



2022 Minutes

of the Annual Sessions
of the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends

Three Hundred Sixty-Second Year
Castleton State College | Castleton, Vermont
August 6–11, 2022

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2022 New England Yearly Meeting Sessions Schedule

Schedule 2022 Annual Sessions – This is the Hour, How Does the Spirit Find you?

	Friday 8/5	Saturday 8/6	Sunday 8/7	Monday 8/8	Tuesday 8/9	Wednesday 8/10	Thursday 8/11
6:30 to noon				6:30–7 Early Morning Worship 6:45–8:45 Breakfast			
		8:30–11:30 Registration	9:00–11 Worship (<i>Pavilion</i>) transitioning to Bible Half Hour (<i>Fine Arts</i>)	8:30–9 Bible Half Hour 9:30–11:15 Meeting for Business	8:30–9 Bible Half Hour 9:30–11:15 Meeting for Business	8:30–9 Bible Half Hour 9:30–11:15 Meeting for Business	8–9:30 Check-out/Key Return 9:45–10:45 Bible HH 10:45–12 Lightly held community time
Noon to 3:00		12–3 “Light & Easy” opportunities to visit	12:15–1:15 Registration 12:45 Orientation for First-Time Attenders 1:30–3 Memorial Meeting	12:15–1:15 Registration 1:30–3 Plenary	11:30–12:15 BIPOC drop-in (in person)		
3:00 to 6:00	5–7 Registration	2–5 Registration 3:30–4:45 Home Groups	3:30–4:45 Home Groups 3:30–5 BIPOC Celebration “This is the Hour” 4:30–5:30 Registration	3:30–4:45 Home Groups	3:30–4:45 Meeting for Business 1:30–2:45 Home Groups	3:30–4:45 Meeting for Business 1:30–2:45 Home Groups	
6:00 to 10:00	7:30-9 Welcome for BIPOC Friends (virtual)	6 p.m. Orientation for First-Time Attenders 6:45–8 Opening Celebration 8:30–10 Registration	6:15–6:45 Vespers 7–8:45 Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business 7–9 Registration	6:15–6:45 Vespers 7–9 Contradance	6:15 Celebration of Gretchen’s Service, transitioning to Coffee House, ending at 9	6:15–6:45 Vespers 7–8:15 Closing Celebration	

Registration: Fine Arts Center
Childcare: Castleton 102/104
JYM: Glenbrook Gym
JHYM: Hoff Hall
Young Friends: Campus Center
Memorial Meeting, Plenary, Bible Half Hour, Business Meeting: Fine Arts Ctr

Family Bookstore: Campus Center
General Bookstore: Jeffords
General and Family Bookstore hours will be posted in the Yearly Meeting News
Locations of other events will be posted in the Yearly Meeting News

2022 Sessions Coordinators, Officers, Speakers and YM Staff

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

* = YM Staff

2022 Youth Program Coordinators and Staff

Child Care

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

Junior Yearly Meeting

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

Junior High Yearly Meeting

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

Young Friends

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

Young Adult Friends

Co-Coord: Emi Link, Drew Chasse

Minutes of the Annual Sessions

Saturday Evening

2022-1 Welcome

Presiding Clerk Bruce Neumann (Fresh Pond) opened Sessions with a prayer and welcomed Friends to the 362nd annual New England Yearly Meeting Sessions. The Clerk reminded us to be tender with each other and to dwell in the joy opened to us.

The Presiding Clerk introduced the rest of the Clerks' Table, the tech team, and elders for the evening.

- Recording Clerks: Peter Bishop (Northampton) and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler (Northampton)
- Reading Clerks: Adam Kohrman (Beacon Hill) and Michelle Wright (Putney)
- The Tech Team: David Coletta (Beacon Hill) and Jennifer Higgins-Newman (Beacon Hill)
- Elders: Jacqueline Stillwell (Monadnock), Callid Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond), and Robert Dove McLellan (Fresh Pond)

Yearly Meeting Secretary Noah Merrill (Putney) introduced the Pastoral Care team for Sessions, Abby Matchette (Burlington) and Elizabeth Szatkowski (Portland). These Friends will be available to respond to a variety of concerns, to sit and listen, and to accompany in prayer those who request it. We were also reminded that everyone at Sessions takes part in the work of pastoral care and spiritual accompaniment.

2022-2 Land Acknowledgement

Fran Putnam (Middlebury) offered the land acknowledgement.

The Friends gathered at Castleton University recognize the Western Abenaki [A-ben-A-kee] as the traditional caretakers of these lands and waters, which they call Ndakinna [in-DAH-kee-NAH], or “homeland,” and which are currently known as Vermont. Friends were asked to remember Native peoples' connection to this region and the hardships they continue to endure, and to pay respect to the Abenaki Elders and to the Indigenous inhabitants of stolen Turtle Island by taking a moment of silence to reflect and to find something that is rooting us to the place where we are meeting. Friends present on Zoom are joining the gathering from the traditional lands of many other Indigenous peoples.

Don Campbell (Mt. Toby) read a *Joint Statement from the Four Vermont State Recognized Abenaki Tribes in Response to Certain Recent Events* dated June 6, 2022.

We, the four Vermont state recognized Abenaki tribes, stand together in affirmation of our own shared, lived experience here in the Northeast, which is necessarily different from that of our relatives in other places, and which has been acknowledged by the State of Vermont.

The distinct historical and contemporary realities within the southern reaches of Ndakinna, our homeland—under the influence of British and French colonial, federal, and state governments—have brought us to where we are today. Through common experiences of colonization, marginalization, and displacement, our citizens are now found within what is now called New England and points beyond.

We are appreciative of the public process of change that is underway, to raise awareness, remove imposed divisions, and restore balance in these homelands. We wish to work together for healing and understanding among All of our Relations and all of those who are here now.

We look forward to opportunities for dialogue and collaboration—a responsibility incumbent upon us all—in these increasingly challenging times. Traditional teachings make it clear that we owe this to each other, our children, and to the Earth, our Mother.

Signed by the Chiefs of the Four Vermont State Recognized Tribes, on behalf of their Councils and Communities (signatures on file).

Chief Richard Menard, Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi
Co-Chief Shirly Hook, Koasek Traditional Band of the Koas Abenaki Nation
Chief Donald Stevens, Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation
Chief Roger Longtoe Sheehan, Elnu Abenaki Tribe

The body received the message from the Chiefs in prayerful silence.

2022-3 Roll Call

The Reading Clerks called the name of each monthly meeting by quarters. Friends were invited to stand and wave as their quarters and monthly meetings were named.

First-time attenders and families with new members were welcomed.

Friends in the hall were asked to raise hands or stand, and Friends on Zoom to turn on their cameras and wave, if they had been to: five or more Sessions, ten or more, fifteen or more, and so on. By the time we got to those few who had attended 55 or 60 times, we celebrated in awe.

2022-4 What is on Your Name Tag?

Phil Veatch (Fresh Pond), clerk of Sessions Planning, described the important information found on the backs of our name tags. He also spoke about the two bookstores and the Coffee Cottage. He invited Friends in the hall and on Zoom to do everything that will be done this week with the sense of ministry, and to keep in mind how everything we are doing is an expression of faith.

2022-5 Bringing Our Rock to Worship

In advance of Sessions, Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond) had asked a few Friends to bring rocks from different parts of the Yearly Meeting. Friends at Castleton were asked to decorate those rocks with something about our own gifts and to bring them to the intergenerational worship called for Sunday morning at the Pavilion. Friends on Zoom were invited to stay open to creative adaptations of the suggested activities to the home setting. We were asked to think about the foundation on which we build our community.

2022-6 Message from the Outgoing Children and Family Ministries Coordinator

Gretchen Baker-Smith (Westport) spoke to the Yearly Meeting. This is her last summer serving as Children and Family Ministries Coordinator. Sad as it is to see her go, there is great joy in the celebration of her long and faithful service.

Gretchen spoke about ministry and gifts, about how clearly she heard the call to lead the JHYM program, about being open to discern and do the will of God even when it didn't look anything like what she intended. She accepted the Yearly Meeting's gratitude and did not shrink from owning her leadership role, though she reminded us that leadership is not the only work of ministry that the group needs. It takes all of us. We are the ones, she reminded us, that bring to this community what the Spirit has in store for us.

"If you are a rock," she asked, "what are you going to build on that foundation?"

2022-7 Song for Betty Ann Lee

Kara Price (Storrs), our new Children and Family Ministries Coordinator, led us in a song in honor of Betty Ann Lee (Westport). Betty Ann was our beloved Sessions Coordinator for the Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) program for many years.

2022-8 Youth Leave to Their Programs

Kenzie Burpee (Wellesley), our recently appointed JYM Sessions Coordinator, introduced the leaders of the children's and Young Friends' programs, and each in turn introduced their program's staff before they left the room, followed by the children and Young Friends.

2022-9 Minute of Record About Preparations Before the Start of Sessions

New England Yearly Meeting has taken on the significant challenge of holding its Annual Sessions united in a hybrid format, with many attending the gathering at Castleton University and many present on Zoom.

On Friday afternoon, before the official opening of the 362nd Annual Sessions, staff, clerks, and large numbers of technical support and other volunteers met in the hall and on Zoom for a thorough rehearsal. The exercise was blessed with both success and challenges that could be identified and resolved.

Friends have expressed gratitude for all the foresight and faithfulness that will make this hybrid gathering possible, and are prepared to be tender with each other for whatever difficulties we may experience.

2022-10 Remembering Those Not Here

Before closing worship, Friends were invited to say the names of Friends who were unable to be present for whatever reason.

The desire to be a group together again could be heard in the long list that rose out of worship naming Friends who were missed by those gathered: beloved individuals, couples, whole families, and the Cuban Friends not permitted to travel to the United States. A Friend reminded us that some of those named might be fully present on Zoom, and even so the depth of affect in the voices bringing forth the names clearly expressed our yearning to be even more present to and for each other.

Sunday Morning

2022-11 Pools, Stones, and Prayers

Friends gathered for intergenerational worship in the round under the Castleton Pavilion and in the gallery of rectangles on Zoom.

Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond), with help from young friends Sage, Conifer, Oscar, and Nahar, led Friends in singing *Open My Heart* and presented us with two queries: How does the Spirit find you? What big feelings are you experiencing that must be shared?

Friends in the Pavilion and at home wrote their feelings of grief on tissue paper, and words of balm onto gold foil. These were placed in pools of water set around the Pavilion and then drawn out to make collages of prayer. The canvases will be on display in the Fine Arts Center, and Friends may add to them throughout Sessions.

2022-12 Transition to Bible Half-Hour

After the children went to their respective programs, Friends in Castleton took a prayerful 10-minute walk from the Pavilion to the Fine Arts Center auditorium. Many of those present on Zoom also held the shift from intergenerational worship to Bible Half-Hour in silence.

2022-13 Introduction of Bible Half-Hour Speaker and Elders

Jennifer Higgins-Newman (Beacon Hill) introduced our Bible Half-Hour speaker, Regina Renee (Ward) Nyégbé, 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 videoconference.

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.

L. V. M. Shelton (Plainfield), Lee Andrew (Ujima Friends Meeting), Polly Washburn (Intermountain YM), 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 by seeding our waiting worship with queries, all framed by the urgent reminder: “This is the hour ... How does the Spirit find you?”

Recordings of the Bible Half-Hour presentations will be available on the NEYM website.

Sunday Evening

2022-14 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), Jennifer 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 (Framingham), Callid Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers), Jackie Stillwell (Monadnock), Maggie Edmonson (Winthrop Ctr), Kathy Olsen (E. Sandwich), Karen Sánchez-Eppler (Northampton), Janet Hough (Cobscook), Kristna Evans (Durham), Fran Brokaw (Hanover), Robert Dove McClellan (Fresh Pond), Mary Chenaille (Worcester), Ben Warner (Cambridge), Hannah Zwirner-Forsythe (Beacon Hill), and Wendy Schlotterbeck (Durham).

2022-15 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.

2022-16 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).

2022-17 Welcome Visitors

Through the week the following visitors and representatives for other organizations were welcomed and invited to introduce themselves:

Heidi Babb, Woolman Hill Conference Center
Jessica Bahena, Friends Committee on National Legislation
Cliff Bennett (Plainfield), Quakers Advocating Justice for Palestine, Quaker Palestine Israel Network
Peter Blood-Patterson (Mt. Toby), Quaker Spring
Fran Brokaw (Hanover), clerk of the Pendle Hill Board
Hilary Burgin (Beacon Hill), Quaker Voluntary Service

Lilly Campbell (Beacon Hill), Beacon Hill Friends House
 Minga Claggett-Borne (Cambridge), Friends Peace Teams
 Kerri Clough, Cork, Ireland
 Emma Condori-Mamani, Quaker Religious Education Cooperative, Friends International Bilingual Center, La Paz, Holiness YM, Bolivia
 Kirenia Criado, Havana Monthly Meeting, Cuba Yearly Meeting
 Sarah Freeman-Woolpert (Concord), Friends Committee on National Legislation
 Audrey Greenhall, French General Conference, Quaker Books, and Quaker Press Manager
 Keith Harvey (Cambridge), American Friend Service Committee
 Mary Lou Hatcher, Lehigh Valley Monthly Meeting, PhYM, attending North Sandwich
 Sara Gada, Friends Publishing Corporation
 Jennifer Higgins-Newman (Beacon Hill), Beacon Hill Friends House
 Nikki Holland (West Richmond, IN; New Association of Friends), Friends United Meeting
 Brian, Caleb, Isaac, and Joshua Holland (West Richmond, IN; New Association of Friends), Belize Friends
 Angela Hopkins, New York YM, attending Northampton Friends Meeting
 Megan Jensen (Monadnock), Sun Moon Farm, Rindge, NH
 Emma Kay, Brooklyn Friends Meeting, New York YM
 Kelly Kellum, (High Point Friends Meeting, NC; independent), Friends United Meeting
 Noah Litu Kellum, Chavakali Yearly Meeting of Friends Church, Kenya, studying at Earlham School of Religion
 Nils Klinkenberg (Beacon Hill), Beacon Hill Friends House
 Carlyne Lamar Jordan, Quaker United Nations Office, New York
 Jessica Lana, Friends Committee on National Legislation
 Mary Link (Mt Toby), NEYM Legacy Gift Committee
 Skye (Caitlin) McQuilken, Rochester Friends Meeting, New York YM
 Lyle Miller (Goshen, IN), representing Everence
 Judith Nandikove, Quaker Religious Education Collaborative and Nairobi YM
 Anne Pomeroy, New Paltz Monthly Meeting, New York YM
 Emily Provance, 15th St Monthly Meeting, New York YM
 Nicole Santos, Friends Committee on National Legislation
 Laura Sawyer, Young Friends Resource Person
 Skip Schiel (Cambridge), Quakers Advocating Justice for Palestine
 Earl Smith, Stillwater Friends Meeting, Ohio YM
 Matt Southworth (Hartford), Friends Committee on National Legislation
 Jacqueline Stillwell (Monadnock), Right Sharing of World Resources
 Ken Stockbridge, Patapsco Friends Meeting, Baltimore YM
 Phil Stone, Clearwater, Florida, Southeastern YM
 Jonathan Vogel-Borne (Cambridge), Friends Peace Teams
 Donn Weinholtz (Hartford), Friends Association for Higher Education
 Pamela Williams, Germantown Monthly Meeting, Philadelphia YM
 Liz Yeats, Friends Meeting of Austin, South Central YM

2022-18 Budget Proposal

Scot Drysdale (Hanover), clerk of NEYM Finance Committee, presented the proposed NEYM budget for FY 2022–23 included in the Advance 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.

2022-19 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 Advance Documents.
- faithful production of the recorded Advance 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.

2022-20 Faith and Practice Revision Committee

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 manifested 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.

2022-21 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 their work towards visioning and identifying what's needed, noticing what's working and not working, naming and nurturing gifts, and raising up new leadership beyond the people who are already known.

Jackie pointed to open 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. Their efforts include writing a job description for each opportunity of service, with the gifts and the skills that they are hoping will rise up to meet the need. Jackie invited all Sessions participants to consider whether they are interested in serving on a committee. The Yearly Meeting needs people who are creative and can think together. The Nominating clerk can be reached via email at nominating@neym.org.

Jackie raised the name of Megan Jensen (Monadnock) for Recording Clerk, to begin next year. Her name will come back for approval on Wednesday afternoon.

2022-22 Unity Agenda

The Clerk referred to the components of the Unity Agenda included in the Advance 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 (see page 28)
- Approval of Minute to Authorize Edits and Corrections (see page 28)
- Approval of Sessions Planning Purposes, Procedures, and Composition (see page 28)
- Acceptance of board, committee, and representative reports (see page 47)
- Acceptance of Memorial Minutes (as prepared by monthly meetings, and reviewed and approved by quarterly meetings and the Permanent Board) (see page 66)

Friends approved the Unity Agenda.

Monday Morning

2022-23 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.

2022-24 Report on Middlebury Monthly Meeting's Response to the Call to Urgent, Loving 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.

2022-25 Report on New Haven Monthly Meeting's Response to the Call to Urgent, Loving 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.

2022-26 Permanent Board Report

Preparing to present a series of reports and recommendations from the 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.

2022-27 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.

2022-28 Recommendation from Permanent Board to Lay Down the Racial, Social, and Economic Justice Committee

Permanent Board also recommended laying down the Racial, Social, and Economic Justice Committee (RSEJ), 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 work 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 Yearly Meeting 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.

A Friend who had served on RSEJ for many years spoke with great passion about his pain at the thought of the committee being laid down. Other Friends also expressed strong and heartfelt opposition to laying it down. We heard how RSEJ had been one place committed to addressing racism when most of NEYM was not, and heard that some Friends of Color had found support within RSEJ. 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.

2022-29 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

2022-30 Plenary Speaker

Nia Thomas (Northampton) introduced the plenary speaker. Emily Provance (15th St Meeting, New York YM) travels widely in the ministry, 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 that 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 by 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

2022-31 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 Marian Baker (Weare/Henniker) 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.

2022-32 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 online. The Clerk also thanked the Spirit for the message given through Regina Renee (Ward) Nyégbeh about Spiritual Speed Limits, which he felt especially moved to practice.

2022-33 Report from the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and 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 regarding the laying down of the Racial, Social, and Economic Justice Committee.

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 (Ward) 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.

2022-34 Report of Ministry of Briana Halliwell

Briana Halliwell (Vassalboro) spoke to Friends about her ministry, which is supported by the Legacy Gift 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 counter-protesters, 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. Briana 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.

2022-35 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; together with Jonathan Vogel-Borne and Minga Claggett-Borne (both of Cambridge) for Friends Peace Teams 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 the Yearly Meeting. They called on the Permanent Board to continue the work of relationship building, and left us with the question: What does justice require of us?

2022-36 Suggested Action Items from Friends Peace Teams

Jonathan Vogel-Borne and Friends Peace Teams representative Minga Claggett-Borne suggested a number of actions related to Quaker involvement in the Indian Boarding Schools. The actions originate in a request from Deborah Haaland, Indigenous leader and U.S. Secretary of the Interior, to religious institutions which were involved in Indian Boarding Schools. The actions will continue and expand the work related to the NEYM Apology to Native Americans (Minute 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 where Native children may have been buried
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)
8. 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 H.R. 5444 and S.2907 (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 the Permanent Board may report back on progress and findings at Annual Sessions 2023.

Acknowledging concerns expressed on the floor about asking the 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**.

The Clerk clarified that the 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 the 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

2022-37 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 Quakers 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 three-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 Belizean Quaker.

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

2022-38 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 in 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 peace work through the Friends 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, NEYM's Board Representatives and our outgoing and rising Presiding Clerks, recently met 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.

2022-39

A Friend observed that the reports about the work of FUM were presented by white Friends. She wondered if there might be an opportunity to hear directly from Friends from Bolivia and Kenya, who are with us at Sessions. She further asked us not to compare Indian Boarding Schools to any other institution, which has happened on at least two occasions.

2022-40 Report and Recommendation on the Continuing Attention to Spiritual Life and Ministry

Noah Merrill (Putney), Yearly Meeting Secretary; and Jeremiah Dickinson (Dover), Interim Clerk of Ministry and Council, started the report on the continuing attention to spiritual life and ministry by presenting a PowerPoint summary of the detailed information in the Advance 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 the Permanent Board and the Spiritual Life Listening Group.

Friends **approved**.

2. The establishment of a Meeting Accompaniment Group as described in the Purposes, Procedures, and Composition (see page 28)

With a concern expressed that there be broad geographic representation, Friends **approved**.

3. The Purposes, Procedures, and Composition document for a Meeting Accompaniment Group (see page 28)

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 and 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 hybrid events.

Several Friends expressed concerns about some functions of the Ministry and Counsel Committee which are not addressed in the current, evolving structure. Not having a Ministry and 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.

2022-41 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 twenty 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

2022-42 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 needed 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?

2022-43 Epistle (First Reading)

The Epistle Committee—Jean Rosenberg (Middlebury), Judy Anne 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.

2022-44 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. Through the usual activities of games, singing, swimming, and boating, 440 children and teens 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.

2022-45 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 meetings 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, and recording of gifts in ministry.

Friends **approved**.

2022-46 Return to the Discernment on Racial, Social, and 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. The Clerk reiterated his sense of the meeting from Monday that we do not have unity to lay down Racial, Social, and Economic Justice Committee at this time.
2. 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. The Clerk reported that the Noticing Patterns Working Group approached Coordinating and Advisory in March, observing a need both for a vision for racial justice work and for forms other than Noticing Patterns. Coordinating and 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 singlehandedly end the microaggressions and more direct violence that Friends of color experience. The personal growth necessary to reduce this violence 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.

A Friend offered celebration, noticing both how far we've come since a few years ago, when we argued about whether we could use the term "white supremacy," and that we had a lot more work to do.

She also reminded us of the Quaker pattern of establishing committees with 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.

2022-47 The Freedmen's Fund

One of the responsibilities of the Racial, Social, and Economic Justice Committee 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 Yearly Meeting 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

2022-48 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."

2022-49 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.

2022-50 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 Dover Friends renovate Dover meetinghouse to support their corporate leading to safely provide sanctuary to immigrants; helped two travelers to attend Cuba Yearly Meeting and celebrate 30 years of Puente; supported 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 on Native Peoples, 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 Yearly Meeting is led to use these monies.

2022-51 Report on the Visit to Cuba Yearly Meeting

Chris Jorgensen (Cambridge) and 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. Their 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.

2022-52 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.

2022-53 Faith and Practice Revision Committee (2nd presentation)

Phebe McCosker (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 has 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.

2022-54 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. (See “Approved Budget” on page 25.)

Friends **approved** the budget.

2022-55 Nomination for Sessions Recording Clerk

Friends **approved** Megan Jensen as Recording Clerk for 2023–25.

2022-56 Chronos and Kairos

We did not read back all the minutes to the body as has been our practice. As the Clerks’ Table wrestled with feeling unfaithful for presenting so few minutes for approval, one of the Recording Clerks noticed that the time usually dedicated to reading back minutes was dedicated to many other things including noticings, and freeing ourselves from the clock and the traditional forms.

What the Spirit has given us in noticings and in more time for listening and discernment has been a large parcel of gifts for these days.

One of the Recording Clerks shared the following reflection: “The Recording Clerks were ready to read back to you the minutes, but we were given other things from the Spirit to take with us at this time.”

We have approved a few minutes, but the Clerks’ Table will meet to review all the work of the Recording Clerks, and to make corrections of grammar and spelling. Subsequently, the Permanent Board will give final approval to the minutes. Permanent Board meetings are open to all and the minutes will be posted ahead of the meeting.

A Friend asked for special care for the integrity of the process.

Friends **approved** this minute.

Wednesday Evening

2022-57 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 “squirmy worship” with the little ones present and active.

2022-58 Youth Programs Epistles

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

Child Care

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 in 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-dyeing, and capture the flag. They also enjoyed “Bible ten minutes.”

JYM, grades 4–6

The Epistle for grades 4 through 6 was read by River, Gabriel, Hannah, and Alice.

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 through 3) for games such as capture the flag.

Young Friends

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

The Young Friends Epistle included 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.

2022-59 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.

2022-60 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 groups provided a recurrent focus of attention and intimate spiritual exchange.

Fran expressed gratitude for the facilitators.

2022-61 Events Coordinator’s Report

Elizabeth Hacala, Yearly Meeting Events Manager, 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.

2022-62 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.

2022-63 Second Reading of the Epistle

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

Friends approved the Epistle, with minor corrections.

2022-64 Clerk’s Closing Reflections

Presiding Clerk Bruce Neumann expressed his joy at having had the opportunity to work closely with the Yearly Meeting office staff and with the rest of the Clerks’ Table, as well as the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group and the Right Relationship Working Group.

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

Reminding us of the 2020 Sessions theme, the first in Bruce's clerkship, the outgoing and the rising Presiding Clerks led us in singing "Row On." Rebecca presented Bruce with a paddle decorated with that year's logo with the words "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."

2022-65 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 Yearly Meeting Annual 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

2022-66 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 God
- 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, with her relentless enthusiasm for reading the Bible, fed our worship and discernment through the week. Her Bible Half-hours reinforced our willingness to listen to one another and our sense of urgency to notice patterns of oppression and faithfulness.

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.

Approved Budget

FY23 Approved Budget

New England Yearly Meeting

FY2023 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed

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

Category	FY2021		FY2022	Δ FY22 to FY23 Budgets	FY2023 Proposed Budget	Notes
	Actuals	Budget	Budget			
<i>(italics = affected by pandemic)</i>						
Income						
4010 Individual Contributions						
General Fund Contributions	155,669.60	204,225	204,225	-	204,225	
Equalization Contributions	21,940.00	26,000	26,000	-	26,000	
4010 Individual Contributions Total	177,609.60	230,225	230,225	-	230,225	
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions						
General Fund Contributions	319,842.03	350,000	350,000	-	350,000	
Equalization Contributions	8,907.00	23,000	23,000	-	23,000	
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions Total	328,749.03	373,000	373,000	-	373,000	
4025 Unallocated Income	900.00			31,000	31,000	1
4030 Organizations Contributions	301.00	0	0	-	0	
4050 Interest and Dividend Income	10,164.32	9,000	9,000	3,000	12,000	
4070 Books & Other Sales Income		17,000	17,000	-	17,000	
4080 Retreat Program Fees	7,346.61	47,000	47,000	-	47,000	
4085 Sessions Program Fees	42,437.00	211,050	221,300	6,100	227,400	
4090 Change in Fair Market Value	-365.72	0	0	-	0	
4099 Net Assets Released To/From	2,090.00	0	15,000	15,000	30,000	2, 3
Total Income	569,231.84	887,275	912,525	55,100	967,625	
Expenses						
5000 Staff						
Total 5000 Staff	410,548	431,519	452,112	41,572	493,684	4
5100 General & Administration						
5110 Administration						
5120 Bank Expense	4,488	7,000	7,000	-	7,000	
5130 Contracted Services	18,258	30,900	31,900	(9,900)	22,000	
5135 Accounting Services	2,500	2,500	2,500	(2,500)	0	
5140 Legal Services	2,500	2,500	2,500	-	2,500	
5145 Infrastructure	5,000	5,000	5,000	-	5,000	
5150 Liability Insurance	4,673	5,100	5,250	-	5,250	
5160 Payroll Service	5,582	5,200	5,200	300	5,500	
5170 Recruiting Expense		0	0	-	0	
5180 Rent	9,350	9,350	9,350	-	9,350	
5190 Misc. Expense	159	0	0	-	0	
Total 5110 Administration	52,509	67,550	68,700	(12,100)	56,600	
5200 Office						
5220 Archives Office Expenses		0	0	-	0	
5220 Cleaning Services	88	265	265	-	265	
5230 Maint - Equip & Hardware	343	1,250	1,250	-	1,250	
5240 Postage	4,693	3,750	3,750	-	3,750	
5250 Office Equipment	3,558	3,250	3,250	-	3,250	
5260 Office Supplies	1,094	2,500	2,500	-	2,500	
5270 Printing & Copying	8,632	14,500	14,500	-	14,500	
5280 Software & Updates	17,177	7,000	7,000	-	7,000	

**New England Yearly Meeting
FY2023 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed**

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

Category	FY2021		FY2022	Δ FY22 to FY23 Budgets	FY2023 Proposed Budget	Notes
	Actuals	Budget	Budget			
5290 Telephone	3,492	4,500	4,500	-	4,500	
5295 Misc. Office	29	0	0	-	0	
Total 5200 Office	39,105	37,015	37,015	-	37,015	
Total 5100 General & Administration	91,615	104,565	105,715	(12,100)	93,615	
5300 Travel & Conferences						
5310 Travel - Committee	775	3,000	3,000	-	3,000	
5320 Travel - Clerk		4,500	4,500	-	4,500	
5330 Travel - Programs	60	3,700	3,700	-	3,700	
5335 Travel - Representatives Travel	150	6,700	6,700	-	6,700	
5350 Travel - Staff	1,785	17,000	17,000	-	17,000	
5360 Travel - Ministries		400	400	-	400	
Total 5300 Travel & Conferences	2,770	35,300	35,300	-	35,300	
6000 Programs						
6110 Sessions Room & Board		181,140	186,850	6,100	192,950	
6112 Retreats - Room & Board				-		
6114 Room Rental	575	20,000	17,530	(3,980)	13,550	
6150 Food Expense	434	18,000	17,430	(1,500)	15,930	
Total 6112 Retreats - Room & Board	1,009	38,000	34,960	(5,480)	29,480	
6125 Program Expenses						
6105 Honoraria - Speakers/Wkshp Ldrs	13,550	22,000	22,000	-	22,000	
6107 Honoraria - Volunteer Leadership			15,000	-	15,000	
6115 Equipment Rental		6,000	6,000	-	6,000	
6121 Supplies and Other Expenses	957	9,300	9,300	(2,000)	7,300	
6165 Pre-Sessions Expense		1,000	1,000	-	1,000	
Total 6125 Program Expenses	14,507	38,300	53,300	(2,000)	51,300	
6130 Committee Expenses - General	1,500	6,350	6,350	-	6,350	
6134 Childcare		2,000	2,000	-	2,000	
6137 Committee Day Expenses		0	0	-	0	
Total 6130 Committee Expenses - General	1,500	8,350	8,350	-	8,350	
6160 Program Support						
6163 Friends Camp	1,561	2,220	2,220	-	2,220	
6167 Religious Education & Outreach		2,000	0	-	0	
Total 6160 Program Support	1,561	4,220	2,220	-	2,220	
Total 6000 Programs	18,576	270,010	285,680	(1,380)	284,300	
6140 Books & Other Sales Expense						
6142 Books		14,500	14,500	-	14,500	
6147 Consignment Sales		0	0	-	0	
Total 6140 Books & Other Sales Expense		14,500	14,500	-	14,500	
6200 Support of Other Organizations						
Total 6200-6590 Support of Other Organizations	44,014	45,975	45,975	-	45,975	5

continued on following page

New England Yearly Meeting						
FY2023 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed						
version #3-B 3/18/2022 approved by Finance Committee 3-26-22						
Category	FY2021		FY2022	Δ FY22 to FY23 Budgets	FY2023 Proposed Budget	Notes
	Actuals	Budget	Budget			
6600 Publications						
6610 Yearly Meeting Minute Book		0	0	-	0	6
6620 New England Friend (Sessions Issue)		4,000	0	-	0	
Total 6600 Publications	0	4,000	0	-	0	
Total Expenses	567,523	905,869	939,282	28,092	967,374	
Net Operating Income	1,709	-18,594	-26,757	27,008	251	
Other Income						
9940 Other Income - Transfers from other funds	79,291.11					
Total Other Income	79,291.11					
Other Expenses						
9950 Other Expense - Transfer to other funds	77,202.00					

Notes:

1. Friends Mutual Health Group distribution of surplus, second part of two; first received November 2021.
2. Funding the priority for support of monthly meetings and ministries, \$20,000 from unrestricted reserves; see note 4.
3. Funding the Honoraria Supporting Volunteer Leadership is being phased in over three years; for FY2022 the full \$15,000 is coming from reserves; in FY2023 \$10,000 and in FY2024 \$5000 will come from reserves. The expense is being tracked in the new subcategory "Honoraria - Volunteer Leadership"
4. COLA increase of 6.3% + small merit increase. \$20,000 to address the priority for support of monthly meetings and ministers by increased support staff (PB 21-89); this increase can be used in either 5130 Contracted Services or 5000 Staff Salaries & Benefits.
5. Amounts will remain flat between FY22-FY23.
6. Publication of *New England Friend* Sessions Issue now tracked in 5270 Office: Printing & Copying.

Unity Agenda Items

Bank Resolutions

The following resolutions are brought by the Finance Committee:

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

Minute to Authorize Edits and Corrections

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

Sessions Planning Purpose, Procedures, and Composition

Purpose

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

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

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

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

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

Procedures

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Opportunities to gather in worship
- Business meetings
- Opportunities for learning
- Opportunities for sharing and relationship-building
- Opportunities for performance, celebrations, special events, and play

In consultation with the Coordination Team and with approval of the Yearly Meeting Secretary, a variety of stipended positions may be established to hold a particular piece of work, (e.g., Registrar, Housing Coordinator, Worship Coordinator, Tech Team Lead, BIPOC Opportunities Coordinator). Stipended positions will participate in the appropriate functional team, and will be supported by the appropriate staff person as identified in their role description.

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

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

Composition

A Sessions Clerk will be nominated by the Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee. This individual will clerk the Coordination Team, the Program Team, and the Theme and Speakers Team. This person will

work closely with the Events Coordinator, creating the planning schedule and the agendas for planning meetings in consultation with the Coordination Team. This person will hold an overview of the planning process and will facilitate significant decisions, where the Events Coordinator will be more involved in the implementation of those decisions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Approved Nominating Slate

Permanent Board (50)

2023

Bishop, Peter (Mtoby)
 Forsythe, Martin (Bhill)
 Mair, Edward (Ames)
 McCandless, Jean (Burl)
 Taber, Will (Fpon)

Warnock, Eleanor (Nham)

2024

Chase, Deana (West)
 Gant, Christopher (Bhill)
 Harrington, Ian (Cam)
 Manning, Leslie (Durh)*
 Reuthe, John (Vass)
 Schwope, Martha (Well)

2025

Hanson, Beth (Wrly)
 Lightsom, Fran (WFal)
 O'Connor, Bob (Vass)
 Radocchia, Anna (Benn)
 Rein, Carole (Nshor)
 Weinholtz, Donn (Hart)
 Weinholtz, Diane (Hart)
 Wilson, Morgan (Fram)
 Wooten, Kathleen (Fpon)

2026

Allen, Kimberly (Durh)
 Davies, Susan (Vass)
 Gibson, Joyce (Durh)
 McCandless, Christopher (Burl)
 Sakulich, Aaron (Worc)
 Zwirner, Mary (Bhill)

Isbell Shinn, Newell (Mt Toby)
Drayton, Darcy (Souh)
Stamm, Liesa (Hart)
Klepack, Meg (WSan)
Jordan, Carolyne Lamar (WFal)
Brenner, Tom (Worc)
Jasaitis, Roger Vincent (Putn)

Archives & Historical Records (6)

2023

Quirk, Brian (Law)
 Forsythe, Carol (Put)*
 Crosby, Eileen (Mt Toby)

2024

Schmidt, Maxine (Nham)

2025

Cazden, Betsy (Prov)

Board of Managers of Investments & Permanent Funds (10)

2023

Harrington, Ian (Cam)
 Mair, Edward (Ames)
Tierney, Joseph (Cam)

2024

Philbrook, Erik (Well)*

2025

McKnight, Jeanne (Well)
 Taber, Shearman (Nham)

2026

Wernette, Tim (Win)

2027

Hackman, Mathew (Prov)
David Eastman (Han)
John Ridgeway (Mt. Toby)

Clerks' Table

2023

Bishop, Peter (NHam), Recording

2024

Kohrman, Adam (Bhill), Reading

2025

Leuchak, Rebecca (Prov), Presiding
 Wright, Michelle (Putn), Reading
Jensen, Megan (Monad), Recording

boldface - new appointment | ***boldface italic*** = re-appointment

Earthcare Ministry (15)¹

2023	2024	2025
MacKenzie, Reb (QCUn)		
Wallis, Timmon (Nham)		

Finance (10)

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

2026

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

2027

Treasurer (2023):

Murray, Robert (Bhill)

Friends Camp Nominating (5; 3 named by YM Nominating; 2 by Friends Camp Committee)

2023	2024	2025
	Burgin, Hilary (BHil)	Keefe-Perry, Kristina (FPon)

Legacy Gift Committee (9)

2023	2024	2025
Gant, Sarah (Bhill)	Link, Mary (Mt Toby)*	Christopher, Megan (Well)
Rockwood, Susan (Mid)*	Reixach, Karen (Keen)	Martin, Lori (NHav)
		Isbell Shinn, Jennie (MVin)

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

2025

Nominating Committee (15) (nominated by Permanent Board)

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

Puente de Amigos (9)

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

Sessions Clerk

2025

Veatch, Phillip (FPon)

Sessions Theme and Speakers Team (5)

2023

Supervisor to the YM Secretary

2023

Reuthe, Elizabeth (Vass)

Youth Ministries (6)

2023

West, Kim (Camb)

Matchette, Abigail (Bur)

2024

Eller, Jessica (Port)

Sanchez-Eppler, Karen (Nham)

2024

Dawson, Janet (Fram)

Representatives to Other Friends Organizations

American Friends Service Committee Corp. (4)

2023

Rhodewalt, Scott (Nkin)

2024

Steele, Rebecca (Port)

Woodrow, Peter (Port), convenor

2025

Barker, Mark (Conc)

Friends Committee on National Legislation (6)

2023

Drysdale, Robert (Han)

Weidner, Holly (Vass)

2024

Cazden, Betsy (Prov)

2025

Grace, James (BHil)

Friends General Conference Central Committee Representatives (8)

2023

2024

Hilles-Pilant, Carolyn (Bhill)

2025

Friends Peace Teams Project (3)

Claggett-Borne, Minga (Cam)

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

Blood, Peter (Mtob)

Collea, Beth (Dov)

Fogarty, Maggie (Dov)

Olsen, Kathryn (Sand)

Weiss, Fritz (Port)

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

Martin, Frederick (BHill)

Keefe-Perry, Kristina (Fpon)

Smith, Jennifer (Conc)

Friends World Committee Representatives (7)

2023

Leuchak, Rebecca (Prov)

2024

Williams, Carl (Pfld)

Hopkins, Mary (Fpon)

Goldberger, Judy (B Hill)

2025

Quaker Earthcare Witness (1)

Haines, Christopher (Fpon)

Appendix to the Minutes

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

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

Introduction

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

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

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

How we got here: Why this report?

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

The proposal envisioned a time of openness and learning, during which it was hoped the Spirit might offer further guidance on how the Yearly Meeting should proceed, and the Yearly Meeting in Sessions would have an opportunity for discernment and direction regarding next steps.

The hope was that this time would allow for the significant energy invested in maintaining an overburdened committee structure to be available instead for prayer, listening, and consultation. The proposal envisioned a series of three daylong, intentionally hosted gatherings focusing on the nurture of the spiritual life of meetings, and on better understanding the recognition, nurture, and care of Friends called to various forms of ministry.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Respectfully submitted,

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

Report on the Gatherings on Spiritual Life & Ministry

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key Learning and Insights to Share

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

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

Through these gatherings, and in prayerful consultation, conversation, and observation, we have been consistently reminded of a small number of areas of possibility and yearning that the Yearly Meeting might seek to help Friends address.

The recommendations that will be offered below seek to respond in part—simply, humbly, and directly—to the longings we have heard, knowing that more learning will come in time, and trusting that further clarity will be given as the journey continues.

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

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

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

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

Yearly Meeting in this time of exploration is to ask what direct role the Yearly Meeting as such can helpfully play. And yet, much of what is needed must arise from and be rooted in local and quarterly meetings.

The Yearly Meeting can encourage, nurture, and reflect back important themes and insights, and can directly offer some things. It is important that the Yearly Meeting play an intentionally limited role, responding to and encouraging Friends rooted locally as they grow into God's leading for their community. Then, the new growth can flourish, and be relevant to and sustained in each local context.

Rather than seeing the Yearly Meeting as the primary actor in nurturing spiritual life and ministry, we might envision the Yearly Meeting as the mycorrhizal network of fungal filaments in the soil of the forest floor that connects, senses, responds, upholds, tends the diverse life forms in the forest, which are the local meetings and persons in whom the Spirit is living, active, teaching, and seeking expression today.

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

Recommendations for Permanent Board and Sessions Approval

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

1. Gather a small body of Friends to companion and accompany local meetings

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

2. Hold a "meeting for listening" for the Life in local meetings

- a. Plan and host an annual, daylong gathering in the late spring for Friends across New England to reflect on the life of our local meetings and to prayerfully consider how the Yearly Meeting's programmatic priorities and activities might faithfully support the spiritual life of local meetings in the coming year.
- b. Insights and reflections at the gathering would substantively inform both programmatic offerings by the YM in the coming year(s), as well as flow into the annual Funding Priorities process for the YM, to be further developed by C&A and approved by Permanent Board and Sessions.
- c. This meeting would be planned and hosted as a partnership between the Quaker Practice & Leadership Facilitator and the clerk of Ministry & Counsel.
- d. Share in prayer and worship together, with an emphasis on the life of Friends meetings in our region

- e. Consider reflections on state of society reports, statistical reports, and other news and information regarding the vitality and experience of local worshipping 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. From this meeting, coupled with insights from the local meeting accompaniment body (see 1, above), and other opportunities, would inform the subsequent preparation of the NEYM State of Society report, which will be shepherded by the clerk of Ministry & Counsel, supported by Friends they may be led to invite.
 - h. Would involve a variety of modalities for sharing and reflection, including some more directed and specific, and some more open and expansive.
3. As a regular part of Permanent Board meetings, and at Annual Sessions, **host opportunities for the wider body of Friends in New England to learn about and celebrate Friends active in public ministry**
4. **Offer regular opportunities for prayerful holding of the wider body of Friends in New England, for those led, and invite Friends to this discipline**
- a. The clerk of Ministry & Counsel would work with the Presiding Clerk to invite Friends with a concern for prayer and eldership to hold the Yearly Meeting in prayer, both from their own homes and through simple in-person opportunities as this is possible, and as led.
 - b. This would involve inviting Friends to serve in this way, helping Friends know this is happening and how they can participate, encouraging opportunities for prayerful holding at particular times, and sharing prayer requests in a more consistent way.
5. The Yearly Meeting recognizes the expressed desire for opportunities for Friends serving in ministry and eldership to gather as led for “shop talk,” mentoring, mutual accountability, and learning
- a. In contrast with previous recommendations, these opportunities would not be initiated or formally organized by the Yearly Meeting. What follows is offered as an affirmation and reflection on what we have heard in our listening and discernment.
 - b. Guidance we have heard from experienced ministers and elders, that we feel is valuable to reflect to the wider body, and those who might consider hosting or attending such opportunities:
 - i. Opportunities need to be sufficiently focused and clear in scope to allow for deeper sharing and development of common language among Friends called to similar kinds of service (e.g., vocal ministry, eldership, pastoral counseling, prison ministry, witness). This allows for differences in experience to be acknowledged without forcing a “one-size-fits-all” approach.
 - ii. Opportunities should give attention to both creating conditions for trust and intimacy (relatively small size, space for sensitive sharing) and the need for prayerful holding, eldership, humility, and grounding through oversight.
 - iii. Friends offering invitations to such opportunities should be clear and explicit about the focus, format, and purpose, to help Friends understand if a particular opportunity might be nourishing or appropriate for them.
 - iv. It is hoped these opportunities will take a variety of shapes, at the leading of concerned Friends, or as hosted by local meetings and quarters.
 - v. We foresee the emphasis of these opportunities to be on personal faithfulness, on the journey of ministry and personal spiritual formation in Friends tradition as a long-term spiritual discipline, and on mutual encouragement, accompaniment, and accountability.

6. 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.

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

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

- a. Focus on developing capacity for religious education and spiritual formation within local meetings, possibly through peer circles and encouraging engagement by Friends active in their local meetings with wider networks of religious educators.
- b. Lift up the existing tools, opportunities, and capacities the Yearly Meeting has developed in recent years for the nurture of spiritual life and service (e.g., the staff role of Quaker Practice & Leadership Facilitator, the calendar of programming opportunities and partnerships both in person and online)
- c. Focus on increasing awareness, participation, and access to existing programming, including the Nurturing Faithfulness program and related opportunities. and shorter-term opportunities such as best practices in nominating, clerking and recording clerking workshops, faithful stewardship programming, and more

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

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

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

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

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

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

by the Yearly Meeting, would be incorporated in *Faith & Practice* consistent with the process for revision of *Faith & Practice*.

Proposed Process for the Yearly Meeting Moving Forward

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

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

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

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

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

Appendices

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

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

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

In 2019, at the direction of Annual Sessions, in consultation with the Committee on Ministry & Counsel, Permanent Board created and charged a new working group, the Working Group on Ministry & Spiritual

Life. This group engaged in an extensive review of previous material relating to the functions and responsibilities of Ministry & Counsel and preceding bodies in the life of Friends, examined the longstanding challenges Friends had faced in faithfully carrying out the broad charge of Ministry & Counsel, and conducted a process of consultation, including individual conversations, inviting insights from meetings, and small listening sessions with a diverse constellation of Friends with relevant experience, perspectives, and gifts.

While the Working Group initially developed several proposals for change to address the concerns raised in their charge, discernment following these consultations yielded a surprising and clear direction. Rather than trying to rush to “fix” the challenges that had plagued Ministry & Counsel, there was a sense that God was inviting the Yearly Meeting to 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 and content for “pastoral care” accompaniment by and within local meetings, help with conflicts and challenges, support for young families, welcoming, fostering openness to change, and care of ministry.

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

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

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

Gifts and experience needed: Spiritual and emotional maturity, gifts in oversight, pastoral care, and accompaniment, conflict resolution, prayerful holding, boundary-setting, communication, and administration. Capacity for holding sensitive matters in confidence, with consultation in trusted relationships

as needed. Experience (past or present) serving in leadership roles in their own local meeting. Experience walking with those in servant leadership roles, mentoring, being a non-anxious presence. Joy in connection with Friends, love for and commitment to the nurture of local meetings as the foundation of Friends' life together.

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

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

This Friend will:

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

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

The Ministry and Counsel Clerk will regularly correspond and connect with Friends across New England, and as helpful will refer requests or inquiries, and share their insights and learning, with those serving in relevant Yearly Meeting leadership roles, including Coordinating & Advisory Committee, Permanent Board, and the Spiritual Life group (see "Oversight of the experiment," page 42).

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

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

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

Qualifications: spiritual maturity and grounding in Friends faith and practice

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

Functions & Tasks

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

Staff Reports

Secretary

Because we cannot reasonably expect to erect a constantly expanding structure of social activism upon a constantly diminishing foundation of faith, attention to the cultivation of the inner life is our first order of business, even in a period of radical social change. (D. Elton Trueblood)

Dear Friends,

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

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

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

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

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

Much of my work is walking with those who serve. Since Sessions last gathered in person in 2019, I've accompanied Friends shepherding their meetings in times of joy, grief, rage, anxiety, and despair. As supervisor of the Yearly Meeting staff who serve Friends of all ages throughout the year, I'm deeply aware of the toll this time has taken—and continues to take—on these beloved servant leaders. I've borne witness to the burdens of Friends serving in volunteer leadership roles, who also face increasing expectations alongside fewer hands to share in the work. These faithful people have sought to hold us—and hold us together—in a scattering time. I've been blessed by the care, resilience, and courage so many of you have shown. I give thanks for your dedication, sacrifice, skillfulness, creativity, humor, vulnerability, and love. I hope we will hold in our minds and hearts a recognition of this sacrifice and loving service on our behalf, Friends, now and in the time to come.

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

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

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

I'm holding three prayers for us now:

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

In brokenheartedness, may we seek and abide in the Peace that comes, not from our own strength or virtue, but from the boundless grace and mercy of God, which

is never earned yet always available to us, even when we reject or forget it.

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

—NOAH MERRILL

Accounts Manager

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

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

—FREDERICK MARTIN

Children and Family Ministries Coordinator

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

- Three JYM and three JHYM retreats, half of which were in person
- Outdoor Local Teen Meetups for middle- and high school youth

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

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

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

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

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

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

and joy, this ministry and community of Friends will continue to thrive and shine.

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

Events Coordinator

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

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

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

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

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

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

I'm sure many of you have wondered "why" in your own work: Why am I clerk of my meeting? Why am I

on the finance committee? Why am I a First Day School teacher? Why, why, why? We are compassionate and dedicated people and that is exactly why we ask why, because we care. Those muscles which usually propel us forward, are so weary from the lack of rest they are often breaking own rather than getting stronger.

You should be a little weary right now.

If you are, be grateful.

That is a good thing.

That weariness is confirmation that your heart is working properly.

It is your humanity responding to so much inhumanity around you.

It is evidence of your goodness still fighting to feel useful. (John Pavlovitz)

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

—ELIZABETH HACALA

Friends Camp Director

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

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

hoped to increase access to Camp while also managing limited capacity requirements.

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

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

—ANNA HOPKINS BULLER

Office Manager

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

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

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

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

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

And all this work was done via telephone, Zoom, Slack, email, Airtable, and Asana, with very few in-person meetings.

This year has been more difficult than previous pandemic years. I have felt more isolated and less able to deal with challenges with grace. I need the energy that is present when we meet in person. I need my meeting community and my workplace community.

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

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

—SARA HUBNER

Quaker Practice & Leadership Facilitator

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

About a year ago, as it became increasingly clear that there isn’t a near future with no threat of COVID, a focus across our programs has been learning to responsibly hold high-quality events that are not only Zoom-based but also in person and hybrid, so that we can better meet the needs of Friends across the lifespan. Much time was spent working alongside others to discover new ways of doing things such as how to hold a retreat, a Permanent Board Meeting, a Ministry & Spiritual Life gathering, or our Annual Sessions with adequate-yet-implementable layers of protection from COVID transmission, or how to design a program that provides a high quality experience for both participants gathered together in person and for those connecting via Zoom. We owe many, many thanks to technology ministers and elders among us as well as Friends with public health expertise who have so generously shared their time and wisdom. Though the initial learning curve has been steep, we are much further along than we were a year

ago and we will continue to learn and adapt as we (and our public health agencies) know better.

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

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

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

—NIADWYNWEN THOMAS

Teen Ministries Coordinator

Dear Friends,

Early last fall, I met with a small group of Young Friends online to build leadership amongst their peers.

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

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

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

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

A day when we did what we thought impossible— gathering Friends of all ages into their local meeting communities, online and in person, during a pandemic, to find Spirit in the process of baking bread.

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

In service and love,

—MAGGIE FIORI (SHE/HER/HERS)

Committee Reports

Permanent Board

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

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

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

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

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

- The Israel-Palestine Working Group (<https://neym.org/israel-palestine-working-group>), which supports local Friends meetings across New England in responding to the Yearly Meeting’s encouragement to deepen our engagement with issues concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- The Right Relationship Resource Group, whose most recent report to the Permanent Board is included with this report
- The Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group (<https://neym.org/noticing-patterns-oppression-and-faithfulness-working-group>), whose practices we use regularly at our meetings, and with whom we debrief after every meeting

- The Ministry Transition Team, whose report is provided with recommendations for moving forward with ongoing care for ministry and the spiritual care of our community
- The emerging group from Earthcare Ministries, which is asking to be reformulated, and whose annual report is also included with this report.

We have also created a new Antiracism Consultation Working Group whose approved charge is here: <https://neym.org/antiracism-consultation-working-group>. This group will affirm and implement the commitment we renewed earlier this year to be an anti-racist faith community.

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

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

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

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

—LESLIE MANNING, CLERK

Right Relationship Resource Group

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

Many times this year we have felt the hand of grace hold us as new revelations came to us about our relationship with our Indigenous neighbors. We became aware of the depth of pain our Indigenous brothers and sisters were experiencing. It opened before us as a vast

ocean which we barely touched with our toes, aware of how deep and wide it was, stretching back over the centuries. Our hearts were broken open again and again. We feel this Apology in our souls.

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

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

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

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

tanamoogk and build on those relationships to help us know how to proceed.

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

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

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

Earthcare Ministry

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

At NEYM Sessions 2021, the Earthcare Ministry Committee submitted a minute to NEYM, "2021 Minute of Support for Survival of the Earth and Her Inhabitants." To quote from our minute:

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

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

At least two monthly meetings (Middlebury and New Haven) took action during the year based on the Urgent Call to Action, our minute that came to 2020 NEYM Sessions. Reports from those two meetings are appended to our annual report posted at <https://neym.org/committees/earthcare-ministry>.

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

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

This was the outcome of our retreat:

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

Expressing our gratitude for the beauty of the sacred gift of life and acknowledging our spiritual and physical connection to it, we seek secure protection

of the rights to pure water, clean air, a stable and just climate, and a healthy ecosystem for current and future generations, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, gender or income.

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

—KIMBERLY STONER AND GAIL MELIX, CO-CLERKS

Archives & Historical Records

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

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

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

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

During the year, Elisa also reports the following activity:

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

—CAROL FORSYTHE, CLERK

Board of Managers

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

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

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

Total expenses during the fiscal year amounted to \$103,218 or 0.78% of the value of the fund at the beginning of the year.

For the benefit of the constituents, the Board of Managers manages the portfolio to provide income for our constituents and competitive appreciation in the value of the investment. The Board achieves this by investing in companies whose businesses are aligned with Quaker values. The Board seeks companies that are making a positive contribution to the world’s need for goods and services and are providing work in a healthy, equal-opportunity environment. Furthermore, the Board of Managers avoids investments that are inconsistent with Friends’ testimonies, including companies that depend upon war materials, alcoholic beverages, tobacco or gambling, and companies that conduct unfair employment practices or pollute the environment. The policies and procedures are described in the Board of Manager Investment Guidelines & Procedures page which is available online at: <https://neym.org/board-managers-investment-guidelines-procedures>.

The Board of Managers reviews each company proposed by the deBurlo Group, our financial advisor, prior to purchase based on these principles. All holdings (including preferred stocks and bonds) held in the portfolio are re-screened on a triennial basis to ensure continued suitability.

The Board remains committed to investing a portion (approximately 2%) of the Pooled Funds in locally controlled community development funds throughout the

New England states. These investments support affordable housing, small businesses, community facilities, education, farms, and fisheries.

The NEYM Board of Managers of the Pooled Funds has begun the process of developing a new suite of charts that will allow for better comparison to other investment options. The pie chart shows proportion of Pooled Fund investments by sector is being replaced by a bar chart comparing them to the S&P 500.

The Board intends to have additional charts available sometime within the 2023 fiscal year. The goal is to allow better presentation of investment characteristics and performance so that organizations considering the NEYM Pooled Fund as an investment option have the best data available to compare to alternatives

—ERIK PHILBROOK, CLERK; AND SHEARMAN TABER, TREASURER

Coordinating and Advisory

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

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

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

We heard regular reports from the Ministry Transition team, weighing in with some thoughts, particularly around the need for pastoral care for monthly meetings (see the recommendations to support spiritual life and ministry, page 53).

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

We gave enthusiastic support to Nia's first presentation about subsidizing children's fees this summer, and reflected on the amicus curiae brief in support of Greenhaven Prison that NEYM contributed to.

On March 8 we had an additional meeting, with a few members of Noticing Patterns Working Group, during which they shared their understanding of a need for a clear vision for how NEYM might approach addressing various forms of oppression. We know that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Friends regularly experience micro- (and more) aggressions, but we must acknowledge that LGBTQIA Friends experience homophobia, and that there is a pervasive bias towards Friends of privilege. Noticing Patterns pointed out that their work should only be one piece of ongoing efforts. We expect some recommendations to come out of this consideration.

Through these various pieces of work, we are listening carefully for where God is at work among us, and where the life of the Spirit is stumbling or restricted. We don't consider that our job is to have all the answers, but the awareness we gain from gathering this group informs each of our work and, sometimes, results in recommendations to the wider body.

—BRUCE NEUMANN, PRESIDING CLERK

Ecumenical Relations

There have been no meetings of all the NEYM Council of Churches representatives. Here are reports from each State's representative.

Maine Council of Churches

This is a very exciting year for the Maine Council of Churches. We have started a 3-year trial of our Executive Director working full-time hoping increased hours and programming will make us more relevant and active in Maine. We spent a lot of time talking and lobbying for bills for Natives. We held a book group around Shirley Hagar's book *The Gatherings*, which was well attended. Just as COVID struck, NEYM RSEJ Committee had awarded us a grant. That grant was finally used to help fund our first in-person event titled "Peace, Peace, the risks to white privilege when 'Civility' exists" with Dustin Ward, attended by over 30 people and also available on YouTube. Our fall event is another webinar, this time exploring pro-life and abortion with Rev. Marvin Ellison.

—DIANE DICRANIAN

NH Council of Churches

Our council did well during COVID, offering a lot of support to head of different denominations and keeping churches aware of the changing COVID restrictions for churches. This year we have been struggling with our new part-time director.

I need to step down and I hope someone else in Dover Quarter and also in Northwest Quarter will be

interested in taking my place in representing Friends in New Hampshire.

—MARIAN BAKER

Massachusetts Council of Churches

Noah Merrill has continued to participate in preperiodic meetings of “heads of churches” convened by Laura Everett, the executive director of the MA Council of Churches, and have worked with them as requested, with particular attention to responding to COVID and racism. During Noah’s sabbatical, Sarah Gant participated in heads-of-church meetings and continues to be involved in several ways.

—NOAH MERRILL

Faith & Practice Revision

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—PHEBE MCCOSKER, CLERK

Finance

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

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

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

1. We worked with Nia Thomas on a workshop designed to help local meetings deal with finances. This workshop included a presentation from Everence, a Mennonite company that assists churches and meetings with monetary issues.
2. Over time, the Finance Committee has come to feel that it is not the appropriate committee to decide which organizations NEYM should support (and why) and how much money should be given to each. In the spring of 2021, the Finance Committee requested that the Permanent Board convene a working group to discern these issues. The working group’s recommendations were submitted to and discussed by the Finance Committee and will be presented and discussed at Sessions.
3. We approved forwarding new grant-making guidelines (for committees that give away money as grants) to the Permanent Board.
4. The Anna Brown Fund is an endowed fund “for the education of children of farmers.” We approved the Treasurer sending this year’s income from that fund to the New England Farm Workers’

Council (NEFWC), who offered to find appropriate children of farmers to support.

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

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

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

—SCOT DRYSDALE, CLERK

Legacy Gift

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

We embraced a new financial arrangement allowing unexpended funds to carry over at the end of the fiscal year, rather than being returned to the principal. This resulted in more funds being available than otherwise

would have been for the fall 2021 grant cycle. We were able to award a total of \$29,937 in grants to four Friends to follow Spirit’s Call in their individual ministries in September 2021.

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

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

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

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

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

—SUE ROCKWOOD AND MARY LINK, CO-CLERKS

Update from Ministry & Counsel

Our experiment continues. Over the past two years, in the space created with the setting aside of the Ministry and Counsel committee, we have explored new ways

of nurturing and supporting life and ministry in the Spirit. There were three gatherings—the nourishment of spiritual life in our meetings, the varied experiences of ministry, and the relationship between the meeting and minister. There has been extensive listening and consultation, seeking to further understand the needs and yearnings present among us. From this have come initial understandings and recommendations. They are presented elsewhere in these documents and will be brought to the floor at Sessions.

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

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

—JEREMIAH DICKINSON, INTERIM CLERK

Nominating

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

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

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

We recognize our work as both nominating Friends with the gifts and skills needed to serve in a wide variety of volunteer roles on behalf of the Yearly Meeting, and seeking to remove barriers to the full expression of the spiritual gifts and skills given through each Friend, for the building up and thriving of local Friends meet-

ings. We set up sub-groups to focus on distinct areas and shepherds for each committee and position in our care. In March we facilitated a consultation open to everyone in the Yearly Meeting on Best Practices in Nominating.

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

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

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

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

With Light and Love,
—JACQUELINE STILLWELL, CLERK

Committee for Nurturing Friends Education at Moses Brown School

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

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

At the fall 2021 Board of Trustees retreat, Jennifer McFadden, in partnership with co-clerk David Bourns and other members of the committee, led a comprehensive session on Friends decision-making. Slides and sa-

lient points from that retreat session have been engaged with throughout the school year at the MB Governance Committee and in other forums to share with the broader MB community a deeper, common understanding of Friends process.

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

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

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

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

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

staff, administrators, and trustees; and in the larger MB community.

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

Moses Brown School Report

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

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

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

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

isolation and separation of the past two years, opportunities for MB students to meet and learn from Friends were deeply appreciated.

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

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

—JENNIFER MCFADDEN, DIRECTOR OF FRIENDS EDUCATION

Puente de Amigos

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—CAROLYN STONE AND EM MCMANAMY, CO-CLERKS

Sessions

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

As in previous years, planning for this year's New England Friends gathering began right after we said

goodbye in last August. This year we have been using smaller, more focused teams for the work following the procedures approved last fall by the Permanent Board.

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

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

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

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

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

This team then considered what guests should be invited to speak to the gathered body and were delighted to receive enthusiastic acceptance from Regina Renee Ward from Pueblo, Colorado, a member of Ujima Friends Meeting, as our Bible Half Hour presenter.

Regina Renee identifies as a Christian Friend and is someone for whom the Bible is not just a foundational document for our faith tradition, but is a living, breathing, guide to daily living. Our plenary speaker, Emily Provance (New York Yearly Meeting) carries a particular concern for the spiritual benefits of intergenerational opportunities and how to move from aspiration to practice.

The most important aspect of planning is the discernment of Friends with gifts for the many volunteer and staff roles in running the week of events. With the many opportunities for worship, for learning, for meeting to conduct business, for sharing and relationship building, for performance, celebration and play, spanning all age groups, it really takes a village to make Sessions happen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We have been busy! And we are so excited to see you all, to be together again. We are doing something important, something that can only be done in community. As individuals we can live faithfully, but it is only in community that we can live in the peaceable kingdom.
—REBECCA LEUCHAK, CLERK SEPT 2021 TO JAN 2022;
AND PHILLIP VEATCH, CLERK FROM FEB 2022 ONWARD

Young Adult Friends

Young adult Friends have deeply been impacted by the pandemic, especially as many transitioned into or out of college, navigated classes or work spaces that were newly online in or in different formats, experienced a change in jobs, or moved into and out of living situations while negotiating health and safety concerns. During all this uncertainty and hardship, staying connected with other Quakers has been a challenge

for many as schedules are in flux and more on-screen engagement tips the scales of Zoom fatigue. And yet, some young adult Friends have found small and creative ways to maintain connections with each other, finding joy and mutual support during the pandemic.

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

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

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

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

—EMI LINK, COORDINATOR

Youth Ministries

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

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

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

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

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

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

—JANET DAWSON, CLERK

Reports of Representatives to Other Quaker Organizations

American Friends Service Committee Corp.

AFSC promotes “lasting peace with justice as a practical expression of faith in action” in 17 countries and 31 U.S. cities. Initiatives in 2018 included:

- “Love Knows No Borders” demonstration at San Diego border involving 200 faith leaders and echoed in 79 locations nationwide;
- “Gaza Unlocked” focused on Ahmed Abu Artema’s national speaking tour and stories that children in Gaza wrote (*Life Under Blockade*);
- “Healing Justice,” work with released prisoners to ban use of private prisons; and
- “Sanctuary Everywhere,” educational tools and webinars aimed at creating safe communities for immigrants.

AFSC Corporation responded to a proposed Mission Statement in which Friends Relations Committee urges monthly meetings to accompany AFSC staff and communities. Our goal is to link meetings’ ongoing anti-racism work with “de-colonizing practice.”

At the annual meeting, Marc Lamont Hill discussed Palestinian rights and corporate media efforts to censor such discussion. Workshops offered included Healing Justice, Decolonizing the Future, The Great March of Return, Organizing for Migrant Justice, and Advocacy Arising from Community Needs.

FCNL Leadership and AFSC activists considered ways to be symbiotically effective at the legislative and grass roots levels, and we brainstormed ways AFSC might approach climate change in its current strategic planning for next ten years.

—SUBMITTED BY SCOTT RHODEWALT AND CHARLES SIMPSON

Friends Committee on National Legislation

We are glad to report that many NEYM Friends are actively engaged in the work of FCNL. A number of meetings contributed ideas to the biannual Legislative Priorities for the current Congress, which FCNL’s General Committee approved at its annual meeting in November 2018. NEYM’s appointed representatives, plus about ten other New Englanders, participated in the Annual Meeting, which includes presentations, worship, and fellowship as well as business sessions. While in Washington, they visited 24 members of Congress to advocate for the SNAP program. During the year, 12 New England Advocacy Teams lobby members of Congress and educate the public; this year, their focus has been trying to repeal the post-9/11 Authorizations for Use of Military Force. Two FCNL Advocacy Corps members have been working in New England this year: McLeod Abbott, in Lewiston, ME; and Omar Hajajreh in Plainfield, N.H. Many other

Friends and meetings support FCNL financially, read its newsletter, participate in webinars and conference calls with staff, and use the resources on its website. During NEYM Sessions, please take opportunities to meet with FCNL staff: Advocacy Team trainer Sarah Freeman-Woolpert, Major Gifts Officer Sarah Kennedy, and Native American Advocate Lacina Onco.

—BETSY CAZDEN, CHARLOTTE GORHAM, IAN HARRINGTON, REBECCA LEUCHAK, BOB SCHULTZ, STEVE WHINFIELD

Friends Peace Teams

We suffer from a public crisis of faith brought on by the myth that human destructiveness is greater than the power of life. The concept of nuclear winter, that human beings can wipe out all life as we know it, was followed by the concept of environmental devastation—that we actively pursue environmental destruction for our own pleasure. Can we reclaim our faith in the power of life? Can we post a photo of Hiroshima today on our wall, where the grass, trees and birds are back, the people are back, and the city is bustling. This does not diminish the magnitude of the human tragedy of dropping an atomic bomb on a city, but the power of life is greater than any human destructiveness.

Friends Peace Teams calls people to trust and therefore rely on the Spirit of Life. To believe that not only peace is possible, peace with the earth and humanity is the only path to sustainable society. We testify that peace IS possible, reliable and essential, and call on everyone to stand up for and demand the end of state-sanctioned violence and the full commitment to peace with the natural world and humanity. Please join us.

—MINGA CLAGGETT-BORNE

Quaker Earthcare Witness

Quaker Earthcare Witness continues to grow. We continue to attract representatives from yearly meetings that have not sent reps before, and thus expand our community and increase outreach into the wider Quaker community. I have had the privilege of rooming with new reps at two recent meetings, assisted them to feel comfortable in the organization, look forward to returning, and make new friends in the process.

While I was unable to attend the steering committee meeting last fall near Tacoma, Washington, the spring meeting in St. Paul, hosted by the St. Paul and Minneapolis meetings, was particularly deep and meaningful. The connection to the local Quaker communities and the time spent with hosts was a real joy.

Our General Secretary, Shelley Tanenbaum has been active in representing QEW across branches of the Soci-

ety and sharing our love and concern for the earth. She has also placed QEW in a position to sign on to a variety of position papers and legislative proposals to endorse meaningful change and build our visibility within the wider Quaker community. The dialogue across QEW on these proposals has also been useful.

—CHRISTOPHER HAINES, REPRESENTATIVE

Memorial Minutes

Arthur Jablow Fink
March 1, 1947 – April 21, 2021

Arthur Jablow Fink, 74, of Peaks Island, Maine, passed on April 21, 2021.

With his beloved family by his side, he bid farewell in his island home with a fire in the fireplace and candles lit. The family's dear friend and chaplain, Jean Berman, led a simple, collaborative experience honoring Arthur in the sacred time of his spirit crossing over.

Arthur was born and grew up in Manhattan. He attended the Friends Seminary high school. While a student there he volunteered to work on the campus of Friends World College on Long Island as it prepared to open. There he met a group of remarkable and wise Friends who were creating this college. These experiences inspired him to attend Swarthmore College, where he studied physics. He received a master's degree in computer science from Harvard and was a doctoral candidate in artificial intelligence.

When Arthur realized that his doctoral work at Harvard was largely going to serve the military, he left Harvard and went to work at the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in Boston. At AFSC Arthur worked in public relations, hosting his own radio broadcast and discovering a passion for broadcast journalism. Along with a small group of Friends, he researched and published reports documenting the military industrial involvement in education, particularly at Harvard. Arthur's academic and press credentials allowed him to attend conferences on weapons development, where he challenged those developing and funding weapons. He was arrested and jailed several times for his anti-war work. One Friend's inspiration to attend law school was his conviction that Arthur and another Friend, Sukie Rice, would continue to need representation in court.

He had a long career as an international expert in software development and usability. His work was groundbreaking and durable, particularly for its attention to how the user would engage with the software. Arthur was one of the pioneers in "user friendly" programming. He presented widely around the world.

He traveled extensively for work and had a special place in his heart for his cherished Amsterdam and the Netherlands.

Arthur was both a scientist and an artist. He had a passion and a gift for dance photography that took him throughout New England into New York. He was the resident dance photographer at the Bates Dance Festival for more than 12 years. Arthur described dance as his "spiritual gift" which taught him "at a very deep soul level." His portfolio of photographs of dancers captured the dancers' experience as they created their performances. A posthumous show, "Dancing in the Light," at the Spiegel Gallery at Maine Jewish Museum, displayed some of these remarkable images.

In 2013, Arthur was invited to join a group traveling to Auschwitz as the photographer. The group created a visual, musical, and dramatic performance from the journals of Etty Hillesum, who had been interned in the camps as a young woman. His colleagues ultimately performed at the Etty Hillesum Congress in Belgium. An exhibit at the Maine Jewish Museum and at Portland Friends meetinghouse showed some of Arthur's photographs from that trip, capturing the sense that the trees were still impacted by the pain and the cruelty that had happened at the camp. Arthur planned other presentations of the work with a focus on bringing hope and light as we consider dark historical events.

Arthur's first child, Sarah, died as an infant. He carried the grief of this death for the rest of his life and he shared the understanding he gained that each life, no matter how long or short, was whole and was a gift. He brought this experience and wisdom to volunteer for years photographing babies and supporting families whose children had very short lives, died at birth, or were stillborn. Arthur was instrumental in supporting Friends who had a short-lived son to hold a memorial meeting at Portland Friends Meeting. This inspired other older Friends to also honor their own short-lived child.

He celebrated the community of Peaks Island, and often served as the unofficial island photographer, photographing the parades and events for the community to enjoy. Teaching photography courses was a treasured part of his photographic career.

Arthur served on the board of Creative Portland, the Historic Preservation Commission of Portland, and as president of the board of the Merriconeag Waldorf School in Freeport, during which service he oversaw the first capital campaign to design and build what is now the Maine Coast Waldorf School in Freeport. Before moving to Portland, Arthur served on the board of Pine Hill, the Waldorf School in Wilton, N.H. Arthur also served on the board of Abbey of Hope, a group fostering interfaith dialogue, and was an engaged participant in the Northfield Conference, a multi-age, multi-faith, multi-gender spiritual conference held every summer at Northfield-Mt. Herman School in Massachusetts.

For 20 years, Arthur was involved with PechaKucha Portland, a branch of an international story-telling forum begun in Tokyo, which offers opportunities for people to share their passion about ideas and experiences. He served on its board of directors and frequently spoke and mentored other presenters, sharing his expertise in consulting and coaching.

He had more than 50 years of cherished involvement with the Quaker community in New England, serving as the recording clerk for the Yearly Meeting and on several Yearly Meeting committees, including the current committee for revision of Faith & Practice. Arthur first joined Friends at Fifteenth Street Meeting, NY, in high school, and later was a member of Friends Meeting at Cambridge (MA), Monadnock (NH) Quaker Meeting, and Portland Friends Meeting. At Portland, Arthur facilitated a two-year-long process which led Portland to approve same-gender marriages. Portland Friends knew Arthur as a gifted recording clerk, able to capture the deep sense of a meeting. Arthur was admired for his ability to write using precise and eloquent language. This gift started early as a game he and his mother (an editor herself) would play together. With *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White at hand, they would practice boiling down texts by removing words unnecessary to communicate intent, an art he cultivated life-long.

During the pandemic years, Arthur treasured attending meeting for worship on Zoom at Pendle Hill, London, and Amsterdam Friends Meetings. During this time Arthur hosted a "query group," where he would bring a query exploring the intersection of creativity and faithfulness to a group followed by a period of worship-sharing.

Always the thought-provoking questioner in any meeting or conference, he encouraged compassion, exploration, and soulful artistic expression in discernment. At his memorial service, a person shared their conviction that Arthur's super power was asking questions that focused attention in unexpected ways and at times changed peoples' lives.

Arthur liked to tell stories and excelled at it. He often began with personal memories and experiences, then gracefully transitioned to universal truths. Through combining personal and universal, his stories touched others' hearts and minds deeply.

Arthur was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer on his 74th birthday and died seven and a half weeks later. He was remarkably centered, generous, and at peace during this period. He died confident that death was not an end, but a transition.

An memorial meeting was held outdoors on Saturday, October 9, 2021, at the Lions Club on Peaks Island, honoring Arthur's life and legacy and the pure joy he shared so freely.

Arthur was predeceased by his mother, Selma Jablow Fink; his second mother, Sona Holman Fink; his father, Karl Fink; and his infant daughter Sarah.

Arthur is survived by his beloved wife Aaiyn Foster; his second daughter, Alyssa Foster Tabbutt; his son-in-law Kenneth Curry; his grandchildren, Jackson George, Lola Rose, Homer James, and Ophelia Grace of South Lake Tahoe, California; his stepsons Austin and Jonathan Chick and their families; and by his much loved sister, Janet Rose Fink.

Arthur had a private green burial at Portland Friends Meeting Cemetery on April 24, 2021.

PORTLAND FRIENDS MEETING, MARCH 5, 2022

FALMOUTH QUARTERLY MEETING, APRIL 16, 2022

James (Jim) Warren Gould
May 14, 1924 – March 13, 2021

James Warren Gould, beloved member of Sandwich Monthly Meeting, died peacefully on the morning of March 13, 2021, at the age of 96. Jim was raised in an environment of peace and love. His father, Douglas, was a World War I veteran who after the war spoke openly about his contention that all wars are ugly and wrong. Jim's mother, Elsa, became the head of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Jim served in the Army in World War II and was promoted to being an interpreter when officers discovered his language skills. During the War, Jim became a pacifist and dedicated the rest of his life to peace-making. After earning his Master's in international relations, Jim pursued a career in the Foreign Service, having assignments in the Dutch East Indies and China. He later earned a doctorate in his field and went on to teach at Scripps College for 34 years. Though a very humble man, Jim did share his sense of accomplishment from having the opportunity to inspire hundreds of graduate students over the years. Those of us who knew and spent time with Jim can only begin to imagine how much better the world is because of him.

In addition to teaching, Jim worked with countless diplomats for peace, in and outside of the United Nations. From 1990 to 1995, Jim was president of the United Nations Association of Cape Cod. In 2010, he was presented the Ambassador of Peace Award for his lifelong commitment to the United Nations efforts for world peace and justice. In 2017, the Peace Abbey in Millis, MA, presented Jim the International Courage of Conscience Award. Jim was also a great contributor to documenting the history of Cape Cod. He was well known locally as someone who answered questions from all who sought him out.

In midlife, Jim found his spiritual home in the Quaker faith. Jim often spoke about his love for the members of Sandwich Monthly Meeting and for other Quakers. He encouraged Friends to take an active part in peace and social-justice work. Right up to the end of his life, Jim could be seen standing outside the Falmouth Village Green protesting war and violence.

Just as Jim had felt the United Nations could have done more to foster peace, he felt that Quakers needed to become more involved in addressing racism. In his efforts here, Jim found it difficult for Quakers to talk peacefully and productively about racial justice. During the last 16 years of his life, Jim shared his sadness about this issue. He communicated his fervent hopes and prayers for a more involved process of reconciliation among his beloved Friends. As Jim used to say at times, "Let's see what love can do." While we grieve the loss of our beloved friend, none of us will ever forget Jim Gould's inspiring life lived in service, peace, and love.

EAST SANDWICH PREPARATIVE MEETING, JANUARY 23, 2022

SANDWICH MONTHLY MEETING, FEBRUARY 6, 2022

SANDWICH QUARTERLY MEETING, APRIL 23, 2022

Marjorie Leonard Hancock
October 3, 1924 – August 25, 2018

Marjorie Leonard Hancock was born on October 3, 1924, in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI, and died August 25, 2018, at Cooley Dickinson Hospital (Northampton, MA) while living in Leverett, MA. She was a poet, writer, teacher, activist, and Quaker. She was also a wife, mother, friend, and a strong, active presence in the Quaker community with a strong belief in God. A friend recalled that "Her presence in meeting has always been clear. Toward the end of her life her messages were often about love."

As a child, she moved often. Her father was a Navy chaplain and his family moved with him from assignment to assignment. Sailing on a Navy ship to Guam and living there was an important part of her childhood. She loved the sea and sometimes said she remembered feeling safest on board ship, out in the ocean. While living in Guam she met and learned about the Chamorro people [the Indigenous people of the Mariana Islands-ed.]. She lived in or visited many places including the U.S. Virgin Islands; Guam; Shanghai; San Diego and Long Beach, CA; Brooklyn, NY; Shady Nook, ME; and Winchester and Ashfield, MA.

When she met and married her husband, Charles Thomas Hancock, Jr. (1914–1997), a Quaker and conscientious objector, they were members of Scarsdale Monthly Meeting. They moved to Ashfield in 1961, after which her husband took a job at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Soon after that she took a job with the Amherst schools, teaching kindergarten at the Munson Library in South Amherst. They commuted to Amherst together from Ashfield until she was forced to leave her teaching position because she could not get child care for her kindergarten-aged children. In 1965 they settled in Leverett, MA, close to her husband's job as a librarian at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Marjorie's husband had very strong views about many subjects. Marjorie often acted on behalf of his leadings even when her leadings were in a different direction, but when her leadings were powerful, she followed them and he acted on behalf of them. They both believed in the importance of their work for God through the Religious Society of Friends, and there was never any question but that they should advise and consult with each other and support each other's work. They were partners.

They had three children: Charles Thomas III, Dacre, and Sarah. While their children were of school age, Marjorie was employed at home providing child care for the son of a friend, and also engaged in the life of her family and the Mt. Toby meeting. After her husband suffered a heart attack in 1977, friend and meeting member Laura Robinson taught her to drive. Marjorie subsequently gained employment, first in a department store and later at the University. She retired in the mid-1990s to care for her husband, by then retired as well. After her husband's death in 1997, Marjorie participated in the Foster Grandparents Program in the Leverett Schools. She also read her poems on several occasions.

For most of her life Marjorie expressed her feelings and thoughts in poetry and fiction, and later in devotional writings after the manner of Friends. For her memorial meeting in 2018, her children collected some of her poems and writings in a book called *Benchmarks: Thoughts in Passing*, giving a copy to the Mt. Toby meeting library. Her poetry is notable for its joy, gentle humor, and recognition of the earth's beauty, while her writings show insight into the human spiritual condition. Marjorie had an abiding love for the natural world that led to her gardening and caring for animals. She acquired many pets and was herself adopted by wild birds as host and mother. To all creatures, her generous nature and dedication to their welfare were evident.

Marjorie was a pacifist long before she was a Quaker. Marjorie said her ideas about pacifism began when she was around five years old, listening to her father's sermons. An example of her pacifist convictions is the story told by a friend of Marjorie's refusal to participate in air raid drills with the public school class she was teaching in the early 1950s. She refused to have her students participate in drills because she believed young children should not be exposed to issues of war. She was fired from that job because of her anti-war philosophy.

Over the course of her life, Marjorie was active in Friends Meeting at Cambridge (MA), Scarsdale (NY) Monthly Meeting, and at Mt. Toby Monthly Meeting, which she joined in 1964. Marjorie was recognized as a powerful figure among Friends for her spiritual and social insight, her work with children, her ministry in meeting for worship, and her advocacy for peace during the height of the Vietnam war.

She was active in both Mt. Toby Monthly Meeting and New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, serving on many committees in the 1970s. From 1972 to 1975 she served on the Board of Trustees of the Moses Brown School in Providence (the New England Yearly Meeting school built in 1789); the Christian Education Committee from 1971 to 1976; the (ad hoc) Friends Educational Needs Committee from 1976 to 1979, when the committee's work was completed; and as the Mt. Toby representative to the Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee from 1971 to 1976.

Marjorie was an integral part of Mt. Toby's ecosystem. She was a major influence in the life of the meeting for 50 years between 1964 and the 20-teens. She was a fierce spiritual presence in the meeting at the same time her spirituality has been described as "light-hearted." She was always dedicated to the needs of children in the life of the meeting. Marjorie was a loving person all of her life. She was a survivor. She brought a calm. Her guidance was from within, a kind of a purity and clearness of purpose. A family member recalls: "Her way to change seemed to me to be like the steady dropping of water on a rock, the power of continual yet subtle force of spiritual resoluteness and belief in Goodness within All."

During her presentation on her spiritual journey, Marjorie said, "Wherever there is life there is Spirit. We are trying to know God. Each of us is necessary to see God, we need only to open our hearts to listen with our inner ears, to dare to be brave, to be faithful to righteousness." She also said, "I am a willing captive of the Spirit. I do not have to search for God. God is within me. There is an eternity to God and I am part of it." Marjorie Leonard Hancock died August 25, 2018, and was buried in the Mt. Toby Friends Burial Ground on August 28, 2018. Her memorial meeting was held at the Mt. Toby meetinghouse on October 20, 2018.

Choices Fourth Month, 2001 (Marjorie Leonard Hancock)

Joy lurks everywhere; Choose joy.

It peeks around the corners of our lives

Gather it in

Make room for it in your heart, for it wears a loving face.

Step into the circle of light emitted by love.

Let your whole life reflect its beauty.

Pass on its blessings.

Choose joy.

(Poem ©2018, The Estate of Marjorie Leonard Hancock. Used with permission).

MT. TOBY MONTHLY MEETING, JANUARY 15, 2022

CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING, FEBRUARY 5, 2022

Linda J. Lyman
September 25, 1934 – January 8, 2022

Linda J. Lyman left this world on January 8, 2022 at the Gosnell Memorial Hospice House in Scarborough, Maine. She lived independently until the day she entered the Gosnell House of her own volition. She chose her path to the end, directing when she should be medicated, and died a few days after entering Gosnell House as she had lived—on her own terms with intent and deliberation.

Linda was born on September 25, 1934. She grew up attending Lake Forest Friends Meeting in Lake Forest, Ill. She attended many other meetings over the years, Bellingham, WA, being the last before finding her way to southern Maine and our tiny meeting.

Over the years she worked at the Pendle Hill Study and Retreat Center, then served as Friend in Residence at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Center. For 9 years she held a position on the board of Friends Publishing Corporation, which publishes *Friend's Journal*.

In her lifetime, she garnered a variety of amazing experiences. She marched with Martin Luther King Jr in the 1960s, striving to enact change with non-violent protests.

She worked with Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, the world-renowned author of *On Death and Dying*, a work that introduced the five stages of grief and death. This work affected Linda's decisions regarding her own end-of-life choices.

Yet it was her experiences in the natural world that elevated her soul and brought her peace. While working as a family mental health therapist, she would take clients on extended forays into the woods, her favorite being the Boundary Waters of Minnesota. She led people on canoe trips, hiking, and learning the ways of nature.

Linda met her life partner, Marty (Meredith) Walton in 1989 and they shared more than 30 years together, leading a rich life of Quakerism and beyond, with family, friends, and in the outdoor world.

They lived in Kennebunk for nearly 10 years, found our tiny meeting and immediately joined our Quaker community. Linda served as our clerk for 6 years, until Marty's health began to decline. Linda was also involved with various town councils involving dogs on the beach, building a coalition between homeowners and dog people. She also worked monitoring the river and beaches, sampling water for contamination.

When she and Marty moved to Springvale, Maine, they began a relationship with the Unitarian-Universalist church of Springvale, while continuing to be involved in our Southern Maine Friends Meeting. Serving the community has always factored into Linda's life.

When Marty became seriously ill, Linda helped her through her end-of-life care with dignity and choice, never leaving her side until the very end.

She lived alone for another 1½ years, immersing herself in the woods and creatures around her home, feeding a wide array of birds and critters. Her final days in Springvale were involved in orchestrating their care and feeding.

Her legacy and contributions, both to our meeting and her extended community, will be remembered and revered, as she will be.

SOUTHERN MAINE MONTHLY MEETING, MARCH 27, 2022

FALMOUTH QUARTER, APRIL 16, 2022

Earl “Chip” Neal
December 9, 1945 – June 25, 2021

When Chip Neal brought his family to Dover from Maryland in 1978, they loved everything about their new home except the proposed construction of a nuclear power plant in nearby Seabrook.

He had been hired by New Hampshire Public Television to do a nightly news show, having worked his way up from entry-level floorman in a pioneering community college television station to cameraman at WETA in Washington and then director/producer at Maryland Public Television.

Across the Granite State he became known for the segments he produced and hosted on New Hampshire Crossroads, where he spent many years traveling every corner of the state bringing unique New Hampshire features and people to a statewide audience. It was in one of those stories that he coined the phrase “Yankee yard.” His curiosity was sweet-tempered and non-judgmental. He also produced segments for the popular weekly Windows to the Wild outdoor adventures series featuring Willem Lange.

Although he attended the University of Illinois during the Vietnam era, he did not earn a degree until he worked at the University of New Hampshire for NHPTV. He graduated from college the same year his daughter, Amanda, graduated from high school.

He never aspired to go into management. Rather, he always preferred to be hands-on, something son Jamie inherited.

That was reflected in the family’s old farmhouse near the Cochecho River, where they began rearing a few chickens, sheep, and honeybees. After aligning with the Clamshell Alliance opposing the Seabrook Station, he realized the activists he admired the most were all Quakers, and soon he, too, was worshipping in the old meetinghouse, along with children Jamie and Amanda, while his wife Nell continued at First Parish just down the street. Over time, as she felt her spiritual growth being nurtured more through connections with Friends, she, too, became part of the Meeting.

Their social life included visits by boat with other Quaker families living downstream or around Great Bay. Inspired by what he had read about the Amish and a “why not” attitude, Chip determined to try a barn-raising of his own, resulting in a merry one-day celebration that did, indeed, accomplish the task.

Chip was commissioned to create a private documentary profiling Silas Weeks, who had been instrumental in the reopening of the Dover Friends meetinghouse. The interviews, now available on YouTube, remain a touching intersection of the faithful lives of both Silas and Chip.

Many of the qualities of Chip’s spiritual life also infused his professional career. A fellow producer noted that Chip possessed a brilliant communication talent in short-form and long-form storytelling. He not only saw the heart of a story, but let it speak for itself, time and time again. Where most producers

tended to interpret meaning for the viewer, Chip had the unending patience—and absolute stubbornness—never to let that happen in his work. Thanks to his relentless focus, firm discipline, and above all a fabulous sense of humor, time and time again he would dig down until he found the light of truth hiding inside the most humble to the most exalted story, and to let it shine like a diamond in the wide open, all on its own, available and meaningful to the viewer.

As he grew and matured, he more and more thought deeply and broadly about events and phenomena, all with a spiritual bent. Often, this led to rising in the middle of the night to write down his ideas and insights, sometimes as haiku with a snap.

He emphasized the necessity of being centered in the present, explaining, “Life is that thing you’re doing right now.” From that, he had an ability to view difficulties from the side and then provide helpful alternatives to the knot before us.

During his terms as clerk of Dover Friends Meeting, Chip would stand after the closing of worship with the shaking of hands and then, gazing around the room, say simply, “Thank you for sharing your spiritual journey with us this morning— whether spoken or unspoken.”

He loved serving as clerk and treasured Quaker process, especially taking sufficient time in our labors together.

The advance of Parkinson’s interrupted his service to family, Friends, and the wider world, but not his presence. He had often reminded us that in trying to reach a destination while sailing, one had to constantly make adjustments—tacking.

He was also fond of a Navajo prayer:

*All above me peaceful,
all below me peaceful,
all beside me peaceful,
all around me peaceful.*

He passed over peacefully on June 25, 2021, in the comfort of his wife, Nell.

DOVER MONTHLY MEETING, NOVEMBER 21, 2021

DOVER QUARTERLY MEETING, MAY 29, 2022

Edward Anthony Robinson
September 12, 1940 – April 20, 2020

Ed Robinson (79) passed away on April 20, 2020, after a short illness caused by cancer. Ed died peacefully, surrounded by family in the home of his beloved niece, Jessica Sobey, in South Portland. The music of Pavarotti played as the sunlit room dimmed and he took his last breath. Prior to his death, Ed wanted people to know he was filled with love and joy and that his life had been blessed. He cherished all who had a chance to speak with him or send messages in his final days, and he sent deep affection to others he knew would only learn later of his swift passing.

The eldest of the six children of Edward Anthony Robinson and Maud Eva (nee McSweeney) Robinson, Ed was born on September 12, 1940, in the Bronx, NY. The family later moved to nearby Yonkers, where Ed spent much of his childhood. Aspiring to the priesthood, Ed attended Glenclyffe Seminary and High School in Garrison, NY. After graduation, Ed went on to the novitiate in Milton, MA, for investiture into

the Capuchin Franciscan Order. In 1963 he received a B.A. in philosophy from St. Anthony Friary in Hudson, NH, and later an M.S. in theology from St. Mary Immaculate Friary in Garrison, NY. In 1966 Ed was ordained to the Catholic priesthood at Sacred Heart Church in Yonkers, NY. He spent most of his priesthood ministering in the western Pacific islands of Guam and Saipan.

In the later 1970s Ed changed course, choosing to pursue a secular life, first in California and later in Maine. Ed loved to fall in love and was blessed with marriages to three special women, all of whom can vouch for his charm and tenderness as well as his more impossible contours. Ed and his third wife, Carol Schoneberg, enjoyed attending meeting for worship together, but once again Ed returned to his status as a single man towards the end of his life.

In Cape Elizabeth and throughout Greater Portland, Ed worked for decades as a landscape gardener, arborist, and creator of “beautiful vistas.” He was a keeper of bees, as well as a botanist, scholar of philosophy and religion, pontificator of politics, flower distributor, opera lover, Friend, and friend to many humans and to all animals, including the woodchuck who is a permanent resident at Portland Friends Meeting, perhaps due to Ed’s friendship. Ed taught horticulture and philosophy at Southern Maine Community College, where he was a mentor to many of his students. Although he left the priesthood, he never abandoned his spirituality or religious studies. Two Friends have noted that they had many deep conversations with Ed about spirituality, having a common interest in college-level teaching of religion and philosophy. These Friends noted that Ed was an avid listener, genuinely interested in their publications, poetry, and art; they shared a rare spiritual intimacy with Ed. Another Friend noted how rich was Ed’s sharing during Adult Religious Education classes.

Ed readily found a home at Portland Friends Meeting and he took on the care of the cemetery and gardens at the meetinghouse, spending many Sunday afternoons talking with Friends and making plans for improving the grounds. Ed also served on the cemetery committee for many years. His messages during worship often connected with the wonder of nature and the divine that surround us. In his own words, Ed was “happy as a lark” when gardening, a kind of work that allowed him to daydream, one of his primary passions. A true Franciscan, Ed loved the natural world more than its human-made-and-financed counterpart. As “Ye Faithful Gardener,” both the name of his business and the ethos he exuded, Ed found beauty wherever he looked, and he shared that passion with all those he met throughout his life.

He would listen to anyone who had a story to tell, and he had a story for anyone willing to listen. While many facts of Ed’s life are known, much more remains obscured in what his family and friends have come to know as “Edlore.” As his nephew Jonathan has written, “his antics were infamous, his joy infectious, his stubbornness infuriating, and his stories legendary.” His indelible laugh and his sense of wonder mean his absence leaves a great void, which is impossible to fill except through our memories of Ed.

One Friend recalled going to a free rehearsal session of the Portland Symphony Orchestra with Ed and talking about the experience over a glass of red wine at the Press Herald Hotel afterwards. Ed’s enthusiasm for classical music was so great that when the Friend left the conversation for a few minutes, Ed immediately continued talking with others who were at a nearby table.

That was Ed, indeed!

Ed Robinson is survived by his five younger siblings: Liz Smith, Richard Robinson, Meg Robinson (Bob Neff), Marty Robinson, and John Robinson (Eva); as well as by his cousin, Sandy MacDonald; foster daughter, April Crocket, and her family; five nieces and nine nephews; as well as many grandnieces, grandnephews, and countless cousins.

Ed was given the green burial he desired on Wednesday, April 22, 2020, in the Portland Friends Meeting cemetery. He chose the site with family and Friends just the day before he died, a profound experience

for all who were present. He loved the dirt, and to the dirt he was returned—on Earth Day. And on what would have been his 80th birthday, September 12, 2020, Ed's family held a memorial service for him at Portland Friends Meeting, outside by the cemetery he had long cared for.

PORTLAND FRIENDS MEETING, AUGUST 30, 2021

FALMOUTH QUARTERLY MEETING, APRIL 16, 2022

Susan Sayer-Crew
September 1, 1961 – October 30, 2021

If one believes that nature is inherently positive, sometimes impulsive, and brutally honest, then Susan Sayer was a Force of Nature. At her memorial meeting, a former roommate from Cornell recalled Susan as a vibrant young woman who infused spice into her life—both literally (with the different flavors she added to their popcorn) and figuratively. She had a joie de vivre that could not be ignored.

Susan was born in Oswego, New York, on September 1, 1961, and died October 30, 2021. It was at Cornell that Susan met her husband, Jeff Crew. Jeff and Susan were married by a Justice of the Peace in Philadelphia on July 23, 1995. After graduating from Cornell she moved to the Philadelphia area where she was active in the Providence Meeting of Media, Pennsylvania. She advocated for open space in the greater Philadelphia area.

As a member of the Westerly Friends Meeting, Susan frequently coordinated meals at the WARM center. One attender remembers her upbeat and direct welcome when she met him at the WARM shelter and said "Now you are on Team Susan!" One of her aides remembers making mountains of broccoli slaw for 50 people under Susan's tutelage. With her aides and the Ministry and Counsel Committee, Susan made cookies for those in our meeting who felt isolated in the initial phases of the covid-19 pandemic. Recipients of the gift knew they were receiving not just cookies, but Susan's love and care.

Susan dealt with debilitating Multiple Sclerosis for about 15 years, but she spent little time talking about her ailments and chose to practice daily gratitude. From her wheelchair she raised her son, Daniel, and kept her home in order. A few weeks before her death, Daniel was engaged to Soveig Persson. Susan was pleased. She was aided in her endeavors by her characteristic organization and razor-sharp mind, lifelong traits as confirmed by her brothers, elementary-school classmates, friends from her distant past, and co-workers at Swarthmore College who attended her memorial meeting. She recognized her diminishments directly and was constantly making accommodations in order to accomplish her "Great List" of important things to do and see in her life. Everywhere she went, Susan connected with people. Friends from near and far and from all different parts of her life came to visit her on her 60th birthday.

Once at a meeting for worship, Susan shared the perspective that MS slows one's thoughts and provides time and space to reflect on and refine what one says. While that may be true, those who knew her never felt that Susan's mind was slowing. She served as co-clerk of Ministry and Counsel. Susan taught our First Day School young Friends about our testimonies, using the acronym SPICES for Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Service. Having been a facilities planner at Swarthmore College, she understood the optimum use of space and brought this experience to her role on our Building and Grounds Committee. Working on a historic building with few ADA accommodations was challenging, and she often shared her frustration and anger with the committee. In the last days of her life, she willed a restricted gift to make the front entrance of our meetinghouse handicap-accessible. This gift will benefit countless Friends in the years to come.

Toward the end of her life, Susan had a tough time relinquishing control. While planning her own memorial meeting, she stopped and said, "The sad part is I won't be there." But her spirit was indeed there.

The room was filled with music, laughter, fond memories, and heartfelt emotion from those whose lives had been touched by Susan. During the memorial, one Friend shared that, when he thought of Susan, he was reminded of the poem “Miracles” by Walt Whitman, which seemed to capture her outlook:

*Why, who makes much of a miracle?
As to me, I know of nothing else but miracles, ...*

*To me, every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,
Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,
Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with the same,
Every foot of the interior swarms with the same;
Every spear of grass—
the frames, limbs, organs, of men and women, and all that
concerns them,
All these to me are unspeakably perfect miracles.*

It is a gift to see the world through such eyes and it was a gift to know and learn from our Friend, Susan Sayer Crew.

WESTERLY MONTHLY MEETING, FEBRUARY 13, 2022

SOUTHEAST QUARTERLY MEETING, MARCH 20, 2022

Jeanne Theis Whitaker
September 2, 1926 – October 25, 2021

Providence Friends Meeting has lost the gentle and gracious presence of Jeanne Theis Whitaker, who made our meeting her spiritual home for 45 years. She was faithful in attending worship every Sunday, always dressed in simple and functional clothing in the colors she loved—soft mauve, purple, teal, and light gray—the colors of the sky. Hers was a deeply calm and ever steady being. And though she rarely spoke out of the silence, when she did rise to her feet to share a message, Friends present felt anticipation for the great light that she would share with all of us. She spoke slowly and thoughtfully, quietly in a kind of awe, but always with precise articulation—a trait, one might say, of a woman who had spent her career studying and teaching French poetry with its creative exploration of the music of language. On a more basic level, she developed those habits of careful enunciation while gently guiding beginning students of French in accurate pronunciation. Ever the teacher, the guide, in listening to her it always seemed as if, for Jeanne, the very breath and sounding of the words gave physical presence to the message imparted.

She truly loved the children of our meeting, where Jeanne raised her two sons and taught in our First Day School. She was a steadfast and active member of our Peace and Social Justice Committee, sharing the message of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with Friends, both in the context of social-justice action and in those rare but very weighty messages in silent worship on Sundays.

People often said how strong Jeanne was for such a gentle person. But there’s another good word to describe her, and that’s “practical.” She was someone who understood the importance of doing things repeatedly so you can do them well. Lovers of language learning know this and so do good cooks, and Jeanne was both.

She was celebrated in our meeting community for her famous culinary skills, evidenced when preparing delicious baguettes and scrumptious chocolate cakes for potluck Sundays. And she was particularly

proud of her work in organizing and running the meeting's annual yard sale. In these many ways, she served our community with joy and energy.

She brought the qualities of courage, moral fortitude, and passion to her commitment to our Friends' community and the wider world, putting her faith into action by trying to make that world a better place. Beyond our Monthly Meeting, Jeanne was instrumental in creating the American Friends Service Committee's Providence office for Southeastern New England. She was active in demonstrations against the war in Vietnam and participated in draft counseling. For many years she was active in the Fellowship for Reconciliation. And Jeanne participated in a Nonviolence Study Group in the 1970s along with other members of the meeting. All who knew her truly saw in Jeanne a Friend who let her life speak.

Jeanne's friendships in the meeting were many. In her later years when she had moved from Providence to live at Kendal Longwood, she reminisced with tender fondness about so many Friends from Providence meeting, both young and old. She spoke in particularly loving tones of the women in our meeting and the children. But of course, she was warm and gracious with all. With Jeanne, as one Friend shared, you immediately sensed that there was behind those kind eyes and quiet reticence a rich and extensive past and interior life. As she got to know you better, like a blossom she began to open up and share the life lived.

Jeanne's life story was indeed dramatic. She was born in 1926 in the former French African colony of Cameroon. Her parents, Edouard Theis and Mildred Dagar, were Protestant missionaries. They went on to have seven more daughters, so Jeanne became the older sister that the younger ones went to with their worries and enthusiasms. The family lived in Africa for six more years, then moved to France, where they settled in a little mountain town called Le Chambon-sur-Lignon. Her father started a school there in 1938, the Collège Cévenol, and during World War II he and the other local pastor organized the townspeople to hide thousands of Jews from the Nazis. These acts of heroism form a quite well-known chapter in the wartime history of France, and her parents were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations by the State of Israel, an honorific used to describe non-Jews who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save Jews from extermination by the Nazis. In 2010, Jeanne donated her pacifist father's papers to the Swarthmore College Peace Collection. This upbringing and her pride in her family's pacifist legacy was the strong foundation for Jeanne's life-long commitment to social justice.

At the beginning of the war, Jeanne's parents sent her and five of her younger sisters to stay with American families. Jeanne went to live with the family of her pen pal, Trudy Enders, in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. Trudy and Jeanne remained friends for almost 90 years, including the last decade they both spent at Kendal Longwood.

At the early age of 15, Jeanne began her studies in French Literature at Swarthmore College and later became a professor there, meeting and marrying C. Sylvester (Syl) Whitaker. He was a student when they fell in love, and the affair was doubly bold because he was also Black. Jeanne gave up tenure at Swarthmore for the sake of Syl's career move to the University of California Los Angeles where he taught political science and served in University administration. They moved to Los Angeles, but soon after he asked for a divorce. Jeanne gathered up her two sons, returned to the east coast, and took substitute teaching jobs to get by. Through the support of a former Swarthmore dean who had become president of Wheaton College in Massachusetts, she was hired as an assistant professor in a tenure-track position at Wheaton, rising to the rank of full professor of French Literature.

Although after their divorce her ex-spouse all but disappeared from the family's life, she kept in close touch with his relatives, and they loved her. Every year she would drive her two boys to Pittsburgh to visit the extended family. These trips were very important to her and to her sons because they kept the boys in touch with their Black identity. Jeanne also wanted to make sure they were connected to their French heritage as well. In addition to frequent short visits to France with the boys in tow, she took a

sabbatical from Wheaton so the three of them could live there for a year and get to know her very large extended family.

Through all the challenges, Jeanne had always been a practical woman. She was clear-eyed and level-headed, and that became especially valuable as she juggled an academic career with home life and parenting her energetic and talented sons. In her later years, when she retired from Wheaton, she had a clear plan: move to Providence to be near the Friends Meeting. Downsizing, she brought her very large personal library of French literature to the Providence Friends meeting, where they were set out on many tables in the social room in hopes that some might find a home. She later found another generous way of distributing them by offering them for free to graduate students in the French Department at Brown University.

She could be a great source of support for others, and particularly to women. She identified her feminist convictions with her start of teaching at Wheaton. She loved encouraging female students and colleagues, and was excited to serve as a delegate to the World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985. Jeanne was a great supporter of the women in her family life, her daughter-in-law, and her granddaughter, and was thrilled in her last year of life to become the great-grandmother to a baby girl.

Ever the pragmatist, after a decade of life in Providence, she started worrying about having to drive so much, because she had a condition that made her hands shake. She visited her life-long friend Trudy at Kendal and decided that would be a good place for her. When she suffered a series of falls that left her unable to walk on her own, she accepted a move to Kendal's assisted-living wing without complaint. In a second bout with pneumonia, the first having put her in the hospital, she made it clear that she never wanted to go back to a hospital again. She and those she loved knew what was coming. At her bedside or via Zoom, her family and friends were able to say their goodbyes and to give her the death she wanted.

We who knew Jeanne Whitaker might close with these words:

What a gentle spirit but strong-willed person. For Providence Monthly Meeting, Jeanne still stands as a beacon of the moral beloved community. In her long life spanning continents and cultures, she lives on with us today, a Friend who truly understood and followed George Fox's admonishment to Quakers, written in 1656:

Be patterns and examples in all countries, places, islands, nations wherever you come: that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone whereby in them you may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.

She walked in the Light and she brought light into all of our lives. She would tell us that we can still carry that light within us even now that she's gone.

PROVIDENCE MONTHLY MEETING, FEBRUARY 13, 2022

SOUTHEAST QUARTERLY MEETING, MARCH 20, 2022

2022 State of Society Report

Re-weaving the fabric of our community is like darning a sock that is worn and has holes, yet still made of strong material. Love, listening, and discernment can create strong threads to close the gaps. In the end, it will be familiar, though changed, comfortable, resilient and durable. Friends Meeting at Cambridge

The COVID pandemic in its second year, loomed large over us all and all we did. There was no individual and no meeting community unaffected. Buffeted by the ebb and flow of the virus and its many, increasingly contagious, variants, meetings sought new ways to hold their communities together in the face of enforced social distance and isolation. Many meetings maintained an on-line presence, allowing shared worship, if only in small images on a device screen. Some were heartened by the depth of spirit possible with these arrangements while others found the technology intrusive on gathered worship. Still others chose not to participate in Zoom worship at all. Where in-person gatherings were possible, some gathered in hybrid sessions, others chose separate in-person and on-line worship. Some explored creative ways of safely gathering together outside.

Throughout, Friends deeply grieved the loss of connection one with another in familiar and beloved worship spaces and in unstructured social time or over shared food at a potluck. A vital knowing felt lost in the inability to be physically with others in our sacred spaces. Not offsetting, but a counterpoint, was the opportunity on-line to welcome distant Friends and those whose physical status prevented in-person participation.

While we are grateful for the use of technology to connect us with Friends near and far who have joined us in this manner, the loss of hallway chat, to some degree even with those present in the Meetinghouse, keeps us feeling distant from each others lives and individual stories. (Putney Friends Meeting)

Our children were particularly impacted by the loss of in-person gathering. In meetings that were able to implement new ways of engaging children, either on-line or with creative, outdoor activities, the results were often joyful. But these were the exceptions. During 2021, First Day School and other children's programming largely ceased across New England. Where children met separately without the usual contact with the adults, this contributed to a sense of fracture from the whole. The absence of their energy and promise was mourned.

Difficulty attracting and engaging new and younger families and children underscores a common concern among many meetings that their meetings are aging. Some meetings have lost long and faithful members and their loss resonates within these communities as they are challenged to sustain and strengthen. Some have been concerned about their long-term viability in light of the declining numbers.

This past year was heavy with the deaths of weighty Friends. The ... clerk noted that a generation is now mostly gone. This we recognize with great humility and must ask ourselves: Are we modest, humble and resilient enough to step into the path of eldership and knowledgeable membership? (Sandwich Monthly Meeting)

For some meetings, the second year of COVID brought opportunities to make major changes in how they use their buildings, taking on major infrastructural repairs to improve energy efficiency or structural repairs so that they will be able to continue to use the building once they can meet inside again.

There is a continuing transition away from pastored meetings in rural areas with dwindling populations. In the past year, Durham meeting decided to sell their parsonage. After deep discernment, Winthrop Center decided to sell their meetinghouse.

[D]uring the pandemic, worshiping largely online, we found, to our surprise, that our spiritual connections grew stronger and deeper. We gained a sense of ourself as a Meeting unconnected with our meeting-house. (Winthrop Center Friends Church)

With the continuing need for on-line and/or hybrid worship, Friends have experimented with new forms of worship. Friends in both formerly pastored and formerly unprogrammed meetings are finding new ways for members to share in care of worship, including using recorded music instead of singing together, beginning with queries or quotes to center the worship, and multigenerational worship experiences.

There has continued to be a strong commitment to support and advocate for needed societal changes in keeping with our testimonies. The on-line environment offered focus in small groups and new opportunities for connection spanning geographic distances. Particularly this year there has been an emphasis on Indigenous concerns, including supporting the Yearly Meeting's Apology to Native Americans, anti-racism work and the broad issue of climate change and protecting the environment. Meetings have supported the work of devoted individuals and groups in these areas through formal letters of support and care and accountability committees. Engaging with other faith groups working to address social justice concerns at the community level remains a priority for many meetings.

Consistent as a practice across all meetings is the wish to ground our work in love for one another and through seeking the guidance of the Divine. When conflict has arisen, meetings have been challenged to practice patience and forbearance with each other, trusting that conflict can provide openings for new growth. At times, meetings have sought help from outside their meeting to address particularly stuck points. Always, there has been a commitment to reach deep beyond the differences to something more eternal.

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

The State of our Society in 2021 reflects both the disruptions that the COVID pandemic has caused and the hope that nonetheless endures. We have moved into a more virtual environment and direct experience of each other has become more difficult. Despite this, resilience has shone through as we have worked towards building deeper connections and continued the work of living faithfully into the Light in our fractured world. There is a sense of being part of a larger unfolding that requires love, patience and persistence, all of which is nourished by those strong connections to each other and to the Divine that are the roots of our faith.

*We don't know how our path will unfold. We reach, we try, we pray.
We await the further leadings of the Spirit and remain under the care of the Spirit. (Hanover Friends Meeting)*

Epistles

General Epistle

The Epistle of the 362nd Annual Sessions of the New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

To all Friends everywhere:

From the 6th through the 11th day of the Eighth Month, 2022, Friends gathered at Castleton University, as well as by videoconferencing, to hold our Annual Sessions. We acknowledged that we met on unceded land of the Abenaki people, now known as Castleton, Vermont, and we heard from the chiefs of the four recognized Vermont Abenaki tribes. We gathered together for the purpose of creating a sense of community, worshiping together, doing business, and envisioning our future. Our theme for this year was, “This is the Hour: How does the Spirit find you?”

This year’s meeting has been our first since 2019 where some of us have been able to join together in one location. This was also our inaugural “hybrid” Sessions, which has incorporated both attenders at Castleton and attenders who have joined via videoconferencing. We were blessed to have 350 individuals registered to attend in Castleton, and 167 registrations for on-line participants, for a total of 517 attenders. This number included 70 youth of high school age or younger, and 33 Friends representing Quaker organizations or visiting from other yearly meetings, including from outside the United States, notably Belize, Bolivia, Cuba, Ireland, Kenya, and Mexico.

We were deeply grateful for the tremendous expertise, patience, and grace of our technical support team. We were also thankful for the team that allowed us to practice “language justice” by offering simultaneous translation into and out of Spanish.

We continued our practice of financially supporting the gathering using a “pay-as-led” approach, inviting all to attend regardless of financial means. Youth of high school age and younger were invited without charge. Our youth programs are still in the process of restoration after the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Numbers have been down significantly from where they were before. However, the young participants in the 2022 Sessions showed great energy and enthusiasm for the adventure of being together. Youth programs are clearly still vital.

In coming together at this year’s Sessions, we have had to rebuild a sense of community that has been damaged by years of pandemic-related separation, and by the assaults of our unjust economic and social system on our sense of safety and connection. We had to ask each other: “How are you doing, Friends? What has been on your heart?” The leaders of our intergenerational opening celebration guided us in releasing the “Big Feelings” that we brought with us, creating a communal collage of them, in order to sink into clearness to listen and discern. This work continued during our intergenerational and interactive Plenary, led by Emily Provance, who engaged and united us through story and song, questions and discussions, emphasizing connection, love and mercy.

As we moved into doing the work of our Annual Sessions, Regina Renee Nyégbéh of Ujima Friends Meeting ministered to us daily, challenging us to engage with Bible verses which asked us about how we listen to and answer God’s call. Are we truly listening? Do we act on what we hear and are shown? Are we quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry? Are we aware that we can move too fast but also that we can move too slowly?

Throughout this gathering, we wrestled with the questions raised by our theme, “This is the Hour,” reflecting our sense of urgency about the enormous challenges that we and all of the world’s people face at this time: dismantling Empire, and healing the immense damage that it has caused, leading to racial, economic, and social injustice and the destruction of the planet.

As we engaged in the business of the Yearly Meeting, we realized that seeking God’s guidance and practicing obedience to the Divine will is hard work for us. Our sense of urgency often leads us to reenact the ways of Empire. Humble listening was our way through. We strove to listen through the personal pain and experience of beloved Friends as we wrestled with numerous issues related to how our Yearly Meeting answers the call to promote racial, social, and economic justice.

The Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Group asked the whole body of Friends to take up the ministry of naming the patterns of oppression and faithfulness among us here at Sessions. Our Presiding Clerk made time for these noticings to be aired.

We addressed issues of right relationship with the Indigenous peoples of our region and beyond. These included the distribution of our letter of apology to Native peoples of our region, the northeastern United States, and responding to the call to join the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative. We were inspired by reports of Friends United Meeting ministries in Belize, Kenya, and Ramallah, Palestine, which are supported by NEYM and individual meetings and Friends. Friends have been both complicit in cultural imperialism and have taken part in building up lasting institutions and programs run by local people. We are humbled by the contrast. We were reminded that “America” means continents, not a country.

Our NEYM representatives to the Board of Friends United Meeting reported that the conversation with FUM over the discrimination against unmarried couples and those in same-gender relationships in their personnel policy is continuing. They report that trust is being built.

With regard to the NEYM Faith and Practice draft chapter on marriage, a listening session took place in which Friends openly discussed concerns about inclusion. One of the issues raised was a concern for the potential invisibility of people in committed polyamorous relationships. The Faith & Practice Committee responded with new language to this and other issues, and the chapter received its requested preliminary approval.

We felt a concern for the nurture of the spiritual life of Friends. In our continuing exploration of how to fulfill the work of Ministry and Counsel, we heard proposals for experimenting with support for ministry and eldering throughout the Yearly Meeting. We also want to support local meetings, and to evaluate the Quarterly meeting structure.

New England Yearly Meeting celebrates its 30-year friendship with Cuba Yearly Meeting. Three Friends from NEYM were able to attend Cuba’s Yearly Meeting sessions this spring and were warmly received. We were deeply moved by the sufferings currently experienced by Cuban Friends, and by Cubans as a whole.

As we deeply listened to these and other issues, we found God’s grace swelling our hearts with love. We needed the insights, prayers, and gifts of everyone to seek and find unity on the ways forward.

Thank you, Friends, for your good listening to our condition. We are eager to hear from you about your own place in the great journey. Be blessed, always, with God’s presence and love in all your work, and all your ways.

Faithfully, your Friends of New England Yearly Meeting
Bruce Neumann, Presiding Clerk

Junior Yearly Meeting K–3

Dear Friends,

We are a group of 15 Quakers from Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade, gathering for the first time since 2019 for the New England Yearly Meeting at Castleton University in Castleton, VT USA. This week we gathered with the intention of building and understanding our community.

We spent time in this smaller group in addition to the larger group, which included our older members of JYM—the 4th, 5th, and 6th graders. For many of us, it was our first time coming together as a part of this community. We played name games to learn more about each other at the beginning of the week. It did not take long for us all to start making friends and having fun together. We loved starting the day off as a big group, with singing, worship, and Bible 10 minutes. Some of our favorite songs were “All God’s Critters,” “Bim Bam,” “I am an Acorn,” and “The MTA Song.” Getting to sing and dance together was special, something that is very hard to do over Zoom. We got to sing these songs all week, together and even with the middle school group, JHYM.

Snack time, of course, was important. Juice boxes, crackers, and fruits were a big hit, but the most fun snack of all was the ice cream that we made as a group. We also had fun activities to look forward to in the afternoon, like tie dye, capture the flag, kickball, and water day! Water day was a fun way to cool off after a few really hot days, and we all worked together to make sure that the staff were absolutely drenched by the time pickup came around. Crafts and stories were very popular in the afternoon, too. We made pipe-cleaner bracelets, finger-knitting creations, and sock puppets. We read a book called “The Big Orange Splot” which told the story of a once neat and clean street, where all of the houses were just the same. This all changed as the characters in the story began creating the houses of their dreams. We realized how beautifully unique we all are, and how fun life is when we embrace each other—no matter how wacky and colorful we like to be. We drew the houses of our dreams and taped them to the wall, to represent our beautiful community and how unique we each are. We asked to read this book again at least 4 different times.

Outside of program, we had a lot of fun playing with our new friends, riding in the golf carts on the college campus, swimming in the pool, riding bikes, and of course showing off our newly temporarily tattooed arms and legs. We are so happy that we finally got to see each other after a long couple of years. Saying goodbye to our friends is sad, but we are excited to see each other again in the future.

Love,
JYM K-3 Children & Staff

Junior Yearly Meeting Grades 4 through 6

Dear Friends,

We are a group of 14 Quakers going into grades 4, 5, and 6 who came together for New England Yearly Meeting from August 6 to 11, 2022. Because of COVID, it has been three years since we’ve been together in person, so we had to make this year really fun.

We started by learning each others' names with the Beanie Baby game. We played lots of other games including Wax Museum, Vampire, Blob Tag, and Movement Telephone. One of our favorite traditions is JYM ball, which we enjoyed sharing with newer friends.

Every morning, we met in the gym for morning meeting, which included announcements, Bible ten minutes, and lots of singing. Wednesday morning, Gretchen Baker-Smith visited our group and led us in a wonderful clay meditation.

We didn't only have fun with just our group. Sometimes we joined our K-3 friends, like when we played Capture the Flag, made tie-dyed shirts, played kickball, and had Water Day, which was also the day the sixth graders went to the lake with the junior high kids. The ice cream at the dining hall was good, but not as good as the ice cream we made with the K-3 group on Tired Tuesday. Sure it was melty, but it was good!

When we were not in program, we enjoyed time with our families in the playing games like Uno, riding bikes, and swimming in the pool. We liked going to the coffee house, which is like a talent show for kids and adults. River performed and was part of the Disruptive Behavior Committee.

We were sad to leave each other, but we know it will be fun to be together next year.

In Love and Light,

The 4th, 5th, and 6th graders of JYM, represented by Alice, Gabriel, Hannah, and River

Young Friends

Dear friends one and all,

We, as Young Friends, began this week in turmoil. The COVID-19 pandemic has left our community, like so many others, in need of rebuilding connections and finding unity once more. We have struggled to find a common wavelength, to once again be united in Quaker community, sharing in our collective joy and labors of justice. However, we were stalwart in our intentions to once again see ourselves in the light of shared love. So we, the 17 high school aged Young Friends of New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM), met together at Castleton University in Castleton, Vermont from the days of August 6 to August 11, 2022. Though bombarded by brutal heat, which left many tired, sweaty, and possibly a bit sunburned, we set about the work of repairing.

In our opening celebration on Saturday, Gretchen Baker-Smith shared with us an important message on how our gifts and ministry can touch the hearts and futures of so many. Even the perceived smallest of ministries can act as the strongest of cornerstones for a community or a cause. Her words gave us strength and courage, guiding us to use our gifts to restore our grieving community.

On Sunday we opened the day with intergenerational worship. We were asked, as individuals, to write our emotions and thoughts on pieces of tissue paper and to then join them with our greater NEYM family in one giant collage of hopes, dreams, appreciations, and grief. We were led to consider, especially, this grief. We grappled, in grief, with lost experiences and frayed community. We were asked to recognize that grief is not something we should seek to forget. It should be embraced, it should build our communities to greater heights and teach us its lessons. We had the burden to use these lessons that same morning when we returned to the program and began to sing.

That morning we were compelled to consider a favorite youth song. The community was informed of the history of the song's creator who was also responsible for the creation of Minstrel Shows, which featured

harmful caricatures of Black people, represented by white people in “blackface.” The community considered how to respect many member’s joyous memories associated with the song, while also acknowledging the many people harmed by the stereotyped and regressive attitude encouraged by racist media such as Minstrel Shows. This experience showed a common theme seen in Young Friends this week; how difficult situations and walking with each other in them can tie us closer in community.

We also reached outside our corner of Young Friends to seek connection. Later that day we joined our friends in Junior Yearly Meeting and Junior High Yearly Meeting for electives such as capture the flag and creation of shrinky dinks, which are works of art made from melting plastic into wild and mysterious shapes. Further, on Monday morning, we engaged with our younger friends in an art project led by Young Friends Coordinator Maggie Fiori. With Maggie, we participated in Monotyping, a process where a thick plastic sheet is painted, then a piece of paper placed atop it to capture some facsimile of the paint put to plastic. Many Young Friends found this a great outlet for releasing stress and any collected negative energy.

Tuesday saw us headed to a local lake. We engaged in card games, conversation, and swimming at the lake. We talked with friends and youth programs’ staff, and relaxed alongside other youth in the broader Yearly Meeting. This joy in the community brought us closer, showing us that joy is also needed to build a strong community.

That afternoon we had the pleasure of building a bridge. However, the group’s general lack of carpentry skill meant it had to be a metaphorical bridge, for our friend Gretchen Baker-Smith. Gretchen is retiring from her over 30 years of ministry as a youth coordinator for New England Yearly Meeting. Gretchen has done so much, for so many youth and youth programs’ staff across the larger Yearly Meeting. She has inspired so many to share their gifts. She acts as a shining example of what one individual can do for a community; her honesty, her care, her amazing hugs all given to her community with the compassion of all her heart. Gretchen will be missed in her role, but we as a community give the warmest hopes of happy rest and continued joy to our dedicated lighthouse of love, Gretchen Baker-Smith.

It is in this spirit of care of community and honesty that the youth of Young Friends must shine a light on some concerns we have for our greater New England Quaker community. Tuesday morning, Young Friends joined in on Meeting for Business. Young Friends were present for discussion on two items of business. The first was an update on, and response to a letter of apology that the Yearly Meeting had sent to many local Indigenous Tribes. The letter conveyed the deep sorrow for our and our ancestors’ role in colonial oppression towards Indigenous peoples. The second item dealt with delving into Yearly Meeting records on how our Quaker forebears were involved with Indigenous Boarding Schools, seeking how Quakers were involved in teaching and financing these schools. Schools which harmed Native Communities by destroying culture and forcefully teaching assimilation.

Many Young Friends were troubled by aspects of these items. A few Friends even asked to stay behind at business meetings in order to voice these concerns to the rest of our community. It seemed to some among our community that these actions were more related to resolving the guilt of our community’s involvement and not to the seeking of change and restorative justice for Indigenous peoples. These concerns arose from Young Friends in view of how much importance was put on firmly quantifying the contributions of New England Quakers to these Boarding Schools. It is nearly impossible to quantify the damage done by colonial powers to Indigenous peoples. How can one put a price on what amounts to attempted, and in some cases successful, cultural genocide. In the process of the Yearly Meeting asking merely what our contributions were, we can be seen to be ignoring the larger needs of the Indigenous Community outside our Quaker community.

In further reflection undertaken Tuesday night many voiced confusion and frustration at the length of time it has taken for the Meeting to act. The Quaker process of decision-making has beauty in how it

seeks group discernment and unity. However, when many years of sessions must be spent to write only a few paragraphs, we do not leave time to discuss and organize action in response to the need for justice.

As Young Friends we ask all of our fellow Quakers to get to work. To seek out, learn from, and support the activism of those who work for Indigenous issues in the present. We ask that our greater Quaker family note the abundance of issues that Indigenous populations in not only the United States face, but those issues faced by Indigenous populations abroad. Populations who are affected by the same colonial oppression. See these issues and act for those in the here and now; for those who are losing their land at this very moment; for those who can not receive proper justice for lost loved ones at this very moment. We must examine the past to acknowledge our culpability, but that examination and acknowledgment mean nothing if we can not help those who are still suffering in our present day.

This Young Friends community also brought concerns towards how the spirit conveyed in Quaker testimony this week centered on a Christian interpretation of the spirit. We in Young Friends have found a more complete understanding of our community through the experience and testimony of those Friends among us who share different theological perspectives. Perspectives that differ from more common Christian interpretations of the spirit. A barrier is created when Friends who have come to our community without the knowledge-base of Christian theology must break through Christian language to find their own understanding of Quaker testimony. Young Friends ask that our wider community examine their use of Christian language in business to support those Quakers among us who have entered our space with different perspectives on the light of the spirit.

We as Young Friends recognize the grief that our community faces, but as our intergenerational worship on Sunday morning taught us, grief must walk with us. To find comfort in our grief is to seek actions from its cause, not to find ways to dissolve it. We walk in grief with the rest of our New England Yearly Meeting family.

The Young Friends of NEYM have grown in community through our struggles and our joys this week. We are dedicated to the ministry of helping our Yearly Meeting grow and repair all facets of our Quaker community and in helping any and all across our world to find justice, peace, and joy. We hope to serve in ministry to you as you have to us.

In our grief and in our hope,

The Young Friends of New England Yearly Meeting

Epístola de Los Amigos (Cuáqueros) en Cuba

Gibara 19 de febrero del 2022

A todos nuestros Amigos Cuáqueros:

Acogidos en el amor al que nos tienen acostumbrados en la comunidad de Gibara, su mar y su aire que purifica nuestros cuerpos, que han sufrido durante dos largos años que nos mantuvieron distantes por la pandemia mundial, y convocados por el lema “Unidos sirviendo al Señor” y el texto: “Todos los que habían creído estaban juntos, y tenían en común todas las cosas; y vendían sus propiedades y sus bienes, y lo repartían a todos según la necesidad de cada uno,” celebramos nuestra 94 Asamblea General de la Junta Anual reconociendo que ha habido un esfuerzo en tiempos tan difíciles en el sentido financiero, incluso para hacer esta reunión; más la fuerza del Espíritu Santo nos impulsó a estar juntos otra vez ¡Que alegría nos reunimos otra vez en la casa del Señor!

El encuentro produjo que se mezclaran sentimientos de gozo al recibir a los que llegaron y añoranza por tantos rostros que no están, sentimos la ausencia de nuestros Pastor Ramón González – Longoria Escalona con sus oportunos consejos y sus aportes espirituales de gran peso en las decisiones de la iglesia. Recibimos la donación de la Familia González – Longoria Concepción de su biblioteca personal que contribuirá a la formación de nuevas generaciones; patrimonio que recibimos con amor.

Las visitas de las hermanas Christel Marie Jorgenson, Mary Randolph Hopkins y Mary Rebecca Leuchak-Monroe de Nueva Inglaterra ha sido bálsamo para nuestras heridas en este tiempo de duelo por la pérdida de tantos hermanos valiosos.

Todos los mensajes y estudios bíblicos giraron alrededor del texto que nos convocó en esta ocasión en Hechos 2:44–45.

Ha sido motivo de alegría recibir un certificado de agradecimiento del Puente por los 30 años de hermandad espiritual, así también un proyecto bajo el nombre del Pastor Ramón Andrés González – Longoria Escalona que recibirá fondos para ayudar al sustento de nuestros pastores y misioneros promovido por la familia, en especial por Marcos González Concepción. También fue motivo de gozo el reconocimiento de los dones ministeriales de nuestra hermana Ailsa Pavón López

En la luz
Junta Anual de los “Amigos Cuáqueros” en Cuba.

Cuba Yearly Meeting Epistle

Gibara, Cuba; February 19, 2022

To all our Quaker Friends:

As always, we were welcomed by the love of the Gibara community, the sea and the air purifying our bodies, after suffering for two long years, separated by a global pandemic. We have been called together by the theme “United in the service of the Lord” and by the text “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.” We are gathered for the 94th General Assembly of our Yearly Meeting. We recognize that even to bring this meeting together has been a great effort in such difficult economic times; but the strength of the Holy Spirit moved us to be together again. What a joy to meet again in the house of the Lord!

The gathering brought mixed feelings of joy in receiving those who came, and longing for so many faces which are not with us. We feel the absence of our Pastor Ramón González-Longoria Escalona, with his helpful advice and his weighty spiritual counsel in the decisions of the church. We have received from the González-Longoria Concepción family the gift of his personal library which will contribute to the formation of new generations; it is an inheritance which we accept with love.

The visit of Christel Marie Jorgenson, Mary Randolph Hopkins, and Mary Rebecca Leuchak, our sisters from New England, has been a balm for our wounds in this time of mourning for the loss of so many dearly loved brothers and sisters.

All the messages and Bible studies concentrated on the text which called us together at this time, Acts 2:44–45.

It has been a source of joy to receive a certificate of thanksgiving from Puente de Amigos for thirty years of spiritual fellowship, and also to approve a fund under the name of Pastor Ramón Andrés González-Longoria Escalona, to help sustain our pastors and missionaries, promoted by the family, and in particular by Marcos González Concepción. It was also a source of joy to recognize the gifts in ministry of our sister Ailsa Pavón Lopez.

In the Light,

Yearly Meeting of the Quaker Friends in Cuba.

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Z



New England Yearly Meeting of Friends

901 Pleasant Street, Worcester, MA 01602-1908
voice: 508-754-6760 • fax: 877-257-2834 • website: www.neym.org

Accounts Manager

Frederick Martin
508-754-6760
accountsmanager@neym.org

Events Coordinator

Elizabeth Hacala
740-478-2539
events@neym.org

Friends Camp Director

Anna Hopkins Buller
207-445-2361
director@friendscamp.org
www.friendscamp.org

Office Manager

Sara Hubner
508-754-6760
office@neym.org

Junior YM/Junior High YM Coordinator

Kara Price
508-997-0940
kara@neym.org

Meeting Accompaniment Group Clerk

Sarah Gant
617-964-9775
accompaniment@neym.org

Permanent Board Clerk

Leslie Manning
207-319-0342
pbclerk@neym.org

Presiding Clerk

Rebecca Leuchak
clerk@neym.org

Program Director

NiaDwynwen Thomas
978-886-7179
nia@neym.org

Treasurer

Robert Murray
treasurer@neym.org

Yearly Meeting Secretary

Noah Merrill
617-615-6396
ymsec@neym.org

Teen Ministries Coordinator

Maggie Nelson Fiori
978-382-1850
maggie@neym.org