantle her internalized patterns

of oppression. Last fall she applied for a Legacy Gift Grant to become a sanctified minister and follow the ever-evolving call from God.

Spiritual encounters with animals have helped her become a clear channel of communication between humans and the more-than-human beings with whom we share the Earth.

Itinerant ministers are driven by the Spirit across the landscape, and her ministry in its current form involves living in a tiny house in the form of a converted school bus and taking her ministry on the road. Brianna testified that Christ calls her to love, protect, and serve the oppressed with the ferocity of a lion and the gentleness of the lamb, to resist empire, and to surrender to the promptings of the Spirit with absolute trust in God.

2022-808 Report on the Distribution of the Letter of Apology to Native Americans

Andrew Grant (Mt Toby), Don Campbell (Mt Toby), Suzanna Schell (Beacon Hill), Kim West (Cambridge), and Sara Smith (Concord), members of the Right Relationship Working Group and the Friends Peace Team, talked about the process of disseminating the Apology to Native Americans approved at Sessions last year. After sharing a poem by Abigail Echo Hawk, the Apology was read aloud.

Distributing the letter began with compiling a list of local and regional Native groups. When the letter was sent out, the hope was that it might be a way to establish relationship where so far there has been none.

Correspondence received in reply felt like a holy opening.

With the distribution of the Apology, the Right Relationship Working Group has completed this stage of its work on behalf of NEYM. They called on Permanent Board to continue the work of relationship building, and left us with the question: What does justice require of us?

2022-810 Suggested Action Items from Friends Peace Teams

Jonathan Vogel-Bourne (Cambridge), and Minga Claggett-Bourne (Cambridge), on behalf of the Friends Peace Team, suggested a number of actions related to Quaker involvement in the Indian Boarding Schools. The purpose of these actions is to “put feet to the words” in the Apology to Native Americans (approval 2021-80). The proposal included eight major tasks to act on:

1. To undertake a thorough and comprehensive review of our own records.
2. To determine the amount of financial and material support NEYM contributed.
3. To identify graveyards.
4. To publish a report.

5. To determine the value, in current dollars, of the money received from the federal government to operate the boarding schools.
6. To apologize to the tribes and nations affected by our actions.
7. To urge Congress to pass the “Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the U.S. Act” (H.R. 5444 and S.2907). To fund tribal programs for Native language instruction and revitalization.

The minute was approved in two parts:

Friends request that the Presiding Clerk notify monthly meetings about HR 5444 and S2907 (A bill to establish the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies), and suggest that individuals write their Senators and Congresspeople to encourage them to co-sponsor and support passage of these bills.

Friends approved, and charged the Presiding Clerk to include this request with the Sessions summary sent to monthly meetings.

Friends also ask the Permanent Board to begin the process of researching New England Quakers’ involvement with Indian Boarding Schools, and to do this in consultation with the Archives Committee and the Right Relationship Resource Group. We recognize that this research may happen in stages, may require funding from sources other than our operating budget, and may benefit from widespread input from around the Yearly Meeting. It is hoped that Permanent Board may report back on progress and findings at Annual Sessions 2023.

Acknowledging concerns expressed on the floor about asking Permanent Board to shepherd the work of the Yearly Meeting, the Clerk senses that **the meeting endorses engagement with the work as delineated**, and that the minute is approved.

Permanent Board’s involvement with the work does not preclude action by monthly meetings or individuals. The task given to the Board is to coordinate a research project of unknown magnitude; but the work of building relationships with Native groups is necessarily local and there is no reason to wait for Permanent Board to do their part before acting at a local level. The National Native American Boarding School Healing Project is one of many resources available through which

Friends can listen to and learn from Native voices.

Tuesday Afternoon

2022-902 Presentation about Belize City Friends Center

Nikki Holland (West Richmond, IN) spoke about her work with Quakers in Belize. The Belize City Friends Center (a ministry of FUM) has a church and a remedial school which equips students to face a high-stakes standardized test and also addresses their spiritual, physical, and mental health needs.

The church started with Belize Friends who became Quaker in Scotland and then came back looking for a meeting. It is a youth church, with kids involved in every aspect of running it. Eight young Friends so far have taken a membership class and become members. One of them founded AVP Belize.

Their Community Center is very small, which means they can respond quickly to needs like a food relief package program, a human trafficking awareness program, and tutoring offered when schools were closed during the pandemic. It provides a safe space for youth who might be vulnerable elsewhere.

Nikki is finishing her first 3-year term and starting her second. In these next three years, she hopes to see enrollment in the school increase and for the school to get a computer lab, and also for members of the church to continue discerning what it means to be a Belizian Quaker.

Friends can support the Belize City Friends Center with donations of money, with prayers, and with encouraging emails and postcards.

2022-903 Report from Friends United Meeting Board Representatives NEYM's representatives to the Friends United Meeting (FUM) Board, Frederick Martin (Beacon Hill), Jennifer Smith (Concord), and Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond), spoke about FUM and our relationship with this organization.

They reminded us that most Quakers in the world are FUM Quakers in Africa, as well as North America, the Caribbean, and Palestine. Ramallah Friends School is an important educational institution in Palestine. Quaker missionaries in Africa brought values like peacemaking and gender equity that were not typical of other denominations. FUM's work today includes repairing a Friends school damaged by fire in one of the largest slums on the continent of Africa, and organizing peacework through the Friends Church Peace Teams Project to establish a nonviolent presence during the elections happening in Kenya.

They reminded us that in last year's Sessions, in response to continued concerns about the sexual ethics portion of FUM's personnel policy, we established the Bodine-Rustin Fund, as well as a mechanism which allows monthly meetings to divert monies to that fund which would otherwise go to FUM. Last year's Sessions also directed the clerk to write to the FUM Board, expressing

our continued concern with the sexual ethics portion of FUM's personnel policy.

Following up on that letter, a meeting was held recently, which included NEYM's Board Representatives, our outgoing and rising Clerks, with the Clerk, Assistant Clerk, and General Secretary of the FUM Board. While there was no immediate outcome from this meeting, trust was built and this group expects to meet again, including a wider variety of FUM Friends. They concluded by inviting all of us to attend the next FUM triennial, to be held in 2023 in Nakuru, Kenya.

2022-905 Report and Recommendation on the continuing attention to Spiritual Life & Ministry

Noah Merrill (Putney), Yearly Meeting Secretary; and Jeremiah Dickinson (Dover), Interim Clerk of Ministry and Counsel started the report on the continuing attention to spiritual life & ministry by presenting a Powerpoint summary of the detailed information in the Advanced Documents.

The Permanent Board has reviewed and united with these recommendations.

After the presentation, the Clerk brought to the gathering the opportunity to unite with the following:

1. Continuing the season of experimental discernment for three more years, noting that the formal structure of the Committee on Ministry and; Counsel would continue to be temporarily set aside, while these recommended steps are put into place and further discernment can continue. This experiment will continue to be under the oversight of Permanent Board and the Spiritual Life Listening Group.
Friends approved.

2. The establishment of a Meeting Accompaniment Group, as described in the Purposes, Procedures, & Composition.
With a concern expressed that there be broad geographic representation, **Friends Approved.**

3. The Purposes, Procedures, & Composition document for a Meeting Accompaniment Group,
Friends approved.

4. Asking 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).

Friends approved.

The Clerk asked whether Friends affirmed the following, which would be shepherded by the Spiritual Life Listening Group:

1. Convene a Meeting for listening
2. Host opportunities for the wider body of Friends in New England to learn about and celebrate Friends active in public ministry
3. Offer regular opportunities for prayerful holding of the wider body of Friends in New England, for those led, and invite Friends to this discipline
4. Encourage opportunities for Friends serving in ministry and eldership to gather as led for “shop talk,” mentoring, mutual accountability, and learning
5. 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.

Friends affirmed these five recommendations.

It was suggested and encouraged that all these activities and gatherings be held as a hybrid meeting.

Not having a Ministry & Counsel Committee without fully knowing what new structure would shepherd the old and emerging functions is uncomfortable to many. Nevertheless, once we unite on moving forward with "experimental discernment" the Spirit is unlikely to take us back to where we were before.

2022-906 Minute of Appreciation for the McCandlesses' founding and care for the Children and Family Bookstore

Ruah Swennerfelt, on behalf of Friends who have worked at the Children's bookstore over the last 20 years, read the following minute of appreciation:

In 2002 Jean McCandless had a leading to open a children's bookstore outside of the regular bookstore at NEYM Sessions. With the support of her husband Christopher, and the help of their son Jonathan, they brought this leading to life.

Over the last 20 years (excluding the two years of COVID), Children, families, and others have found joy, respite, special events, books and crafts in the Children and Family Bookstore. An *ad hoc* committee for Families of Children with Special Needs grew from the work of the bookstore. Before the age of the internet, the bookstore distributed First Day School curricula to Monthly Meetings, many of them written by Jean. Many artists volunteered to be a part of the bookstore, including Annie and Peter Blood-Paterson, Stephan Haynes, who made amazing signs and played music, and at current Sessions, Juliet Wright brought her guitar playing and songs. Children's Bookstore volunteers identified by their starry crowns brought a lot of joy to many younger Quakers and a lot of older ones too.

This minute is in appreciation of Jean and Christopher McCandless for their many years of service to our Yearly Meeting.

Friends approved inserting this minute of appreciation in the record of our proceedings.

Wednesday Morning

2022-1103 Noticings

Friends noticed...

- ...at times we fall into the false belief that we are responsible for each other's feelings, when really we are powerless over the feelings and the actions of others (something the Friend learned while living in a difficult relationship). Participating in the ways God is at work changing the world is not the same as thinking of ourselves as the cause or agent of everything that happens.
- ...several times during the week *Chronos*, the time of the clock, has undermined *Kairos*, the time of the Spirit. We bent the schedule only when bureaucratic items of business need to be completed. Being quick to listen should mean a willingness to bend our will to match God's time. She wondered: "How long, how long must we wait to fall in step with God's plan for us?"
- ...going over the time allotted for business privileges people who are able to stay: those without children and without physical impediments that require rest from prolonged sitting.

A Friend wondered...

- ... how much of our peace testimony is based on living in the Life and Power that takes away the occasion for war, and how much is based on our fear of conflict? Is this why our Justice testimony is so much weaker than our Peace testimony? How do you negotiate with a person or with a country that's stealing your land? How do we have peace without justice?

2022-1104 Epistle (First Reading)

The Epistle Committee, Jean Rosenberg (Middlebury), Judy Williams (Hanover), and Robert Dove McClellan (Fresh Pond) read a draft of the epistle for this year's Sessions. They reminded us that the purpose of the epistle is to give a sense of our condition as we gathered together, how the Spirit moved among us, and where we were guided as a body. It is not a laundry list of events and items of business, but a story of how our relationship with God has been made manifest during this week.

Friends offered a few comments which the writers hope to incorporate before a final reading at the closing celebration.

2022-1105 Report from Friends Camp

Camp Director Anna Buller made her report in a video in order to avoid COVID cross contamination between Camp and Sessions. Four hundred and forty children and teens, through the usual activities of games, singing, swimming, and boating, engaged in the "Ministry of Joy." Joy which was palpable in the one-second-per-day video of camp activities. Anna spoke also about resilience as a theme which was evident in the way these young Friends set aside the challenges of the past years, to create a community which was gathered, committed, and creative. Some themes of camp this year have been resilience and joy.

2022-1106 Permanent Board Recommendations Concerning Salem Quarter's Request

Leslie Manning (Durham) presented two requests from Salem Quarter.

Salem Quarter has declared a Jubilee or Sabbath suspending many of its organizational functions. The following two items will be addressed as specified.

1. Salem Quarter Grants will be distributed by the Legacy Gift Committee, to refresh and restart the Legacy Futures Fund, with a preference given to applicants from the monthly meeting of Salem Quarter.

Salem Quarter's treasurer, John Robinson has agreed to stay engaged during the period of Sabbath and will continue to support and advise the Legacy Gift Committee.

Friends Approved

2. The Permanent Board has agreed to undertake other Ministry and Counsel functions of Salem Quarter: including the approval of travel minutes, laying

down meetings, recording of gifts in ministry.

Friends Approved.

2022-1107 Return to the Discernment on Racial, Social, & Economic Justice

The Clerk shared his perception that racial justice is much more on people's minds around the Yearly Meeting than it was even five years ago, and he assured Friends that this work is not being laid aside.

1. Lack of unity for laying down RSEJ

The Clerk reiterated his sense of the meeting from Monday that we do not have unity to lay down Racial, Social, & Economic Justice Committee at this time.

2. Interest in Racial Justice work.

The clerk reported that a number of people have contacted the Nominating Committee expressing interest in racial justice work. Nominating will have further conversations with each of them to explore their gifts, nature of their interest, and their availability to serve.

3. New forms for addressing racial justice

The Clerk reported that the Noticing Patterns Working Group approached Coordinating & Advisory in March, observing a need both for a vision for racial justice work and for forms other than Noticing Patterns. Coordinating & Advisory, Nominating, and Permanent Board will all be exploring the question of what structures the Yearly Meeting needs at this time. This is not on any specific timetable, but these conversations will continue. This exploration will be informed by several components.

First, there has been a shift over recent years towards an understanding of the Yearly Meeting as a support for monthly meetings, and less as a cluster of committees like RSEJ doing work on behalf of the Yearly Meeting.

Second, NEYM has begun making increasing use of smaller and often shorter-term groups to undertake specific pieces of work. This way we can engage more Friends who are not able to commit to longtime committee service.

The Clerk observed that no Yearly Meeting committee will ever single handedly

end the microaggressions, and more direct violence that Friends of color experience. This is work that happens best in small groups and in monthly meetings where people learn together and can support one another.

The Clerk asked if Friends were comfortable with this plan for how future work will be discerned and conducted.

Note to Permanent Board: The clerk's table wrestled with the ambiguity of this moment in our business - there was nothing being approved or affirmed. If the Permanent Board is inclined, you could insert a note to the effect of "Permanent Board concurs that this was the sense of the meeting"

A Friend offered celebration, noticing how far we've come since a few years ago when we could hardly own our complicity with "white supremacy."

She also reminded us of the Quaker pattern of establishing committees overlapping charges. She supports convening a smaller group of Friends after Sessions to do the logistical work that will align our energies to pursue the desired outcome.

2022-1108 The Freedmen's Fund

One of the responsibilities of Racial, Social & Economic Justice has been the distribution of the Freedmen's Fund. In the absence of an active RSEJ committee, a new procedure was established by the Permanent Board for the management and transfer of these funds.. This procedure directs the Treasurer to distribute the available income in the Freedman's Fund, to four historically black colleges which have certified a program in teacher training and education.

Wednesday Afternoon

2022-1202 Epistle from Religious Society of Friends in Germany and Austria

We heard the Epistle from the Religious Society of Friends in Germany and Austria.

The pandemic has brought the uncertainties of German and Austrian Friends into sharp focus and has upstaged major concerns like injustice, global warming and the nuclear threat. Their 91st Yearly Meeting took place under challenging health protocols.

This year, they developed guidelines to protect children and youth in Quaker events from sexualized violence. Friends can see into the darkness, yet we turn towards the light and let it

guide us.

2022-1203 Report from FCNL Representative

Sarah Freeman-Woolpert (Concord) reported on her work with FCNL. Her enthusiasm was compelling. Lobbyists in Washington are making progress on some legislation and have had some recent victories. On the grassroots level, there are 130 advocacy teams in 44 states. Friends Place, a Quaker center in Washington, has hosted hundreds of groups and recently has joined with mutual aid networks to host displaced migrants after Texas Governor Greg Abbott began bussing migrants from Texas to DC.

Sarah encouraged Friends to engage with advocacy teams, individually or as part of a

meeting. **2022-1204 Legacy Gift Committee**

Mary Link (Mt. Toby) and Sue Rockwood (Midcoast), co-clerks of Legacy Gift Committee, shared that this was a year of openings and transformations for the Legacy Committee. “Whenever it looked to us like doors were closing, as various aspects of our charge were coming to completion, new openings beckoned.”

Distribution of the last of the Future Fund was completed. The fund had grown over time, and lasted longer than expected, but fulfillment of this charge also means the loss of a resource that has made a big difference to individuals and meetings

Sue and Mary noted that, likely due to Covid, they had a grant cycle with no applications. They understand for other Friends granting organizations that this is not unusual in this time.

New openings include managing requests for the Salem Quarter Fund during the quarter’s planned sabbatical, and providing the process and discernment for distribution of the new Bodine-Rustin Fund. Each of these felt like an exciting new use of the committee’s knowledge and experience

Recent grants have helped release **Dover Friends** for renovating Dover Meetinghouse to support their corporate leading to safely provide sanctuary to immigrants, two travelers to attend Cuba Yearly Meeting and celebrate **30 years of Puente**, **David Coletta’s** (Fresh Pond, Three Rivers) ministry helping meetings discern whether and how to best incorporate technology into care for worship in this time of Covid. Grants have also helped **Briana Halliwell** (Vassalboro) to transition to a full-time life of ministry and minimalism on the road in a school bus, **Andrew Grant’s** (Mt. Toby) land-based inquiry with the intent of accounting for the impacts of settler colonialism, and **Emmy Mathis** (Cambridge) to develop and implement a 1.5-year long program “Embodying the Light; Embodying the Beloved Community.”

Mary and Sue concluded, sharing that a subcommittee has been formed to begin considering the expected 2024 review of whether the current use of Legacy gift funds continues to be where the YM is led to use these monies.

2022-1205 Report on the Visit to Cuba Yearly Meeting

Chris Jorgensen (Cambridge), Rebecca Leuchak (Providence), told us of their visit to Cuba Yearly Meeting's Sessions along with Mary Hopkins (Fresh Pond) in February 2022.

Our representatives were deeply moved by the spiritual vitality, love, and friendship of our Cuban brothers and sisters. The generosity was all the more stunning given the challenges that Cubans are currently living under.

There is another group traveling to Cuba later this year. Anyone, especially those of us belonging to meetings with sister relationships with Cuban monthly meetings, are encouraged to investigate the possibility of going. Cuban Friends love to be connected with us, and we are an important part of their spiritual life.

2022-1206 Message from the Clerk of Cuba Yearly Meeting

We watched a video greeting from Jorge Luis Peña, Presiding Clerk of Cuba Yearly Meeting, followed by an English interpretation. Jorge Luis spoke of challenges, such as the widespread impact of a fire at a fuel depot in Matanzas and, on a more personal level, the difficulty of maintaining enthusiasm in the wake of the pandemic. But he spoke with excitement about the opening of a new conference center and the return of an in-person regional youth retreat.

2022-1207 Faith and Practice (2nd presentation)

Phebe McKosker (Hanover) presented the changes made to the Faith and Practice chapter on Marriage based on comments earlier this week. They will write about sexuality in a separate chapter on Living a Faithful Life, where they hope to raise up the ways that Friends today are faithful in their intimate lives.

Changes to the chapter on Marriage included expanding the discussion of changing social norms related to sexuality and marriage. The committee has heard powerful yearning from polyamorous Friends for affirmation and acceptance by their faith community, but the Faith and Practice Revision Committee is not a body that can answer that yearning when neither the monthly meetings nor the Yearly Meeting itself have yet grappled with it.

A Friend asked that more help be offered to monthly meetings for those occasions when the clearness committee discerns that either the couple or the meeting is not clear to place the marriage under the care of the meeting. The committee noted the comment.

Friends gave Preliminary approval on the main text of the chapter and the notes. The Extracts will be brought for preliminary approval next year.

2022-1208 Budget Final Approval

Scot Drysdale (Hanover) presented the budget for final approval, noting that there had been no questions about it at the listening sessions after its first presentation.

Friends approved the budget.

2022-1209 Nomination for Sessions Recording Clerk
Friends approved Megan Jensen as Recording Clerk for 2023-24.

Wednesday Evening

2022-1301 Welcome and Open Worship

The Clerk welcomed us to the closing celebration, then again welcomed families with new members, whether by birth, marriage, or otherwise. We settled into ten minutes of “squirming worship” with the little ones present and active.

2022-1302 Youth Program Epistles

Reading Clerk Adam Kohrman (Beacon Hill) introduced the Epistles from our youth programs. Childcare; Junior Yearly Meeting; Junior High Yearly Meeting, and Young Friends.

Childcare

Rainer Humphries (Hartford), Child Care Coordinator, shared his appreciation for the parents who trusted Child Care with their children. Rainer expressed gratitude to the parents and families for making this program successful. He noted that:

This is the hour for hand washing. This is the hour for your turn on the slide. This is the hour for you to pick the next book, to read again and again and again. This is the hour to paint a picture, or draw, or add stickers to a piece of paper and an artful way. And this is the hour to solve so many puzzles.

JYM, Kindergarten to grade 3

Janet Dawson (Northampton) expressed appreciation for the leadership of Kenzie Burpee (Wellesley) with Junior Yearly Meeting. Then she read us the Epistle from the Kindergarten, first, second, and third graders.

Gratitude was expressed for finally being able to do things that they were not able to do over Zoom, such as group snacks, singing, tie-dye, and capture the flag. They also enjoyed “Bible ten minutes”

JYM Grades 4-6

The epistle for grades 4-6 was read by River Price-Bachand (Storrs), Gabriel Golden (Weare), Hannah Nagle (Portland), and Alice Allen-Harvey (Durham).

The group described the joy felt at being able to play group games and being able to sing together. Furthermore, they mentioned being able to join the younger JYM group (K-3) for games such as capture the flag.

Young Friends

Brennon Schifman (Providence) read the Epistle from the Young Friends.

They felt a need for their letter to include some of their concerns with the New England Quaker

community: that our Letter of Apology to Native Americans was more about resolving our guilt than about seeking change and restorative justice, and that our community centers a Christian interpretation of Spirit which creates a barrier to Friends who have come to us without a background of Christian theology and language. They recognized the grief that our community faces, and reminded us that the way to find comfort is to walk with grief and seek ways of addressing its root causes.

The Presiding Clerk noted that this Epistle was ministry and should be received with reflection.

2022-1303 BIPOC Report

Michelle Wright (Putney), reading clerk, read a report written by Emma Turcotte, (Beacon Hill), BIPOC Opportunities Coordinator. She organized and facilitated spaces and opportunities for BIPOC attendees: a welcoming before the beginning of Sessions, a multi-purpose gathering space, and intentional gatherings during sessions, all of them available both virtually and in person. Individuals were given the opportunity to say, “As a friend of color, I am feeling (*fill in the blank*) in anticipation of the rest of Sessions this week.” The offerings were well-attended, sharing was deep, and Friends noticed a sense of connection and familiarity.

2022-1304 Home Group Coordinator’s Message

Fran Brokaw (Hanover), Home Group Coordinator, described the home groups which met this week both online and on campus. Many people expressed great joy in being together, though some found it overwhelming to have so much socializing after three years of isolation. The discussion of the Bible Half hour in the home group provided a recurrent focus of attention and intimate spiritual exchange.

Fran expressed gratitude for the facilitators.

2022-1306 Events Coordinator’s Report

Elizabeth Hacala, Events Manager for NEYM told us that planning for Sessions this year required “a healthy disregard for the impossible” as well as faith that way would open.

Two different and concurrent Sessions were planned, one on campus and one online, and then woven together in a grace-filled unity. We had about 350 Friends here in Castleton and 167 among us virtually. A few staff have had to go home sick, but there have been zero cases of COVID on campus this week. Masking was definitely worth it, even in 90° heat. Elizabeth gave thanks to all of the people involved in the planning.

2022-1307 Expressions of Thanks

The Presiding Clerk recognized the invaluable work of the tech team for making this hybrid gathering work, and for the interpretation team's striving for language justice.

He asked Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, to stand and accept our love and thanks.

2022-1308 Second Reading of the Epistle

Jean Rosenberg (Middlebury), Judy Williams (Hanover), and Robert Dove McClellan (Fresh Pond) read the NEYM Epistle with revisions based on comments received earlier.

Friends approved the Epistle, with minor corrections.

2022-1309 Clerk's Closing Reflections

Bruce Neumann(Fresh Pond), Presiding Clerk, expressed his joy at having had the opportunity to work closely with the NEYM office staff and with the rest of the clerks table, as well as the Noticing Patterns of Oppression & Faithfulness Working Group, and the Right Relationship Working Group.

He introduced Megan Jensen (Monadnock) as one of the new Recording Clerk, and Rebecca Leuchak (Providence), Rising Clerk.

Reminding us of the 2020 Sessions theme, the first in Bruce's clerkship, the outgoing and the rising clerk led us in singing "Row On." Rebecca presented Bruce with a paddle decorated with that year's logo with the worlds "*Row on. There's dawn beyond the night,*" and "*For Bruce Neumann in gratitude for many years of service in our Friends community and for your steady rowing as Presiding Clerk of New England Yearly Meeting from August 2019 to August 2022.*"

2022-1314 Final Closing

Our new Presiding Clerk, Rebecca Leuchak, offered a closing prayer.

"I hear the voice of the divine roaring in our ears. There is much work to be done. I see a path forward, a future that we are called to create, and I wonder what things we might accomplish if we truly listen to the divine."

Friends closed the 362nd annual NEYM Sessions in worship, proposing to meet again at Castleton University on August 5, 2023.

A Friend left us with the words, "Parting is not parting. It is simply moving our bodies, but our spirits are still together."

Thursday Morning

2022-1401 Concluding Bible Half-Hour

This year those gathered at Castleton were asked to vacate our rooms soon after breakfast and before our last gathering. With all business concluded, we met again one last time for Bible Half-Hour and open worship.

Throughout the week, Regina Renee's Bible Half-Hours fed our discernment and reinforced our willingness to listen to one another as we considered items of business. She was ill on Thursday and could not join us for this last meeting, but faithful to her leading, she had left for us the materials she had prepared. Through the week, she had delivered her message with enough power and clarity that Friends were able to take her materials and run the Bible Half-Hour in her absence, guiding us to sit with the queries and respond to the Bible readings she had selected.

This proved to be the fitting culmination of her work and a sign of her faithfulness as we felt Spirit speaking through her teaching even in her absence.

This final presentation looked back at the lessons we had heard through the week: •

Miriam's readiness to observe from a distance and then to intervene when needed. •

Samuel's youthful and eager listening to the voice of ()

- Eli's tired and formalistic dispatch of priestly duties without calling the wrongdoers to task, and willingness to accept God's judgment.
- Solomon's willingness to ask for wisdom.
- The lessons about "spiritual speed limits;" to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger.
- The lesson about "spiritual *minimum* speed limits" and the urgency to speed-up our listening capabilities at a time when young people and people of color may be leaving the Society of Friends in frustration when we're too slow to hear the call of justice.

Regina Renee's Bible Half-Hours fed our worship and discernment throughout the week, and reinforced our willingness to listen to one another, the urgency to notice patterns of oppression and faithfulness, and her relentless enthusiasm for reading the Bible.

After the review, we were left with those queries that had been so helpful throughout the week

- What are you led to?
- What are *we* led to?
- How does the Spirit find you?

Those gathered were favored with a renewed sense of urgency and with clear and doable guidelines for moving forward, as well as clear and unambiguous warnings about the costs of not moving forward.

Turn! Turn! Turn! The Seasons Change

Report to Permanent Board

From the Presiding Clerk

September 17, 2022

My warmest greetings to all Committee members and Friends in attendance at the September 2022 Permanent Board meeting, It is great to be with you!

I greet you as your new NEYM Presiding Clerk. Please note that I use she/her/hers pronouns and am a member of Providence Monthly Meeting, located on lands that are within the ancestral home of the Narragansett, Mashantucket, Pokanoket and Nipmuc people. Our city and region are marked by the legacy of Rhode Island's economic foundation in the triangle slave trade. I acknowledge these realities as deeply important and not to be ever forgotten.

My warmest thanks to Bruce Neumann for his faithful service as our Clerk during years which included the enormous challenges of the Covid Pandemic, the emergence of new ways of being present with one another, and challenges and openings of relationship between Friends, and between Friends and wider communities. How blessed we are for his and many other Friends' many talents and deep love for our community. Gratitude to all of you who serve in the many and various ways that you are able.

And speaking of warm, this has been a terrific summer for swimming. I even got to swim while at Castleton University during that very hot and dry week of Yearly Meeting's Annual Sessions in early August. The pool water there registered at 87 degrees Fahrenheit! Needless to say, the cold shower in the locker room afterward was the most refreshing part of the swim break! It was wonderful to be with all of you who could attend for some or all of that hybrid Sessions week filled with Quaker worship, business, learning, and fellowship.

Actually, diving in and swimming is what I have been doing in my work for New England Yearly Meeting since the close of Sessions just over a month ago. These past few weeks I have been involved in finalizing the draft of the Annual Meeting minutes presented to you for discernment and approval. This time spent with the dedicated Friends on the Clerks Table gave me the opportunity to forge connections for our work together moving forward. I have also been debriefing with the Tech Team, and the Sessions Planning Team which has carefully reviewed the very informative post-Sessions evaluations that attending Friends submitted. I have been reflecting prayerfully on my own, and with others involved in Sessions events, on the sense of how Sessions unfolded for all of us this year and where the Spirit is moving among us and where we may be headed in the years to come.

With our Yearly Meeting Secretary Noah Merrill's return from Sabbatical, he and I have taken up the pattern of meeting every other week and I can report that we are forging a good relationship and I look forward to working together. In an effort to get to know our Yearly Meeting better, I have been on intervisitation trips, actually begun over the summer months and continuing into this fall. Having the opportunity to be with many of you in worship and fellowship has been so far, and will continue to be, a great joy.

I am picking up on the work that Bruce was involved in, sending out the Letter of Apology to our many Native communities of this region. Strengthening of existing relationships, openings of doors for new relationships, and possibilities of collaborations are the blessings that I hope will emerge from this initiative. My thanks go to the Right Relationship Working Group with whom I look forward to working.

Nurturing right relationship among us as Friends in New England Yearly Meeting is also an ongoing important endeavor both for me personally and for all of us. I hope that the work that we have already engaged in, to build our awareness of the patterns of faithfulness and oppression alive in our community, will only deepen and strengthen and that we will draw in this challenging work from boundless wellsprings of love and respect for each other. Thanks to the Noticing Patterns of Oppressions and Faithfulness Working Group. We have a long road ahead and much work to do and I pray that we hold each other in tender care as we travel together in this work.

I look forward to supporting our amazing NEYM staff in their work for all of us. They keep many plates spinning with a grace and wisdom that amazes me. And I am so very appreciative of the many years of service that our outgoing Youth staff have faithfully given. Lifting up their gifts with our thanks during Sessions was a particularly sweet moment of gathering. What a joy it is to welcome the new Friends who have stepped up to nurture our young people through NEYM programs. I hope they will feel well supported as they move into these roles.

Beyond our Yearly Meeting and my many meetings with individual Friends to discern your leadings and concerns, I attended last week the gathering of yearly meetings' presiding clerks, hosted by Friends General Conference. We were some twenty in attendance and I was attentive to the sharings from those representing Yearly Meetings all over the United States and Canada. Many of the same concerns and joys we have in our own New England Yearly Meeting were reported by Friends across the Continent.

There is more to this initial swim, more I wish I could include, but that will have to be for another time. I hope that you will feel free to communicate with me. Anytime. My door is open. Please send me an email and let me know your thoughts and/or questions. You can reach me at: clerk@neym.org

I very much look forward to our engagement in the work of the Spirit together!

In Love and Light!

Rebecca Leuchak

To: The Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends
From: Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary
Re: Report in preparation for PB meeting on September 17, 2022

"If your eye is single, your whole body will be filled with light." - Matthew 6:22

Dear Friends,

I recently read a book called, "Subtract: The Untapped Science of Less" by Leidy Klotz. Using examples from many contexts, the author argues that when seeking to create change, many aspects of our cultures, economies, and systems conspire to keep us from recognizing the power of a whole dimension of possible actions—that is, *subtraction*. By subtraction, the book means the revealing, energizing, and transformation made possible by giving attention to *removing* as well as *adding* to a system. By overlooking the value of subtracting, the research in the book suggests, we make poorer choices, unnecessarily waste resources, overextend and exhaust ourselves, and reduce the fruitfulness of our work.

A key insight I took away from this book: when seeking to solve a problem or to create change in a system, people and organizations overwhelmingly default to *adding*, and ignore fruitful possibilities for subtraction. While this adding may have a meaningful influence, by itself it does not address much of the underlying tension driving the results of the system that the intervention is seeking to change. And—as seems perhaps obvious—it's *adding*, and so we then have to do it on top of whatever else we're already committed to. It seems it can be far more effective to look first at removing from the system those elements that are creating the tensions or dynamics that we are seeking to change, before considering what additions may also be needed.

As Friends stewarding the service and ministry of New England Yearly Meeting, I believe this message speaks to our time. In my experience of service among Friends and especially over the past ten years as Yearly Meeting Secretary, I've observed that we are corporately often far more comfortable adding than subtracting. We tend to view the laying down of a committee—or the end of a program, publication, opportunity, or way we've done things in the past—*only as a loss*, and to resist these changes regardless of the effect they might have on the wider context.

In this way, we seem to have difficulty seeing the subtraction of something as a vital part of making something else possible. This seems to happen even and especially when that "something else" is not simply a new committee or project, but an opportunity to qualitatively improve what remains. Think of removing crumbling industrial buildings to create parks, reveal rivers, and nourish the quality of life for communities. Think of creating time for family dinners, or more time and space for prayer that aids discernment about vocation, or opportunities to be available to the unexpected, the unimagined, the mysterious movement of the Spirit that an overfull schedule crowds out of our experience.

In recent years, there have been many changes in our lives—and many for the organization and people that make up New England Yearly Meeting of Friends. A prayer I am carrying for us in the coming months and years is that, in addition to the creation and addition of new efforts and ministries, when we seek to address problems or create meaningful change, we will first—before adding—seek ways we might *subtract* from what we are already doing.

I'm coming to believe that what has sometimes been described as the "testimony of Simplicity" is, in reality, the root of our practice as Friends. In the deepest sense, "simplicity" is not about using fewer of the world's resources, or equitable distribution of wealth, or avoiding ostentatious aesthetic choices. It is putting into practice, imperfectly and continually, the invitation of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew to discipline ourselves to "singleness" in our purpose, attention, and action. And that **singleness** of eye and heart is attention to the presence, guidance, and power of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

Our lives—and our life together—are besieged by distractions. Many of these distractions appear good and beautiful and compelling. They're things we'd love to be able to do. And yet, if something distracts us from that singleness, we risk losing the heart of our calling as a spiritual community. And so, our tradition tells us, our responsibility is to seek again and again to clear away all that distracts us from keeping "our eye single," both personally and communally.

We are not called to be all things to all people. We are not here to share with the world a testimony of busyness, exhaustion, and anxiety. We are here to witness—in our daily living and in the shared work in which we engage—to the tender, humble, world-changing unfolding of the Love of God, even now coming into the world, in us and through us. And this takes discipline, and watchfulness, and courage to acknowledge trade-offs, to celebrate our limitations as reminders of our humanness. As reminders of the precious measure of the time, energy, attention, and financial resources we have been given to steward. It takes a willingness, at times, to disappoint some who want us—or "The Yearly Meeting"—to do everything, or even "just one more thing".

As we begin this new year of service together, may we as members of the Permanent Board seek to cultivate and regularly refresh an ongoing awareness of how much we—as a Yearly Meeting—are seeking to carry and do. May we be watchful in our work—existing or proposed—for distractions that may entangle us in busyness or confusion, in spreading ourselves too thin, in dissipating our attention beyond what can be sustained. Below the thorny thicket of these expectations, down at the root of things, may we keep awake to the stirrings of the Spirit, guiding us to the few things that are truly ours to do as New England Yearly Meeting of Friends. And may we be diligent, as we undertake them, to shelter in the deepening presence, attention, and aliveness that bears the fruits of the Spirit.

In the coming months, we will need to give attention to the implementation of the approved recommendations for the Yearly Meeting's role in nurturing ministry, eldership, and the spiritual life of local meetings. We will return in several ways to supporting our commitments to inclusive leadership development. We will be asked to support continuing attention to the Yearly Meeting's unfolding engagement in seeking right relationship, which is not a project to be accomplished, but a reorientation of our ways of being, one to be discovered in the living of it.

As summer turns to fall, I hope you will consider taking a few moments to refresh yourselves, or to acquaint yourselves for the first time if you are beginning service, on some reports, past recommendations, and reflections that may inform our ongoing work. If you didn't read or listen to my annual report to Sessions, you can [listen to a recording of it here](#), or read it on page 31 of the Sessions 2022 Advance Documents [here](#).

If you are interested in more context, I also hope you will take time to review the most recent progress report on inclusive leadership development ([listen here](#) or on page 14 of the Sessions 2022 Advance Documents [here](#)). The Sessions-approved recommendations relating to Yearly Meeting support of ministry, eldership, and the spiritual life of local meetings are available [here](#), and are posted as an

informational attachment in the advance documents for this meeting.

Here then, some further updates from our wider work:

1. Consistent with our process for the approval of the Friends Camp annual budget, The Treasurer and I met with the Friends Camp Director and the Friends Camp Treasurer to review the proposed budget for Friends Camp for the coming fiscal year. With our support, it has been approved by the Friends Camp Committee, and will be presented to Permanent Board for approval at our 9/17 meeting.
2. In recent months, I have worked with Friends Camp Director Anna Hopkins as she works with the Friends Camp committee to plan for a sabbatical. I hope the Permanent Board will receive and affirm the request in these advance documents regarding the Camp Director's upcoming sabbatical, even as the needed review and updating of our wider personnel policies will be getting underway this fall.
3. Consistent with our grants policy, I have approved and am working to help finalize a grant proposal to Obadiah Brown's Benevolent Fund for a 9/15 deadline, in support of video and audio content supporting and extending the third offering of the Nurturing Faithfulness program which is beginning this month. Interviews with guest presenters will be recorded and released on NEYM's video and audio podcast platforms, and will be available both for the current participants, and for use by local meetings and Friends interested in exploring the spiritual treasures offered through this program.
4. Kenzie Burpee, who with mentoring from Betty Ann Lee served as Junior Yearly Meeting Coordinator at Sessions this summer, is also beginning a year of service with NEYM this fall serving as our first intern. While the scope of Kenzie's work will be broad, we are prioritizing her time focusing on support for youth and family ministry, and multi-age inclusion.
5. Kenzie will be supporting and working closely with Kara Price, as Kara is beginning the service year and her new role as Yearly Meeting staff with energy and excitement following Sessions as Children & Family Ministries Coordinator. Gretchen Baker-Smith has finished her last day as NEYM staff, but has graciously agreed to be available as a consultant to support and accompany Kara through the fall and the first half of the youth programs retreat year. Nia Thomas, with my support, is providing direct supervision to Kara and Kenzie, as she has for some time to Maggie Fiori in her role as Teen Ministries Coordinator.
6. September is a month of thresholds, including both the wrap-up and evaluation of Sessions and the closing of the fiscal year, as well as the beginning of the service year in the Yearly Meeting and many local meetings, the start of spiritual formation and religious education programs for youth and adults, back to school time for families, the first Permanent Board meeting of the year, as well as annual planning retreats for both the YM staff and the Coordinating & Advisory Committee. Please hold all of these transitions in your prayers.
7. This year, immediately following our time together on 9/17, I will be traveling to Richmond, Indiana for a meeting of the group of Superintendents and Secretaries of Yearly Meetings, the first in-person gathering of this unique constellation of Friends since 2019. Those gathered will be especially reflecting on the experiences of the past years, and on the spiritual condition and

growing edges of the Religious Society of Friends today. We—as Friends—have been and are being changed. And it will be good to be together and to understand how we can encourage one another in our service in each of our own contexts.

8. As the 2022 fiscal year comes to a close this month, our overall financial position is strong and largely consistent with our budget and projections. And yet, as I write we have some significant variables outstanding: final invoices from Castleton University for costs related to Sessions on campus, and substantial remaining contributions committed or expected from local meetings and individuals before September 30. This is not unusual, but it is always a cause for careful attention and prayerful outreach. This is another significant addition to this full time—we are grateful for any prayers, encouragement, or contributions Friends and meetings can offer in these busy last couple of weeks. And thank you again for your generosity, encouragement, and service, Friends, in more ways than I can name.
9. Consistent with the discernment and approved funding priorities of the Yearly Meeting, I am continuing work this fall to refocus my time to give greater emphasis to visiting and helping reconnect Friends meetings across our region, accompanying those who serve in leadership roles in their local meetings (including partnering in the establishment of the new Meeting Accompaniment Group), encouraging Friends called to ministry, and creating the necessary space to be faithful in the ministry of speaking and writing. This will continue to require some reorganization of staff roles and responsibilities. It will also require more rigorous prioritization, setting aside or delaying some other things.

After the pause created by the need for my intensive involvement in Sessions planning and support this spring and summer, I am returning my attention to these efforts this fall, and I look forward to sharing more with Permanent Board in November, following further engagement with the staff and Coordinating & Advisory Committee in the coming weeks.

10. With deep gratitude to all who participated for their preparation, diligence, and cooperation, I can report that Sessions concluded without a single known positive COVID case at or attributable to Sessions.

As I write, the energy dedicated to deliberate, searching, and fruitful Sessions debriefing has just (tonight) turned toward preparations for the coming year. I'm profoundly grateful for the contributions of so many to the success of Sessions this year, and in the past few years under such intense and challenging circumstances.

And alongside this gratitude, I am holding a concern for the right ordering of the resources of time, energy, attention, money, and exertion that Sessions as we currently conceive of it demands of so many. I believe that recent resignations and troubling reports related to similar Friends gatherings in the past year, while they differ from our context in meaningful ways, are a warning that we should take care not to ignore. Sessions is a wonderful time that benefits many, and it is a treasured institution. And yet the proportion of our limited resources and of our time throughout the year that is invested in Sessions has only increased in recent years. This means less time, money, and attention for many other aspects of our work.

While not delaying or distracting from ongoing preparations, I see the need—and the possibility—for further clarity about the specific purpose of Sessions, and how this one event

among so many can be more focused, simplified, and nourishing for the life of our local meetings. Sessions is a vital part of the Yearly Meeting, and yet Sessions—as an *event*—is not the whole of the Yearly Meeting. In the deepest sense, the Yearly Meeting is the covenanted web of local communities of faith and practice in the Friends tradition across our region. And fostering the thriving of these meetings in the Spirit is the affirmed core purpose of our work together as an organization.

I look forward to consultation and partnership with Friends stewarding Sessions Planning, with Coordinating & Advisory, and with others as preparations for Sessions proceed in the coming year.

11. Finally, a request and an invitation: If, in your preparation and prayer regarding your service on the Permanent Board, you find that it would be helpful to have further context, history, or perspective on previous or current work of the Yearly Meeting, I would welcome your requests for information or conversation. A significant part of my role in service with the Yearly Meeting is supporting those who serve in leadership roles in having further context, support, and awareness of interconnections, to help their work be more fruitful. If you see ways my reporting to the Permanent Board can be more helpful, please share your suggestions and hopes with me at noah@neym.org—I would love to hear and reflect on them as we go forward together in service.

I wish I might emphasize how a life becomes simplified when dominated by faithfulness to a few concerns. Too many of us have too many irons in the fire. We get distracted by the intellectual claim to our interest in a thousand and one good things, and before we know it we are pulled and hauled breathlessly along by an overburdened program of good committees and good undertakings.

I am persuaded that this fevered life of church workers is not wholesome. Undertakings get plastered on from the outside because we can't turn down a friend...The concern-orientated life is ordered and organized from within. And we learn to say No as well as Yes by attending to the guidance of inner responsibility. Quaker simplicity needs to be expressed not merely in dress and architecture and height of tombstones but also in the structure of a relatively simplified and coordinated life-program of social responsibilities.

Thomas R Kelly, 1941

To the Permanent Board:

After much discernment, all the members of the Earthcare Ministry Committee have reconstituted ourselves as the Earth Quaker Justice Team. We ask that the Permanent Board recognize this change in our name and structure and lay down the Earthcare Ministry Committee immediately to avoid confusion and duplication.

We chose the structure of a Team, based on the Forms of Service Map from New England Yearly Meeting, which identifies a Team as a self-forming group with a shared area of work, identifying our own mission and areas of focus for action. We hope to continue to work with and through New England Yearly Meeting to engage Friends in New England and beyond in this important work.

Our Team passionately believes that the Climate Crisis is an existential threat, and that as Quakers we must respond to it. Our current plan is to concentrate on Climate Justice with a current focus on Green Amendments to state constitutions, and especially on the needs of those who are most affected by pollution of air and water and the consequences of the Climate Crisis.

We believe that it is important for Permanent Board to understand what led to our change in structure. Late in 2021, we were told by the Clerk and Executive Secretary of NEYM that Coordinating and Advisory was considering laying down the Earthcare Ministry Committee. This came as a shock to us. We were committed to staying together and continuing our work and considered breaking off from NEYM and finding another affiliation. After several months of searching for a path forward, through three days of worship and discernment at our April 2022 retreat we found that we could reconstitute ourselves as a Team and remain in service to NEYM.

We now understand that NEYM was reconsidering the structure of committees, and this reconsideration of the Earthcare Ministry Committee was part of that process, but we were not informed about the process at the time. This lack of communication within NEYM did not seem to us to be in the manner of Friends and caused us discomfort and distress. We offer this history in the hope that those responsible for NEYM structure and function will improve communication and support to Friends who put their hearts and time into their ministry and work as members of and for New England Yearly Meeting.

We look forward to continuing to minister to and serve with Friends of New England Yearly Meeting within this new structure as the Earth Quaker Justice Team.

Kim Stoner, co-clerk of the Earth Quaker Justice Team, on behalf of the

members of the Team: Gail Melix (co-clerk), Steve Gates, Reb MacKenzie, Rod
Zwirner, Margaret Marshall, and Neil Blanchard

Friends Camp
Summer Director's Report for Camp Committee
September 7, 2022

This summer, 400 campers and 60 staff members spent between 1 – 10 weeks at Friends Camp, living in community and having 460 different experiences. As I write this report about 3 weeks after camp ended, I am just beginning to catch up on sleep and be able to share perspective on our summer together. In this report, I will try my best to share salient summer lessons, although no report could begin to grasp the sheer number of moments, challenges, and victories during a single summer at camp. Overall, we had a truly wonderful summer season filled with growth, hope, fun, hard work, listening, creativity, openness, and resilience.

Summer in Review: Campers

Campers attended camp this summer after a more typical school year, compared with the 2021 season at camp. While still developmentally seeming a few years younger than they were before the pandemic, many campers had attended camp in 2021 and helped set the culture and welcome new campers. Almost half of our campers were first-time Friends Campers this summer. As usual, we hosted campers primarily from New England but about 10% from further afield. About 40% of campers received financial aid in the form of selecting the lowest, subsidized tier of tuition, and about half of those campers also received additional aid from \$200 to the full price of tuition. A number of scholarship partners contribute funds on behalf of certain campers, including the Keller Family Campership Fund, Monthly Meetings, town camp scholarship funds, Wildflower Foundation, and LL Bean.

To see some camper and family feedback on our summer, please review the survey results attached at the bottom of this report. I am also publishing a 1-second-every-day video which shares moments from our camp summer, and I shared images on Instagram consistently throughout the summer. Please take some time to check out all these happy moments!

A few challenges we encountered with our camper population were managing mental health challenges (as expected), incorporating some campers with behavior differences into the camp community, and some pranking among teen campers. One camper brought a marijuana vape pen to camp, which we found, and the camper was sent home. Our campers and staff alike felt distressed and overwhelmed by the Roe v. Wade decision that came out this summer. Empowering women and girls to have autonomy over their bodies, and responding when boundaries were crossed, or perceived to be crossed, by boys/ men was a theme of the summer. While camp does not happen in a vacuum from the rest of the world, we find that campers were hungry for a retreat from the worries of their outside lives. The staff referred to camp this summer as a ministry of joy, filling campers with the energy, love, and belonging they need to thrive when they return to life outside of camp. Our worship with campers and staff both were fruitful and gathered, with ample vocal ministry.

By the skin of our teen (or the grace of God, or both) we avoided a major Covid-19 outbreak this summer, although we did have 5 Covid-19 cases among staff over staff week and Jones Session and a wicked cold that traveled throughout camp later in the summer. With both our assistant director and office manager sick with Covid and quarantining during the first 3 weeks of our summer, the beginning of the summer was especially challenging for me as camp director. I was grateful for my experience from previous years – if this had been my first summer as director, I can't imagine how I

could have managed those few weeks. Managing testing on arrival, quarantine recommendations for those who were sick just prior to camp, and new symptoms for campers and staff required a great deal of focus and effort during the camp season.

For 2022, we returned to our “normal” summer schedule for the first time since 2019– with 4, 2-week sessions (including a 1-week option for young campers). We were nearly fully registered, with some spaces remaining in our teen sessions. Having a slightly smaller 4th session (Fell Session) is functionally important since we lose several staff who need to return to college before that session begins. We offered a number of special options and programs for the first time since 2019, including teen hiking/camping trips offsite, a bus to NEYM Sessions in Vermont, and an option for campers to stayover at camp in between sessions.

Summer in Review: Staff

In a change since before the pandemic, camp sessions ended on Friday instead of on Saturday, allowing the staff a full Saturday off instead of just a few hours between sessions. The other biggest change at camp since before the pandemic is the number of staff; we have more “middle management” (5, up from 2) and slightly more counselors (30, up from 27). The higher number of staff allows us to better support counselors who have a tricky camper situation, illness or health issues, give them hour-long “chunks” of personal time on a few occasions during the camp session, and have fewer occasions when a counselor is a solo counselor in a cabin. Significantly, I noticed that I felt more present and rested when managing challenging camper and staff situations, since I had the support among the leadership team to hand off smaller problems and projects. Mary Ollen, who is prepared to step in as acting camp director during my sabbatical next year, was one of these support staff members who enjoyed the opportunity to be part of leadership at camp.

Our staff this summer was extremely strong and committed, and overall a stronger group than last year’s already great team. With many returning folks from last year, first-time staff who had previously been Rising Leaders, and even folks from other countries (Spain, Ireland, Jamaica), we assembled a diverse group who worked well together. Counselors are the backbone of campers’ experiences, providing the mentorship, support, and guidance – the special sauce of summer camp. As is typical, we had a few early departures from camp this season for staff. Providing quality coaching of and support to camp counselors was a major goal of mine this summer; I managed to provide written feedback and have a one-on-one meeting with every one of the 30 counselors. Many camps in Maine and across the US did not have enough camp counselors to support full programming this summer; we worked extra hard to support and appreciate the staff who worked at Friends Camp this summer. Continuing this support, as well as increasing compensation for staff, will be essential in the future.

With most of our leadership team returning, we were able to build on experience rather than focus on onboarding. New in his role this summer was our camp cook, Danny. Danny had been a camper and counselor for several years at Friends Camp and also has experience working in restaurant kitchens. While stepping into the role of cook was challenging, Danny took on this challenge with courage and creativity. Together with his team, he did an admirable job feeding camp this entire summer despite lack of food availability and rising prices. Malcolm, our groundskeeper, was also new in his role helping Jack maintain the property as well as teaching woodworking to campers.

Summer in Review: Innovations

We tried out a few experiments this summer. One experiment was to host a psychiatric nurse practitioner (Carolyn Mallon) at camp during Rustin Session. Carolyn’s 3 campers attended camp

during the same session, and she was available as a mental health support person as well as helping out in the health hut. We deeply appreciated Carolyn's presence at camp and hope to repeat this position in the future when possible.

Another experiment this summer was for our Black staff members to offer an affinity group to Black campers, who met at some meals. This effort was entirely conceived of and led by our Black staff members, whose efforts in leadership and as role models cannot be overstated. One parent shared "I want to commend you on the diversity of camp. [My camper] was so taken by that and felt held and seen. She talked about being at a table that was for brown folks to chat. She said things I knew but never understood [about] her experience. She said they talked about the communities they live in and experiences they had good and bad being black and often being the only one."

This was our first summer with a sex ed curriculum for teens. 13 total teens participated in this program, between our Rustin and Fell Sessions, with assistant director Evelyn as the instructor. We received positive feedback on the program, and the campers involved were very engaged with the material. We plan to repeat the program in the future and are considering expanding to include an "advanced" option for returning campers and an additional program for younger campers.

Summer in Review: Finances, Property, and Licensing/ Accreditation

The financial aspects of our summer season are still shaking out, and we will not have a complete picture until the end of the fiscal year on September 30. While we exceeded enrollment and tuition by more than \$50,000 and have had a truly outstanding year with regard to fundraising and camp rentals, high expenses such as staff and food will more than counteract the higher income. Rising costs of food, staff, and supplies are significant for Friends Camp, where we already operate with low expenses. While rental group fees are beneficial, the financial and labor costs of hosting groups such as the Moses Brown 9th grade are significant. Because there are limited ways to cut expenses while still offering a safe and inclusive program, we will need to continue to increase income.

Friends Camp property and grounds are in generally good shape right now. We worked with the local China Region Lakes Alliance and the Youth Conservation Corps to have a LakeSmart review at the waterfront and implement some changes to assist with water quality and erosion control. The kitchen floor replacement that was installed last fall performed well this summer, increasing cleanliness in the kitchen significantly. We have begun on projects to replace more floors and roofs this fall. Unfortunately the buildings and grounds committee was not able to reach a decision about the best way to move forward with a health hut renovation, so that project is on hold until Fall 2023. Also on hold is the progress towards a road agreement with neighbors on Fire Rd 41, since our efforts were met with significant opposition.

Friends Camp is accredited by the American Camp Association, with an in-person visit scheduled for the summer of 2023. Preparing for this visit takes a great deal of coordination, which we already began in the spring and summer of 2022. I work as a volunteer accreditation visitor and visited another camp this summer, which gives me a helpful perspective on the process. Friends Camp is licensed as a youth camp in the State of Maine, but we have not been visited by inspectors for several years. While we were prepared for a visit in summer 2022, no health inspector arrived.

Looking Forward

This soon after the summer, it is easy to identify many areas of growth, improvement, and increased attention for the coming year for me personally as director, for the camp committee, and for

Friends Camp as a whole. However, it has not been possible yet to narrow down those areas into specific areas of focus – instead of attempting everything, we will need to carefully consider which areas should be our priorities. This will be a significant part of my September work, and I look forward to collaborating with our committee on projects this coming season. Just a few areas that I know will require significant *committee* attention include:

- Governance review process
- Focus on an endowment
- Inclusion and diverse perspectives on the camp committee
- Increased fundraising goals
- Financial foresight, including a review of our tuition structure
- Performance review of camp director
- Preparation for camp director's sabbatical
- Health Hut renovation
- Road association for Fire Road 41

Excerpts of Feedback from 2022 Camper Families on Post-Camp Evaluation:

"This experience was far and away more fantastic than we'd even expected. We parents attended overnight camp as kids and are thrilled that our kids have begun those same experiences! It was so nice to meet others with our same/similar values, though we aren't Quaker."

"We loved it. I was nervous because it was [Camper's] first time at sleep away camp and they were one of few Black children but they had an amazing experience and were so happy when I picked them up!"

"Keep doing what you are doing, because it is working! This was her first sleep away camp experience, and she came home overflowing with stories, joy, and pride. [Camper] told us that this experience "Opened a new door in my mind," meaning that she discovered a new side of herself through her time at Friends Camp. We truly could not ask for more. Thank you!!!"

"My only complaint is that for the first 2 nights at home [Camper] was terrified about the monster (for whom there was a watermelon sacrifice)... I have never seen her so terrified. Otherwise she was thrilled with camp and can't wait until next year! Especially as an elder single grandmother raising a grandchild, I believe that it takes a village to raise a child and am grateful that Friends Camp is part of her village."

"We really appreciate the COVID testing and precautions surrounding COVID."

"I just want to say thank you--for providing such a wonderful program where my child feels accepted and supported just as they are."

"She generally made friends, but we wish she had made at least one good friend who she really connected to and felt close to. Perhaps next year a counselor can coax her out of her shyness and connect her."

"[Camper] had a life changing experience at camp. Though she talks a lot about how much she enjoyed food, she left with a sense of peace about being part of a community where EVERYONE can be themselves. Thank you so much for giving her such a special place."

"We are so grateful for the financial aid that we received. we would not have been able to attend if not for that help. Friends camp is such a special and invaluable experience for my child. she loves camp and has a hard time leaving!"

"We are incredibly grateful for the experience [Camper] had. When we arrived to pick him up, he was beaming in a way that we haven't seen for a long time. This is a place where he clearly had the opportunity to shine. The

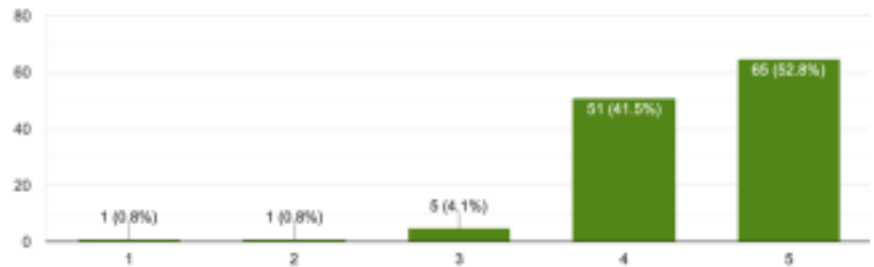
sense of community and genuine care for one another that can be felt at the end of the session is remarkable. From listening to [Camper's] stories it is clear that the staff is exemplary. We look forward to [Camper] returning next year."

"Friends Camp feels really safe to me. I don't say that lightly. I am so grateful at how you manage the campers and the Quaker values really have such a positive impact on the kids. They can't stop talking about it, texting me about meetups last year!) So, THANK YOU for making my kid grow in. (Additionally, the fact you offer multiple options and another way for my NB kid to know

Your child thought the food at camp was:
123 responses

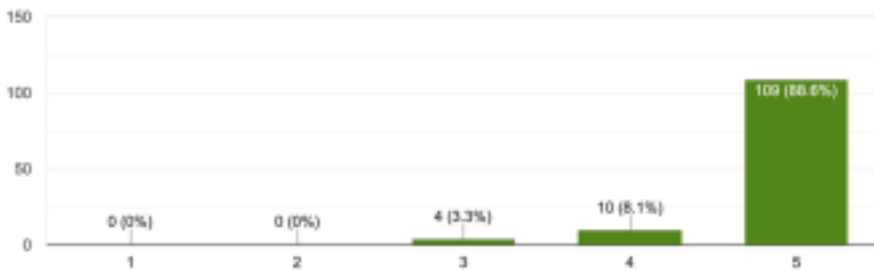


How often did your child enjoy the programs and activities?
123 responses



5= Awesome
1= Not Good

Did your child feel supported by the Friends Camp counselors and staff?
123 responses

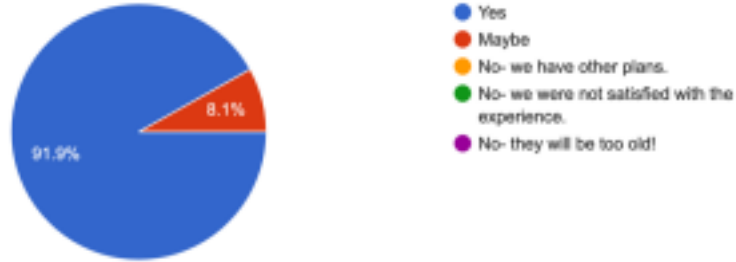


5= Always
1= Never

5= Always
1= Never

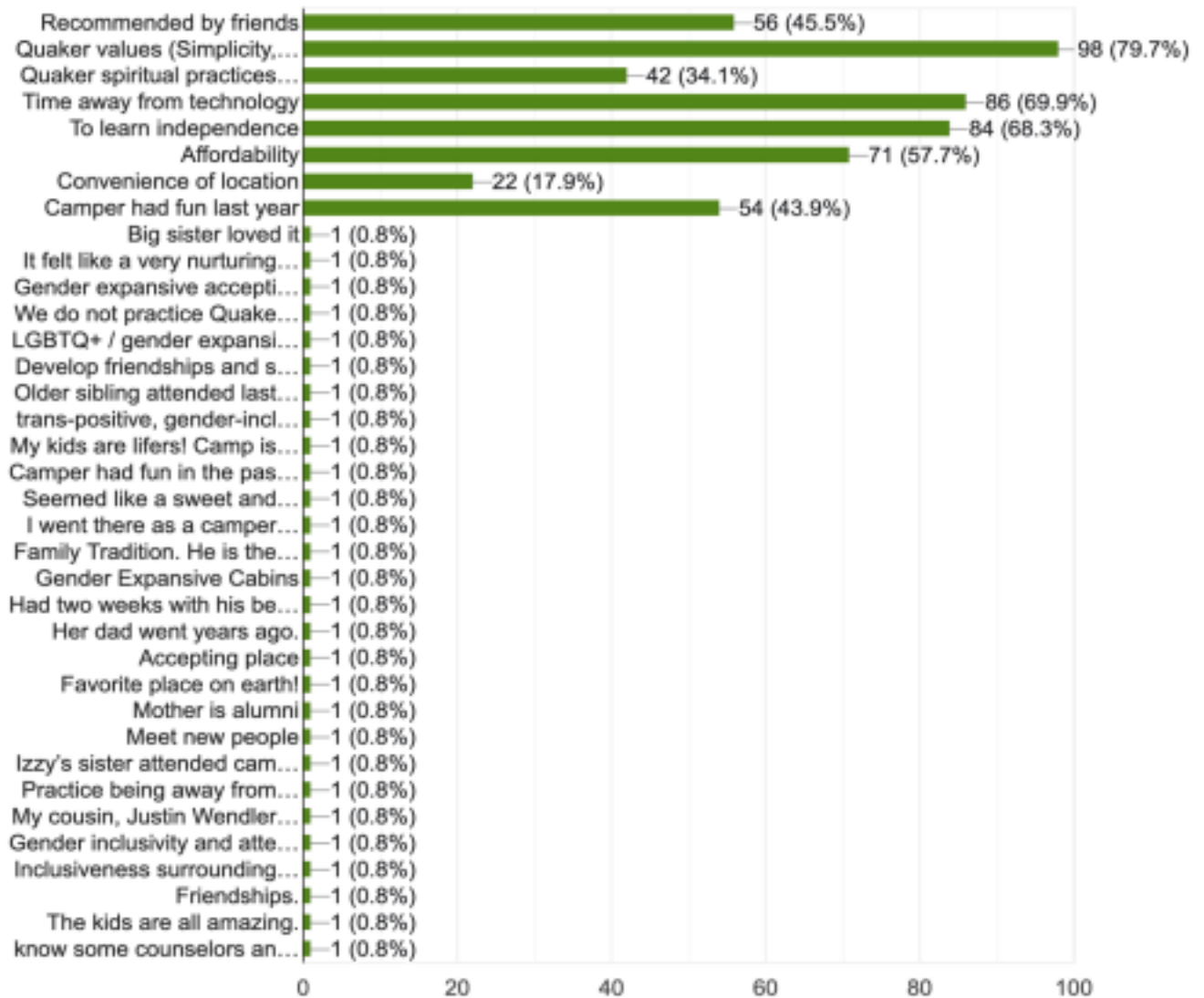
Do you plan to send your child to Friends Camp next year?

123 responses



What are some of the most important reasons you decided to send your child to Friends Camp?

123 responses



Friends Camp FY2023 Proposed Budgets

Presented to NEYM Permanent Board for Approval Ninth Month 17, 2022

Attached are the Friends Camp proposed budgets for Fiscal Year 2023 as approved by the Friends Camp Finance Sub-committee and the full Friends Camp Committee. It has also been reviewed in consultation with the NEYM Secretary and Treasurer. We now request approval of these budgets by Permanent Board.

Operating Budget

The Camp's operations have rebounded from 2020, during which residential camp was entirely cancelled due to COVID-19. For the season just ended, we are pleased to report we were able to provide joyous and meaningful camp experiences to over 400 children, with numerous notes of gratitude received from camper families. We are heartened the demand for camper slots is high; for FY2023 we expect to be operating at near-full capacity.

The primary fiscal challenge for the upcoming year concerns inflationary pressures and a robust job market. Combined, these are making it difficult to recruit and maintain quality staff. In order to remain competitive with other camps, we have proposed increasing staff salaries and wages by 10% for FY2023. To pay for this increase in staff cost and for the rising costs of other expenses due to inflation, we will need to increase tuition rates by 10% as well. Camperships remain available to families of limited financial means. We continue to operate with the philosophy that no child should be denied enrollment for lack of ability to pay for camp, and we proactively seek out those from diverse backgrounds (including different socioeconomic status families) to attend camp.

As of August 31, 2023, Anna Hopkins Buller will have been in the position of Camp Director for seven years, making her eligible for a six-month sabbatical which she plans to take beginning September 1. We have included in the budget one month of salary for acting director Mary Ollen, who was approved for this position by Permanent Board in April.

In spite of all the increase in expenses, we are pleased to present a proposed budget which is essentially balanced.

Capital Budget

The proposed capital budget of \$25,000 is leaner this year than is typical, addressing only projects identified as being of the highest priority. We will be banking the remainder of the budgeted \$41,000 depreciation expense to pay for a major renovation of the health hut scheduled for Fiscal Year 2024.

Submitted on behalf of Friends Camp by Robb Spivey, Friends Camp Treasurer

**Friends Camp / New England Yearly Meeting
Proposed FY2023 Operating Budget
Summary**

9/11/2022

	<u>FY2023</u>
INCOME	
4100 Summer Program Fees - net of camperships	\$ 487,120
4200 Contributions and Grants Received	70,500
4300 Other Operating Income	40,320
TOTAL INCOME	<u>\$ 597,940</u>
EXPENSE	
5100 Staff Expense	\$ 340,871
5200 Summer Program	109,563
5300 Property Expense	83,340
5400 Administrative Expenses	55,900
5600 Off-Season Programs	6,000
5710 Donations to Other Organizations	850
TOTAL EXPENSE	<u>\$ 596,524</u>
NET OPERATING INCOME	<u>\$ 1,416</u>

Friends Camp / New England Yearly Meeting
Proposed FY2023 Operating Budget
Details

9/11/2022

	<u>FY2023</u>
INCOME	
4100 Summer Program Fees	
4110 Tuition & Fees (Gross)	
4111 Summer Camp Tuition	\$ 535,120
4112 Extra Day between Sessions Fees	-
4113 Teen Session Hiking Trip Fees	-
4114 Camper Transportaion Fees	-
Total 4110 Tuition & Fees (Gross)	<u>\$ 535,120</u>
4120 Camperships	
4121 Camperships Awarded	\$ (53,000)
4122 Release from Campership funds	5,000
Total 4120 Camperships	<u>\$ (48,000)</u>
4130 Discounts	
4131 Staff Children Discounts Given	-
4132 Auction Discounts Given	-
Total 4130 Discounts	<u>\$ -</u>
Total Summer Program Fees	<u>\$ 487,120</u>
4200 Contributions Received	
4201 Contributions from Individuals	\$ 60,000
4202 Contributions from Monthly & Quarterly Meetings	8,000
4211 Contributions from NEYM	2,500
4221 Capital Improvement Fund Income	-
4231 Grants Income	-
4241 In-kind Contributions	-
Total 4200 Contributions Received	<u>\$ 70,500</u>
4300 Other Operating Income	
4311 Off-Season Rentals	\$ 26,000
4321 Merchandise Sales	10,320
4331 Interest and Investment Income	4,000
4341 Misc Operating Income	-
4351 Paycheck Protection Program Loan Forgiveness	-
Total 4300 Other Operating Income	<u>\$ 40,320</u>
Restricted Funds	
7110 General Campership Fund	
7111 General Campership - Transfer from Equity Account	\$ -
7112 General Campership - Contributions Received	5,000
7117 General Campership - Release to Camp Tuition	(5,000)
7119 General Campership - Transfer to Equity Account	-
Total 7110 General Campership Fund	<u>\$ -</u>
7120 Codman Academy Fund	
7121 Codman- Transfer from Equity Account	\$ -
7122 Codman Academy- Contributions Received	-
7127 Codman Camperships Given- Release to Camp Tuition	-

Friends Camp / New England Yearly Meeting
Proposed FY2023 Operating Budget
Details

9/11/2022

	FY2023
7129 Codman- Transfer to Equity Account	-
Total 7120 Codman Academy Fund	\$ -
7140 One Child at a Time Fund	
7141 OCAT- Transfer from Equity Account	\$ -
7142 OCAT- Contributions Received	-
7147 OCAT Camperships Given- Release to Camp Tuition	-
7149 OCAT- Transfer to Equity Account	-
Total 7140 One Child at a Time Fund	\$ -
7150 Level Ground Fund	
7151 Level Ground - Transfer from Equity Account	\$ -
7152 Level Ground - Contributions Received	-
7157 Level Ground - Release to Camp Tuition	-
7159 Level Ground - Transfer to Equity Account	-
Total 7150 Level Ground Fund	\$ -
7210 Capital Improvement Fund	
7211 Capital Fund- Transfer from Equity Account	\$ -
7212 Capital Fund- Contributions Received	-
7217 Capital Fund- Release to Current Year Projects	-
7219 Capital Fund- Transfer to Equity Account	-
Total 7210 Capital Improvement Fund	\$ -
7220 Grants	
7221 Grants - Transfer from Equity Account	\$ -
7222 Grants - Grants Received	-
7227 Grants - Released to Current Year Projects	-
7229 Grants - Transfer to Equity Account	-
Total 7220 Grants	\$ -
Total Restricted Funds	\$ -
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 597,940

EXPENSE

5100 Staff Expense

5110 Director

5111 Director Salary	\$ 65,819
5112 Retirement Plan - Employer (10 %)	6,582
5113 Health & Disability Insurance - Employer	9,545
nnnn Acting Director	4,388

Total 5110 Director **\$ 86,334**

5120 Support Staff

5121 Maintenance & Cleaning	\$ 39,600
5122 Kitchen	26,950
5123 Seasonal Leadership Staff	21,054
5124 Nurse	11,990
5125 Senior Consultant	
5126 Winter Assistant Director/ Office Work	14,280

Friends Camp / New England Yearly Meeting
Proposed FY2023 Operating Budget
Details

9/11/2022

	<u>FY2023</u>
Total 5120 Support Staff	\$ 113,874
5130 Counselors	
5131 Counselor Salaries	\$ 94,050
5132 International Staff Agencies	
Total 5130 Counselors	\$ 94,050
5140 Staff Development	
5141 Prof. Development- Director & Year-Round Staff	\$ 3,000
5142 Staff Orientation & Safety Training	5,000
Total 5140 Staff Development	\$ 8,000
5150 Travel, Meals and Lodging	
5151 Director Travel, Meals, and Lodging	\$ 2,400
5152 Summer Staff Travel, Meals, and Lodging	3,000
Total 5150 Travel, Meals, and Lodging	\$ 5,400
5160 Other Staffing Expense	
5161 Workers Compensation	\$ 9,500
5162 Payroll Taxes	21,213
5163 Staff Hiring Expense	2,500
5165 Staff Time-Off Expenses	-
Total 5160 Other Staffing Expense	\$ 33,213
Total 5100 Staff Expense	\$ 340,871
5200 Summer Program	
5210 Kitchen Expense	
5211 Summer Food	\$ 68,584
5212 Housekeeping & Kitchen Supplies	1,500
Total 5210 Kitchen Expenses	\$ 70,084
5220 Summer Vehicles & Transportation	
5221 Summer Van Rental	\$ 8,800
5222 Summer Vehicle Fuel & Tolls	1,050
5223 Summer Vehicle Insurance	
5224 Charter Bus (NEYM Sessions)	-
5225 Other Transportation Expense	-
Total 5220 Summer Vehicles & Transportation	\$ 9,850
5230 Other Summer Program Expense	
5231 Medical Supplies	\$ 3,500
5232 Program Supplies (Arts, Aquatic, Sports etc.)	8,000
5233 Merchandise	10,000
5234 Summer Laundry	8,129
5235 Stayover Between Sessions Expenses	
5236 Teen Session Camping Trips Expense	
Total 5230 Other Summer Program Expense	\$ 29,629
Total 5200 Summer Program	\$ 109,563
5300 Property Expense	
5310 Depreciation	
5311 Depreciation- Buildings	\$ 27,500

Friends Camp / New England Yearly Meeting
Proposed FY2023 Operating Budget
Details

9/11/2022

	<u>FY2023</u>
5312 Depreciation- Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment	13,500
Total 5310 Depreciation	\$ 41,000
5321 Buildings & Grounds Supplies & Services	\$ 29,000
5330 Utilities	
5331 Telephone & Internet	\$ 1,600
5332 Heating Oil	
5333 Trash Removal	1,500
5334 Electric	6,000
5335 Propane	1,200
Total 5330 Utilities	\$ 10,300
5341 Winter Office Rent	\$ 3,040
Total 5300 Property Expense	\$ 83,340
5400 Administrative Expense	
5411 Property and General Liability Insurance	\$ 17,325
5421 CampMinder Online/ Camp Brain	\$ 3,675
5430 Accounting	
5431 Credit Card and ACH Fees	\$ 7,000
5432 Payroll Expense	3,600
5433 Accounting Services	1,000
5434 Bank Service Charges	-
5435 Professional Accounting Review	1,700
5436 Interest Expense	-
Total 5430 Accounting	\$ 13,300
5441 Memberships and Subscriptions	\$ 6,500
5442 Legal Fees	\$ 5,000
5450 Marketing	
5451 Printing	\$ 1,200
5452 Website Design & Changes	1,500
5453 Advertising Expense	500
5454 Newsletter	800
Total 5450 Marketing	\$ 4,000
5461 Office Supplies and Services	\$ 3,200
5471 Fundraising Mailings	\$ 2,000
5481 Postage	\$ 900
5491 Other Administrative	\$ -
Total 5400 Administrative Expense	\$ 55,900
5600 Off-Season Programs	
5611 Off-season Food	\$ 3,000
5621 Off-season Staff for Retreats & Gatherings	3,000
Total 5600 Off-Season Programs	\$ 6,000
5700 Miscellaneous Expense	
5701 Reconciliation Discrepancies	\$ -
5702 Bad Debt Writeoff	
5709 Other Miscellaneous Expense	

**Friends Camp / New England Yearly Meeting
Proposed FY2023 Operating Budget
Details**

9/11/2022

	FY2023
Total 5700 Miscellaneous Expense	<u>\$ -</u>
5710 Donations to Other Organizations	
5711 Donations to Local Organizations	\$ 100
5712 Simple Meal Donation	750
Total 5710 Donations to Other Organizations	<u>\$ 850</u>
8000 Extraordinary Income & Expense	
8001 Extraordinary Income	
8002 Extraordinary Expense	
Total 8000 Extraordinary Income & Expense	<u>\$ -</u>
TOTAL EXPENSE	<u>\$ 596,524</u>
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	<u><u>\$ 1,416</u></u>

FY2023 Friends Camp Proposed Capital Budget

9/11/2022

Expenses

	Amount	Timeline
4 Cabin Roofs - Swallow, Falcon, Lark, Seagull	\$ 6,000	Fall 2022
New viny floors - Owl Cabin	\$ 2,400	Fall 2022
New vinyl floors - Bird Bath Bathrooms	\$ 5,600	Spring 2023
New cement floors - Big Bird Bathrooms	\$ 6,200	Fall 2022
Rebuilding tree house - large enough for program or cabin group	\$ 4,800	Fall 2022/ Spring 2023
TOTAL	<u>\$ 25,000</u>	

Sources of Funding

Budgeted Depreciation	<u>\$ 25,000</u>
TOTAL	\$ 25,000

Leslie,

On Saturday, September 10, Friends Camp Committee met at Friends Camp in South China Maine, and approved a 6-month sabbatical for Anna Hopkins, Camp Director, beginning on September 1, 2023, and continuing through the end of February, 2024.

We are recommending a full rate of pay for Anna during her sabbatical, instead of the half pay described in the personnel policy. This recommendation is in line with Noah's recent sabbatical and with our understanding of Coordinating & Advisory's suggestions and intentions regarding future sabbaticals. We understand that a review of the personnel policy is underway and encourage that review.

NEYM is truly blessed to have such a strong, gifted, committed and capable Director leading our beloved Camp, and Friends Camp Committee feels strongly that Anna should be fully supported financially during her well deserved sabbatical.

In love and light,

Carol Baker
Clerk, Personnel Committee
Friends Camp Committee

NEYM Nominating Committee Report to Permanent Board
13 September 2022

Nominating Committee met on 23 August and welcomed three new members. There are currently 6 openings on the committee if you or someone you know is called to serve. Please let the Presiding Clerk or the Permanent Board Clerk know, as the Naming Committee for this year has not yet been appointed.

Discernment is well underway for an incoming Ministry & Counsel Clerk, and for members of the Theme and Speakers Committee. Unfortunately, we are not ready to bring those names forward yet. Because Theme and Speakers committee needs to begin work immediately, we hope to present names in the coming weeks and find a way for PB to approve them prior to the November 5th PB meeting.

Annual Sessions 2022 approved a new experimental committee – The Meeting Accompaniment Team. The full description of the Team’s Purposes, Procedures and Composition can be found on page 20/appendix 2 of the [Advance Documents for Annual Sessions 2022](#). The clerk will serve as a member of Coordinating and Advisory (C&A) Committee. Because the C&A retreat to begin this year will be on 23-25 September, it would be helpful if the clerk could be determined as soon as possible.

First Reading:

Meeting Accompaniment Team Clerk – Sarah Gant, Beacon Hill Meeting, class of 2027

Essentially the Team’s work is to notice what pastoral care and leadership support is needed and create a network of contacts that can be called up to accompany different situations as they arise. The intention is that the Team will not so much serve as on-the-ground people doing the work with monthly meetings (although they may occasionally do that) but serve as a resource to network Friends as needs arise. Some of the gifts and experience needed are: spiritual and emotional maturity, skill responding to conflict, good at boundary-setting, communication and administration, capacity to hold sensitive matters confidentially, experience serving in leadership roles. And importantly, have love for and commitment to nurture local meetings as the foundation of Friends’ life together. Because this is an experimental committee, the clerk will need to be flexible, comfortable creating something new and calm in the face of unknowns.

Sarah served on the M&C Transition Team, and has been close to this work as it evolved. She made a lot of the calls helping the yearly meeting connect with monthly meeting clerks when the pandemic hit, and has a deep care for the yearly meeting and for local meetings. Sarah brings the gifts of walking with and not fixing, and many people from local meetings know and trust her. Sarah has served as Permanent Board clerk, and during Noah’s sabbatical she managed the administrative and pastoral elements of Noah’s work.

Respectfully,
Jacqueline Stillwell
Clerk, NEYM Nominating Committee

Report and Proposal to the Permanent Board

From the Right Relationship Resource Group
Drafted in August; updated September 8, 2022

Background

Upon preliminary approval of the Letter of Apology and related recommendations for ways monthly meetings could engage with the concern, the Right Relationship Resource Group (RRRG) was formed in the fall of 2020, under the care of the NEYM Permanent Board (PB). The RRRG provided materials and supported meetings as they addressed the Letter of Apology to Native Americans. Upon approval at Sessions 2021, the RRRG was asked to shepherd the distribution of the Letter.

After much consideration, as reported at [Sessions 2022](#), the Apology, with individualized cover letters, was sent in June 2022. However, we held back seven letters to specific tribes as requested. At least two tribes have already responded with an openness to visitation. In some instances, this will be the first contact. Still, in many other situations, an in-person apology will be an inflection point in ongoing relationships already years if not decades in the making, especially true in Maine/Wabanaki territory.

Activities Since Sessions

1. Members of RRRG met with representatives from the Friends Peace Team and Beacon Hill Friends House to consider offering a fall educational program about Quakers and Indian Boarding Schools, extending the research conducted by Paula Palmer.
2. We supported a grant application by the Pokanoket Land Trust that they initiated upon receipt of our Letter of Apology.

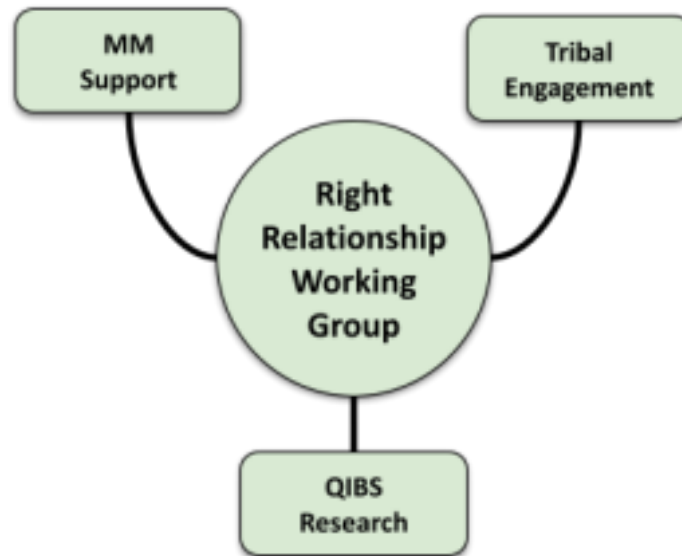
Recommendations

With the Apology distribution, the Right Relationship Resource Group has completed this phase of work. Recognizing a shift in the work before us, we now suggest reconstituting this group as a Right Relationship Working Group under the care of PB with a new charge and possibly additional members of the working group or sub-groups.

We concur with the suggestion of three primary strands of work:

1. **TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT**: Following up on the Letter of Apology, especially preparing Friends' groups for visits in-person.
 - a. Organize and provide oversight for Friends who will present the apology in person when welcomed to do so. Include tribal members in the planning and preparation; help MM representatives prepare for such humbling events.
 - b. Encourage and lightly shepherd ongoing efforts at building right relationships, in part by

- helping local Friends groups understand protocols and potential pitfalls.
- c. Begin to explore what reparations will look like for tribes with whom Friends are engaged; ask tribal partners what they need or suggest.
2. **MM SUPPORT/PREPARATION/EDUCATION**: Helping MMs and QMs continue relationship building. (We recommend folding the new [educational initiative](#) into this charge.)
 - a. Encourage New England Friends to become informed about local and national issues affecting Native Peoples and to work on their behalf in such areas as land conservation and language reclamation on local, state, and national levels.
 - b. Offer intervisitation with MMs.
 - c. Help maintain the [resource page](#) on the NEYM website.
 3. **QUAKER BOARDING SCHOOL RESEARCH**: Advancing the recommendations of the Friends Peace Teams for primary analysis of our YM's involvement in the Quaker Indian Boarding Schools.
 - a. Develop a 'scope of the work' and recommend the best ways to conduct the research and move forward. Specifically, plan how to engage with UMass Archives and other repositories. Consider engaging [Five College Native American and Indigenous Studies \(NAIS\)](#) and other Indigenous stakeholders.
 - b. Attend to how we share painful information within and beyond NEYM.



Finally, we wonder about engaging the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group, recognizing that it is too easy to operate with a residue of empire shading our words and actions.

Progress Report and Recommended Next Steps:

New England Yearly Meeting's Role
in the Nurture of Ministry and Eldership
and the Spiritual Life of Local Meetings

"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

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.

recommendations for future steps would be considered².

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.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeremiah Dickinson, Interim Clerk of Ministry & Counsel, Dover
Sarah Gant, former clerk, Ministry & Spiritual Life Working Group, Beacon Hill
Nia Thomas, Quaker Practice & Leadership Facilitator, Northampton
Leslie Manning, Clerk of Permanent Board, Durham
Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, Putney

² See the [further recommendations](#) of the Working Group on Ministry & Spiritual Life, 2020

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:

1. 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.
2. 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.**
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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:

1. 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.

2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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).
5. 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 lifeforms in the forest, which are the local meetings and persons in whom the Spirit is living, active, teaching, and seeking expression today.

6. 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, 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 they 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 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 YM 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 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.

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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 restrain 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 Coletta (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 & content for “pastoral care” accompaniment by and within local meetings; help with conflicts and challenges; support for young families; welcoming, fostering openness to change; 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: 5-7 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 & 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

Clerk of Ministry and 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 members of Coordinating & Advisory Committee, Permanent Board, and the Spiritual Life Listening group.

Hours and Service Site

This volunteer role represents a significant commitment, expected to require an estimated 5-10 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
- be a skilled, empathic listener, even while being able to hold a view different than the one expressed
- capacity to nurture trust
- consistent in clarifying and then meeting commitments
- be aware of key relational dynamics across NEYM
- be skilled at facilitating conversations among those holding differing perspectives
- communicate effectively in writing and in person
- be a good collaborator 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
- Be in regular conversation with NEYM leadership about the spiritual condition of Friends and Friends Meetings and the nurture of ministry

- Participate in (~monthly) meetings of Coordinating & Advisory Committee
- Serve ex officio as a member of the Permanent Board (~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, anchor 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



Yearly Meeting Support For Ministry & 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 and 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), growing into leadership, new and diverse voices and perspectives

Existing; Proposed

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]

- Explore and ensure continuing support for future offerings of the *Nurturing Faithfulness* program
- Strengthen awareness of existing spiritual formation and religious education opportunities; nurture capacity in local meetings

Care for Worship, Eldership, and Ministry at Annual Sessions

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 **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

To: Permanent Board, NEYM
From: Northampton Friends Meeting
Date: 13th day, seventh Month 2022

Marcianna's clearness committee asks Worship and Ministry, if you see fit, to receive this report, to create a leadings support committee, and to recommend that Meeting affirm Marcianna's leadings and that we send the following letter to New England Yearly Meeting and its constituent meetings inviting them to avail themselves of Marcianna's gifts.

Becky Jones, Heidi Nortonsmith, and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler met to listen while Marcianna Caplis searched for direction about what to do with her strong desire to speak the messages rising in her. A few months ago Marcianna was called by our Meeting's Worship and Ministry Committee to speak about her spiritual journey. She was faithful and brought us her story with a strong emphasis on her experience of seeking and finding "traces of the divine in the natural world."

Both during the presentation and after, many Friends testified that the message given through Marcianna had spoken to our condition. Friends reported how important it was to be reminded to look again and to experience the miracles of nature as motions of the divine, both inside us and out there in a world that needs to be discovered more fully and more intimately if we are going to yield to the urgent responsibilities of taking care of it and taking care of us in it. At some level Marcianna's testimony spoke to what needs to be done and how urgently; but the emphasis that made us tender came with Marcianna's Spirit-led certainty that if we but look and pay attention, unforeseen and healing transformation will follow.

This exploration of "traces of the divine in the natural world" could have been framed in many different ways to speak broadly to Friends' concerns and conditions. She could have been speaking about the relationship between Divine Truth and what is clearly discernible through a tender and reverent scientific understanding of nature's truths. She could have been speaking to young prophets from her inspired and clear naturalistic insight about what needs to be seen and held dear before the prophet reports on whatever divine urgency any call to action may be rooted in. She could have been speaking about the Quaker certainty that as Friends, our illuminations have to be grounded in experience. Her wonder-filled examples of the wonders of nature as traces of the divine help us expand and ground our insights and provide some of the most faithful accounts of the Divine will at work – both out there and in us.

Marcianna, today, is well equipped to go forth to tell people in different sites and conditions what they need to hear in order to feel spoken to by the Spirit. She has the time; she is re-thinking the many tools she used so effectively during her life-long work on the proper stewardship of creation (at Fish and Wildlife in the Department of Interior). She is also now enrolled in the hardest course ever taught at any school of the Spirit: living with rapid and irreversible physical deterioration is leaving her mind and heart fully active, and not just sharp but sharpened by the reality of life and love in the constant presence of physical limitation. In her capacity to keep going, with her courage visibly deployed, Marcianna makes her life speak coherently to our condition about the traces of the Divine. Because we see it done, we know that we too may be given the strength and the blessings to do it, if we are called to live and love in comparable straits.

Marcianna is reluctant to use the word "ministry" to name her hunger to listen for and bring the message given; but all her fibers consent to call it a strong leading that pushes or pulls her to make herself available to speak.

The Spirit has blessed her Monthly Meeting with her faithfulness, and as a Monthly Meeting we unite as we say very clearly that other Monthly and Quarterly Meetings and our beloved Yearly Meeting would do well to invite her as a plenary speaker, or a workshop leader. With divine assistance Northampton Friends will continue to offer the support of Elders and Overhearers to accompany her in her faithful work.

Susan C Vargo, Clerk Northampton Friends Meeting