

Youth Ministry Committee Annual Report to Sessions 2022

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

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

Gretchen Baker-Smith's leading to leave her position as Children and Family Ministries Coordinator at the end of August was a transition that the committee has tended for much of the year. We are grateful for the countless gifts that Gretchen has brought to the position. YMC is working to ensure that the next person in this role can sustain the spiritual community Gretchen has fostered while opening new possibilities for youth and family connection. Youth Ministries Committee supported the search committee which included Karen Sanchez-Eppler as YMC's representative, and gathered information from Friends in monthly meetings about how the new person could best support their youth programs and the young people and families in their meetings..

After an in-depth search process and prayerful discernment, the search committee called Kara Price to the position. Kara has been involved in NEYM youth programs most of her life as a participant, staffer, and parent, has a background in education, and brings a Spirit-filled joyfulness to the position.

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

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