

Permanent Board Meeting

Held at Durham Friends Meeting and over Zoom Video Conference

November 5, 2022

PB 22-77: Opening Worship

Friends opened with a period of worship.

PB 22-78: Clerk's Welcome

The Clerk reminded Friends that the Noticing Patterns wg (NPwg) is under the care of Permanent Board and she urged the Permanent Board's attention to reminders about how we can engage in the practice during PB meetings and elsewhere, as presented by members of the NPwg.

PB 22-79: Roll Call (list updated as of 9/1/22)

The recording clerk called the roll: **Bold** = present in the room; underline = present on Zoom.

Leslie Manning, PB Clerk; **Susan Davies**, PB Recording Clerk; Kimberly Allen; Tom Brenner; Christopher Gant; Beth Hansen; Ian Harrington; Roger Jasaitis; Carolyne Lamar Jordan; **Meg Klepack**, Frances Lightsom; Ed Mair; Christopher McCandless; Jean McCandless; Bob O'Connor; John Reuthe; Aaron Sakulich, Martha Schwope; Liesa Stamm; Willa Taber; Eleanor Warnock; Diane Weinholtz; Donn Weinholtz; Morgan Wilson; **Kathleen Wooten**;

Ex-Officio: Scott Drysdale (Finance Clerk); Rebecca Leuchak (Presiding Clerk), **Noah Merrill** (YM Secretary); Robert Murray (Treasurer); Elizabeth Reuthe (Secretary's Supervisor); Bruce Neuman (Past YM Presiding Clerk); Sarah Gant, (NEYM Meeting Accompaniment)

Regrets: Peter Bishop; Darcy Drayton; Martin Forsythe; Joyce Gibson; Anna Radocchia; Newell Isbell Shinn; Carole Rein; Mary Zwirner

Visitors: **David Coletta**, Audiovisual Host, **Mey Hasbrook**, **LouAnn MacDonald**, **Honor Woodrow**, **Maille Wooten**, Jackie Stillwell, Deana Chase, Em McManamy, LVM Shelton, Don Campbell, John Wojtowicz, Lisa Graustein, Susannah Schell, Marian Dalton, Rob Spivey, Carl Williams, Pamela Therrien, Rob Watt, Sarah Smith

PB 22-80: Noticing Patterns moment—Lisa Graustein, representing the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness work group, encouraged Friends to use the

sentence stems to voice what they notice during the PB meeting. Noticing might include observations of faithfulness, or moments of harm or oppression.

PB 22-81: Leslie Manning, PB Clerk reviewed the agenda. Friends offered no additions.

PB 22-82: Approval of Minutes for September 17, 2022, PB Meeting and October 19, 2022, Called PB Meeting

The minutes from the PB meetings of September 17, 2022 and the Called PB meeting of October 19, 2022 were distributed in advance documents for review. Friends offered no changes or questions.

Friends Approved both sets of minutes.

PB 22-83: Final Approval of 2022 NEYM Sessions Minutes (Edited 2022 NEYM Minutes appended)

Bruce Neuman, Past NEYM Presiding Clerk, clerked this item of the PB agenda for final approval of remaining minutes from the 2022 Sessions. Discernment and approval of most of the unapproved minutes, post-Sessions, occurred at the September 17, 2022, PB meeting. Bruce Neuman requested that Friends approve the remaining minutes as described in the appended excerpt of remaining 2022 NEYM Sessions Minutes. The appended document presents non-controversial minutes for approval under a Unity Agenda; Minute 509 was discussed but not approved at the last PB meeting; and Minute 904 was not part of PB's original consideration but was suggested to be added.

Friends Approved all Unity Agenda minutes

NEYM Minute 509: Laying down of the Committee on Racial Social and Economic Justice (RSEJ). Bruce Neuman explained that the committee is not currently populated and ambiguous conclusions remained after Sessions about next steps to continue the work. Minute 509 lifts up the long history and work of RSEJ and acknowledges the pain felt by long-time committee members at the laying down of the committee.

Friends Approved

NEYM Minute 904: Minute of noticing a pattern of oppression

Friends approved

PB 22-84: YM Treasurer's Report

Robert Murray, YM Treasurer, reported on the YM status for the close of the fiscal year. He will post an update to the YM website in December and will hear questions in February.

Preliminary numbers indicate that expenses significantly exceeded revenue. This was not unexpected for a report prior to the end of the fiscal year, after which numbers are expected to be better. More detail will be available in February.

PB 22-85: Presiding Clerk's Report (Report appended)

Rebecca Leuchak, YM Presiding Clerk, reported on her role as YM Clerk, and on her role as clerk of Coordinating and Advisory committee (C&A).

- Rebecca reported on a concern about a proposed upgrade and expansion of athletic fields at Moses Brown School (MBS). YM owns the land but rents it to MBS. MBS owns the buildings. The Providence Friends Meeting (PFM) property adjoins the MBS, within a residential neighborhood. The neighborhood perceives MBS as a “Quaker organization” due to its long and close relationship to NEYM and PFM. The neighborhood is opposed to the expansion and asserts there is a need for a public meeting to air their concerns.

A PB member proposed that the PB write a letter to encourage the MBS Board to hold the desired public meeting to hear the neighbors’ concerns, and to maintain positive community relationships. The PB Clerk asked for Friends approval for her to write such a letter, in consultation with other PFM Friends local to the concern, and in consultation with Christopher McCandless, Past NEYM Presiding Clerk, who has a long-standing relationship with MBS.

Friends Approved

PB 22-86: YM Coordinating and Advisory Recommendation on Right Relationship Resource Group (report and C&A proposal attached)

Rebecca Leuchak, YM Presiding Clerk presented the C&A proposal for three administrative structures to continue the work of the Right Relationship Resource Group (see report)

From C&A Report to PB for 11/5/22: The three current needs for our Yearly Meeting are:

- *A Right Relationship Resource Group to support and learn from local meetings in their work of building relationships with Indigenous groups. Under care of PB, which will appoint members. Ongoing work with periodic need to review charge.*
- *A Quaker Indian Boarding School (QIBS) working group to define, develop, and recommend to the Permanent Board the Boarding School Scope of Work and*
- *An Advisory Group, with topical knowledge, who can support the Presiding Clerk in seasoning communications and relations with Indigenous Groups,*

Many Friends expressed disquiet about the wisdom of dividing the work into three functional groups, cautioning against the risk of delay, miscommunication, and fragmentation of work that needs to be offered as a heart-centered and integrated whole.

After lengthy airing of concerns over the three-group proposal, a Friend requested that the different aspects of the overall proposed structure be considered for approval separately.

PB 22-86.1: The PB Clerk asked if Friends were ready to approve continuation of the Right Relationship Resource Group (RRRG) function, as a liaison with monthly meetings.

Friends Approved

PB 22-86.2: The PB Clerk then asked if Friends were ready to approve the Scope of Work regarding research on the Quaker Indian Boarding School issue.

Friends Approved

In response to expressed concerns over the third proposed *“Advisory Group with topical knowledge who can support the Presiding Clerk in seasoning communications and relations with Indigenous Groups,”* the YM Presiding Clerk stated that the plan includes active coordination and communication among the other two groups. After a full discussion, it was the PB Clerk’s sense that PB was not in unity on establishment of the Advisory Group and the third recommendation was not approved. She noted that the Presiding Clerk had listened carefully to the concerns that were offered and stated she would take them into consideration as she consulted further about responses to the Letter of Apology and other Indigenous matters.

The PB Clerk stated that with the QIBS Research Group now approved, a more detailed plan to conduct the research, including needed resources and a budget, will be brought for approval at the February 2023 PB meeting. The research group will be under the care of PB and will be connected to the RRRG. The PB clerk nominated the following Friends for service:

PB 22-86.3: The Scope of the Work QIBS Research Group:

Betsy Cazden from Archives
Andrew Grant from Right Relationship Resource Group
Janet Hough, independent researcher

Friends approved these names.

PB 22-86.4: The PB Clerk then nominated to the Right Relationship Resource Group, three additional Friends to serve, with the existing members.

Existing RRRG members: Susannah Schell, Kim West, Sarah Smith Don Campbell, Andrew Grant.

New nominations for Right Relationship Resource Group:

Gordon Bugbee (Beacon Hill),
Minga Claggett-Borne (Cambridge)

Emily Neumann (Fresh Pond).

Friends approved these names

PB 22-87: Noticing Patterns Moment on the preceding business

One Friend expressed concern that the discernment felt rushed.

Another Friend expressed anger over withdrawal of a nominated Friend's name.

Another Friend expressed disquiet, observing their perception of the difference in the nature of the disputes as between the heart of the concern versus practical disputes about structure. The Friend asserted that we often choose to talk about structure as a stand-in for deeper disputes. This seems to be evidence of lack of trust. It is easier to talk about something like structure, that we can control. But we cannot actually trust structure to keep us safe and prevent harm. This brings the worry that we can't trust people—but more important, can we trust God? We need to really listen for that place of clarity about what is the heart of the unity we are seeking.

PB 22-88: PB clerk's moment

After lunch the PB Clerk invited Friends to indicate in chat the names of the aboriginal Peoples on whose lands they each live and recounted current events and some of the history of attempts to rectify cultural violence against the children of Native Americans.

PB 22-89: YM Secretary's Report (Secretary's report and Draft Friends Camp Governance Review process are appended)

Noah Merrill, YM Secretary, lifted up a new role and title for Nia Thomas, affirming the ways in which Nia has expressed her gifts and knowledge in service to NEYM. Nia's new title is Program Director giving her inclusive responsibility for shepherding the YM's programmatic work.

PB expressed thanks and appreciation for Nia's work.

Noah further informed PB of ongoing and evolving work as detailed in his appended report. Items include a progress report from the Anti-Racism Consultation Working Group (ARC WG) and an update and explanation of some financial outcomes of the last fiscal year, including financial implications of shifting contexts and dynamics of Sessions.

On behalf of Coordinating and Advisory Committee, Noah also informed PB about C&A's recommendations on how to proceed with a needed review of Friends Camp Governance practices, including a request for PB approval of the charge for the first phase of the Governance Review work. C&A intends to forward the draft review process to the Finance Committee for review. A summary of the recommended FC governance review process is appended.

PB affirmed the Draft FC Governance Review document and approved Phase 1 of the process.

Noah also informed PB about his assistance to the Weare (NH) Monthly Meeting as they evaluate whether and how to effect a transfer of ownership from the monthly meeting to the Yearly Meeting, of the historic South Pittsfield Meetinghouse. Weare Monthly Meeting is in discernment about formally minuting such a request. The South Pittsfield Meetinghouse is no longer a part of the life and ministry of Weare MM.

Friends affirmed PB's willingness to receive and respond to Weare MM's request for assistance in this property matter and affirmed Noah's work with the Weare MM.

PB 22-90: Report from Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness work group, Small Groups, and Reflection, (NPWG report appended)

Polly Attwood reported for NPWG, expressing thanks to PB for its support of the workgroup, and for PB's willingness to engage in the practice of *noticing patterns*. Polly then called attention to two queries posed in the NPWG report:

- *Noticing Patterns is charged, in part, with lifting up moments of harm. How do we expand the capacity of all of us to notice & interrupt harm we do to each other?*
- *Once noticed, how do we build the capacity to tend to and heal harm within our community?*

Following a brief presentation by Lisa Graustein of a model for holistic change in organizations, PB members and visitors assembled in small breakout groups to reflect on the queries and the vision presented in the model.

PB 22-91: YM Nominating Committee Report

Jackie Stillwell, clerk of the YM Nominating Committee, brought two names for a Second Reading and approval:

Erik Cleven, Souhegan Preparative Meeting to Theme & Speakers Team, to begin immediately

Friends Approved

Carl Williams, Plainfield Meeting, to Theme & Speakers Team to begin immediately

Friends Approved

Jackie Stillwell then informed PB of names proposed for the Naming Committee, which do not need PB approval. The Naming Committee names Friends to serve on the YM Nominating Committee. The following names are brought forward: Beth Hansen, Jeremiah Dickenson, Hannah Zwirner Forsythe, Ed Mair.

PB 22-92: Letters of Introduction to Cuba Yearly Meeting (appended)

The PB Clerk noted that several Friends have undergone a clearness process within their monthly meetings, and with Puente de Amigos Committee, for clearness to travel to Cuba Yearly Meeting (CYM) on February 23, 2023: Kim Bolshaw (Durham MM), Sue Calhoun (Portland FM), Hannah Colbert (Portland FM), and Frederick Weiss (Portland FM). Their letters of introduction can be found in the appendices.

PB Clerk asked for approval of PB for these Friends to visit CYM in 2023.

Friends Approved

Prior to closing worship, the PB clerk invited a time for noticing our words and behaviors during this PB meeting.

PB 22-93: The meeting closed with a period of worship at 3:00 p.m.

Leslie Manning

Leslie Manning (Mar 2, 2023 07:15 EST)

Leslie Manning, clerk

**Permanent Board Meeting
Held at Providence Friends Meeting and over Zoom Video Conference
September 17, 2022**

PB 22-56: Opening Worship

Friends opened with a period of worship.

PB 22-57: Clerk's Welcome

The PB Clerk expressed appreciation for the hospitality of Providence Friends Meeting (PFM) and for helping with technical support. Rebecca Leuchak, YM Presiding Clerk, welcomed Friends to PFM and gave a brief history of the Meetinghouse.

PB 22-58: Roll Call

The recording clerk called the roll: (**Bold**= present in the room; underline= present on zoom. **Leslie Manning**, PB Clerk, **Susan Davies**, PB Recording Clerk, Aaron Sakulich, **Deana Chase**, Beth Hansen, Bob O'Connor, **Carole Rein**, Carolyn Lamar Jordan, Christopher Gant, Christopher McCandless, Jean McCandless, Darcy Drayton, Donn Weinholtz, Ed Mair, Eleanor Warnock, Frances Lightsom, Ian Harrington, John Reuthe, **Kathleen Wooten**, Kimberly Allen, **Liesa Stamm**, Martha Schwope, Martin Forsythe, Meg Klepak, **Newell Isbell Shinn**, Peter Bishop, Roger Vincent Jasaitis, Tom Brenner.

Ex-Officio: **Rebecca Leuchak** (Presiding Clerk), Scot Drysdale (Finance Clerk); **Noah Merrill** (YM Secretary); Elizabeth Reuthe (Secretary's Supervisor); Bruce Neuman (Past-Clerk)

Regrets/absent: Anna Radocchia, Diane Weinholtz, Joyce Gibson, Mary Zwirner, Morgan Wilson, Will Taber, Robert Murray

Visitors: (Please check for the presence and correct spelling of your name if you attended as a visitor)

Anna Hopkins Buller, **Kurt Hansen (?)**, **Susan Cooper**, **LouAnn MacDonald**, **Jonathan Vogel-Borne**, **Susanna Schell**, **Melody Brazo**, **Travis Belcher**, **Jackie Stillwell**, **Nia Thomas**, **Minga Claggett Borne**, Kim West, Sarah Gant, Ellen Nielands, Marian Dalton, Mey Hasbrook, Janet Hough, LVM Shelton, Sam Schiffman, Sarah Smith, Lisa Graustein, Andy Grant, Kim Stoner, Phil Veach, Reb McKenzie, Kathy Olsen, Margaret Marshall, Robb Spivey, Rod Zwirner

PB 22-59: Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness (oral introductory comments)

Melody Brazo of the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness working group passed around wallet cards with the sentence stems: "*I feel...*, *I hear...*, *I know...*, *I see...*, and *I wonder...*". We encourage use of these sentence starters to elevate both our thinking brains,

and our awareness of what's happening in our experience in the world. Through a regular practice of this attentiveness and voicing, YM is helped to find and dismiss patterns of oppression.

PB 22-60: Approval of June 4, 2022 PB Minutes

The minutes from the June 4 meeting were distributed in advance documents for review.

Friends approved the June minutes

PB 22-61: Approval of Sessions Minutes, Bruce Neuman, Past Presiding Clerk, clerking (Draft Sessions minutes appended)

Bruce Neuman, Past Presiding Clerk, introduced each of the minutes from Sessions 2022 requiring approval by PB. Final edited Sessions 2022 minutes, including those that PB identified as needing additional revisions, will be brought for final approval to the November 5, 2022 PB meeting.

PB 22-62: Letter from Earthcare Ministry Committee to PB (letter appended)

Kim Stoner, Earthcare Ministry Committee, presented the concerns expressed in the appended letter from the Earthcare Ministry committee (EMC). The group requests that Permanent Board formally change the name of the group to the "Earth Quaker Justice Team, lay down the existing EMC committee, and acknowledge the change in structure of the group from a "committee" to a "team" (as defined in the Forms of Service Map from New England Yearly Meeting, appended).

Friends in attendance asked for clarification about the differences in YM support, acknowledgement of the work, oversight, and relationship to the YM between a committee and a team. Noah Merrill, YM Secretary, clarified that when a committee acts, it is accountable to the YM, and its action is considered an action of the YM, but when an individual acts it is not considered an action of the YM. Similar consideration as for individuals would be given to the actions of a team. Processes and criteria are in place, for example, to consider non-committee sponsored submissions to the YM newsletter.

Jackie Stillwell, Clerk of YM Nominating Committee (YM NC), stated that "team" members are not named by the YM NC. She expressed YM NC's enthusiasm that forms other than formal committee structures are arising to release and carry forward Spirit-led work.

The PB Clerk called for approval:

1. that the new working title of the ongoing team of Friends called to this work be "Earth Quaker Justice Team"
2. that PB recommend to Sessions 2023 to lay down the Earthcare Ministry Committee and to affirm and lift up the new Earth Quaker Justice Team and its work.

PB Friends approved

PB 22-63: Presiding Clerk's Report (Report appended)

Rebecca Leuchak, YM Presiding Clerk, expressed gratitude for the evidence of service to YM that she sees. Beyond her written report she noted that the Letter of Apology is beginning to open doors of communication to some of the Tribes.

PB 22-64: YM Secretary's Report (report appended)

Noah Merrill, YM Secretary, spoke of the necessity for a daily discipline of prayer to arrive at the discipline of simplicity and discernment in our work. There is so much potential work to be done, but if we are unable to choose our work in prayer and faith, then we run the risk of over-busyness and an unsustainable rush to do everything at once. Coordinating and Advisory Committee is planning a retreat to discern and shepherd the work of the YM, and to clarify purposes and priorities for the coming year.

Friends responded to Noah's report with deep appreciation for the important reminders it offered. A Friend observed that it is easier to add, rather than subtract work when we are tired, sad, or lacking in confidence. We, Friends, are the people who can counter our culture's compulsion to over-do.

PB 22-65: Friends Camp Director's Report and Budget Approval (report, budget and proposal for sabbatical appended)

Anna Buller, Friends Camp Director, expressed gratitude for the care and love that made camp possible, following the hiatus of the COVID pandemic. It was a great joy for camp to return again with over 400 campers through the season. Anna expressed thanks and appreciation to John Reuthe's leadership during his term, now ending, as Clerk of the Camp Committee.

Friends accepted the report

Robb Spivey invited questions on the proposed Camp budget. None were received.

Friends approved the Camp budget for FY 2023, including the full funding of a sabbatical for Anna Buller

Friends expressed appreciation for the careful budget and reflected that Friends Camp shines as our outstanding witness to the next generation, and it is clearly still YM's ministry to uphold.

PB 22-66: Report from Right Relationship Resource Group (report appended)

Susannah Schell and Andrew Grant reported for the Right Relationship Resource Group (RRRG). The Resource Group is requesting a reconstituted charge from PB, and a change in the name "resource group" to a "working group", to reflect evolution of the group's focus and activities as the work has progressed.

Following a period of clarifying questions, and reflection upon the humbling tasks before the YM, to move into more faithful alignment in our relationship to Native American Tribes, Noah Merrill proposed that PB affirm this report and the faithful work of the RRRG to this point. A clear charge is needed however, for the work to move forward from here, including support to MMs as they build relationships, and the need to carefully consider the conduct of research into our Quaker Indian Boarding School history.

Leslie Manning, PB Clerk, clarified that Working Groups are under the care of PB. She restated that Noah Merrill is suggesting that, while desiring to not introduce any obstacles to the work moving forward, Coordinating and Advisory (C&A) meet, before the next PB meeting, to discern the larger context of how and where such a proposed working group fits into the whole of this work, that belongs to the entirety of YM.

Friends noted the tension between the earnest desire to move forward promptly in response to overtures of relationship building from the Tribes, when the need for administrative oversight appears to slow things down.

The PB Clerk asked that PB affirm the RRRG report, and that C&A will bring recommendations for how to structure the work going forward, to the November 5, 2022 PB meeting.

Friends affirmed the report and recommendations

PB 22-67: Names for approval, from Nominating Committee

Jackie Stillwell, Clerk of YM Nominating Committee brought forward one name for approval, to begin immediately:

Sarah Gant for Clerk of the Meeting Accompaniment Group, to begin upon approval, for a term of 5 years. The trial form of the position will be reviewed in 3 years.

Friends Approved

Jackie Stillwell further brought forward two additional names for a first reading, for the Theme and Speakers Team for annual Sessions 2023:

Eleanor Godway and
Mey Hasbrook.

Due to the need to move Sessions planning work forward promptly, these nominations will be brought for approval to a Called Meeting of Permanent Board. If Friends have any concerns or affirmations of these nominations, they should be brought to the clerk of Nominating Committee prior to the November PB meeting..

PB 22-68: Noticing Patterns

The PB Clerk invited the NPwg and the Board to offer noticing's about this meeting. Friends offered the following:

- "I notice that time seems to press the most when we are talking about racial justice and right relationship."
- "I feel discouraged that no one is talking about climate change."
- "I heard all morning about us as 'a people of the Word' (lots of words); we spent a lot of time getting our own words right, and mistrusting other's words."

PB 22-69: Priority Setting for the Board (handouts for the priority-setting exercise appended)

Note: the "priorities" document was distributed for the purposes of the PB exercise only. It reflects an approximation of several of the tasks before the Yearly Meeting, and is not a comprehensive or definitive list of YM priorities.

The PB Clerk announced a time for small group conversations in response to queries and a list of priorities, introduced by Nia Thomas, YM Quaker Practice and Leadership Development staff.

“With all these big pieces of work, what / how do we prioritize; what would “success” look like in our service this year?”

Friends offered the following reflections following their small group conversations:

- Right relationship and anti-racism are very important; wondering where is the climate crisis in our priorities? Are groups, teams, committees actually doing the work that MMs should be doing? QMs?
- MMs are the lifeblood of Quakerism—YM drafted the Apology, now MMs need to step up. YM should be *asking* rather than *telling* QMs who they are
- We need to integrate the work of: *Doctrine of Discovery; antiracism; climate crisis; right relationship*- rather than seeing each as separate items.
- Would like to see more appreciation expressed. People need encouragement and praise; we should take joy in raising new leadership. Also, a reminder: to know each other we need to know each other’s names- WEAR NAME TAGS!
- Wondering if there is some unidentified payoff to having an overfull plate? When we feel overwhelmed, can we have the discipline to stop, and pray? How do individuals and the community work together? How do we manage questions about perceptions of “power”? Perhaps PB could elevate questions about power and communication, to have more YM dialogue about it.
- What are our personal goals and responsibilities for being of service to PB? Read Advance Documents, be ready to engage, encourage PB to communicate broadly to the whole YM to address confusion or mistrust.

Leslie Manning, PB Clerk, closed with the assurance that while we can’t do it all, and Chronos time has come to an end for today, we can rest assured that there is no end to Chyros time.

PB 22-70: Closing Worship

Friends closed with a period of worship.

Next scheduled PB meeting: November 5, 2022

Specially Called Permanent Board Meeting
Held over Zoom Video Conference
October 19, 2022

PB 22-71: Opening Worship

Friends opened with a period of worship.

PB 22-72: Clerk's Welcome

The PB Clerk explained that the purpose of this called meeting of the Permanent Board was to hear a second reading of nominations to the Theme and Speakers Team for annual sessions 2023 because this committee needs to begin its work immediately. A quorum of 11 PB members is necessary to finalize these approvals.

PB 22-73: Roll Call

The recording clerk called the roll:

Leslie Manning, PB Clerk, Susan Davies, PB Recording Clerk, Beth Hansen, Carole Rein, Carolyne Lamar Jordan, Christopher Gant, Darcy Drayton, Ed Mair, Ian Harrington, Jean McCandless, Kathleen Wooten, Liesa Stamm, Kimberly Allen, Martin Zwirner Forsythe, Morgan Wilson, Newell Isbell Shinn, Roger Vincent Jasaitis, Tom Brenner, Willa Taber

Ex-Officio: Rebecca Leuchak (Presiding Clerk), Noah Merrill (YM Secretary);

Regrets: Aaron Sakulich, Christopher McCandless, Eleanor Warnock, Mary Zwirner

Visitors: Marian Dalton; Jackie Stillwell, (Clerk of YM Nominating Committee), Janet Hough, Phil Veach

PB 22-74: With 21 members present the PB clerk declared we can proceed with discernment and approval of the nominations.

PB 22-75: Names for Approval to the Theme and Speakers Team for annual sessions 2023
(Report appended)

Jackie Stillwell, Clerk of the YM Nominating Committee, brought forward two names for second reading and approval:

PB 22-75a - for the Theme & Speakers Team – Mey Hasbrook, (Durham Meeting) to begin immediately

Friends Approved

PB 22-75b - for the Theme & Speakers Team Eleanor Godway, (Hartford Meeting) to begin immediately

Friends Approved

PB 22-76: First Reading of nominations to the Theme and Speakers Team for annual sessions 2023 (Report appended)

PB 22-76 a- for the Theme & Speakers Team – Erik Cleven, (Souhegan Preparative Meeting) to begin immediately

PB 22-76 b- for the Theme & Speakers Team - Carl Williams, (Plainfield Meeting) to begin immediately.

If Friends have any concerns or affirmations concerning these names, they should be brought to the clerk of Nominating prior to the November 5, 2022 meeting of PB.

NEYM Sessions 2022

Draft Minutes for Nov 5 PB consideration

- **Minutes that were approved at Sessions or at our last PB meeting are not included**
- **Minute 509 was discussed but not approved at our last meeting. New/revised text is in red.**
- **Minute 904 was not part of our original consideration, but was suggested to be added.**
- **All other minutes, in purple, will be considered as part of a unity agenda, for approval all at once**

Sunday Morning

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

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

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

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

Regina Renee pointed out how speaking slowly and clearly would help the Spanish interpreters and she reminded us of the term “language justice.”

She opened by offering a very clear road map for the message she had been given for NEYM Sessions. Her timely and constant reminder using the Sessions' theme

provided a clear focus on the urgency of the work of listening, transformation and engagement,

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

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

Sunday Evening

2022-301 Welcome and introductions

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

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

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

2022-303 Approval of Acting Recording Clerk

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

2022-305 Introduction to Noticing Patterns

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

The Group is committed to observe, name, and reflect back to the body long standing patterns and practices, unseen by many but long seen by others, that result in our complicity in oppression. Equally, they are called to lift up patterns of faithfulness and practices that move us further into being a Spirit-led community.

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

Polly reminded us to use the prompts: *I feel; I hear; I see; I wonder; I know*. In our hybrid space, sharing our “noticings” can bring us together and hold as a body how we are experiencing our community.

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

2022-306 Welcome Visitors

Through the week the following visitors were welcomed and invited to introduce themselves:

- Tidy Bab, Woolman Hill
- Jessica Bahena, FCNL
- Cliff Bennett, Quakers Advocating Justice for Palestine, Quaker Palestine Israel Network
- Peter Blood-Patterson, Quaker Spring
- David Bonner, [REDACTED]
- Fran Brokaw, Clerk of Pendle Hill
- Hilary Burgin, Quaker Voluntary Service
- Lilly Campbell, Beacon Hill Friends House
- Minga Claggett-Borne, Friends Peace Teams
- Kerri Clough (Cork, Ireland)
- Emma Condori-Mamani, QREC, Friends International Bilingual Center, La Paz; Holiness YM, Bolivia

- Kirenia Criado, Havana Monthly Meeting, Cuba Yearly Meeting •
- Sarah Freeman-Woolpert, Friends Committee on National Legislation
- Audrey Greenhall, French General Conference, Quaker Books and Quaker Press Manager
- Keith Harvey, American Friend Service Committee
- Mary Lou Hatcher, (North Sandwich) from Lehigh Valley Monthly Meeting, PhYM.
- Sara Gada, Friends Publishing Corporation
- Jennifer Higgins-Newman, Beacon Hill Friends House
- Brian Holland, New Association of Friends/Belize Friends •
- Nikki Holland, Friends United Meeting
- Caleb Holland, New Association of Friends/Belize Friends •
- Isaac Holland, New Association of Friends/Belize Friends •
- Joshua Holland, New Association of Friends/Belize Friends •
- Angela Hopkins, New York Yearly Meeting
- Megan Jensen, Sun Moon Farm
- Emma Kay, Brooklyn Friends Meeting
- Kelly Kellum, Friends United Meeting
- Noah Litu Kellum., Chavakali Meeting in Kenya, and a student at Earlham School of Religion.
- Nils Klinkenberg, Beacon Hill Friends House
- Carolyn Lamar-Jordan, Quaker United Nations Office - New York •
- Jessica Lana, Friends Committee on National Legislation
- Mary Link, NEYM Legacy Gift Committee
- Skye (Caitlin) McQuilken, Rochester Friends Meeting - Rochester, NY •
- Lyell Miller, Goshen Indiana, representing Everence
- Judith Nandikove, QREC and Nairobi YM
- Corinna Owen, Worcester
- Anne Pomeroy, New Paltz Monthly Meeting
- Emily Provance, 15th St MM, New York Yearly Meeting •
- Nicole Santos, Friends Committee on National Legislation •
- Laura Sawyer, YF Resource Person
- Skip Schiel, Quakers Advocating Justice For Palestine
- Earl Smith, Stillwater Friends Meeting in Ohio Yearly Meeting •
- Matt Southworth, FCNL
- Jacqueline Stillwell, Right Sharing of World Resources
- Ken Stockbridge, Patapsco Friends Meeting, Ellicott City, MD. Baltimore Yearly Meeting

- Phil Stone, Clearwater (Florida) Southeastern Yearly Meeting •
Jonathan Vogel-Borne, Friends Peace Teams
- Donn Weinholtz, Friends Association for Higher Education •
Kim West, Friends Meeting at Cambridge
- Pamela Williams, Germantown
- Liz Yeats, Friends Meeting of Austin, South Central Yearly Meeting •
Mary Zwirner, Tribal lands of the Massachuseuk people

2022-307 Budget Proposal

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

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

2022-308 Noticings

The Clerk opened a period for noticing.

A Friend wondered...

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

Friends noticed...

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

A Friend suggested...

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

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

2022-309 Faith and Practice

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

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

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

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

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

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

2022-310 Nominating

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

There has been a shift in the focus of 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 Committee can be reached via email at nominating@neym.org. The only change in our nominating slate is the addition of one name, Megan Jensen (Monadnock) for recording clerk to begin next year. This name will come back for approval on Wednesday afternoon.

2022-311 Unity Agenda

The Clerk referred to the components of the Unity Agenda included in Advanced Documents, and asked whether any of the items required separate consideration. Hearing no request for separate discernment, the Clerk proceeded to ask for approval and acceptance of the items listed below:

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

Friends Approved the Unity Agenda.

Monday Morning

2022-501 Epistle from Canada Yearly Meeting

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

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

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

distances. This work is a lifelong undertaking that requires prayer and faithfulness.

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

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

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

2022-507 Permanent Board Report

Preparing to present a series of reports and recommendations from Permanent Board, Leslie Manning (Durham) read from Faith and Practice to remind us to draw on our experience of worship to find unity not just with each other, but with the divine will.

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

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

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

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 that was 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.

2022-511 Noticings

Friends noticed ...

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

Plenary, Monday afternoon

2022-601 Plenary Speaker

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tuesday Morning

2022-801 Epistle from Uganda Friends Church (Quakers) Ugandan Friends prayed: "Let us draw near to God with sincere hearts, fully trusting in Him." Hebrews 10:22. They recognized the blessings of living and having to care for a fragile ecosystem, and discussed the Christian family, environmental conservation, the generation gap, AIDS, COVID-19, stewardship, and finance. They thanked God for the message sent to them through Marion Baker (NEYM) who spoke about the Samaritan woman Jesus met at the well as one of the first Gospel ministers carrying the Good News to her own people.

After the reading of the Epistle, Reading Clerks reminded us to keep Kenya in our prayers as they hold national elections today.

2022-803 Appreciation for the Tech Team

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

2022-807 Report of Ministry of Brianna Halliwell

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

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

Righteous anger after the murder of George Floyd led her to go to the front lines to protect Black protesters from white counterprotesters, and in that experience she realized that human rage does not accomplish what God desires. Since then she has tried to dismantle her internalized patterns of oppression. Last fall she applied for a Legacy Gift Grant to become a sanctified minister and follow the ever-evolving call from God.

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

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

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

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

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

Correspondence received in reply felt like a holy opening.

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

Tuesday Afternoon

2022-902 Presentation about Belize City Friends Center

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

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

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

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

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

2022-903 Report from Friends United Meeting Board Representatives

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

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

They reminded us that in last year's Sessions, in response to continued concerns

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

Following up on that letter, a meeting was held recently, which included NEYM's Board Representatives, our outgoing and rising Clerks, with the Clerk, Assistant Clerk, and General Secretary of the FUM Board. While there was no immediate outcome from this meeting, trust was built and this group expects to meet again, including a wider variety of FUM Friends.

They concluded by inviting all of us to attend the next FUM triennial, to be held in 2023 in Nakuru, Kenya.

2022-904 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.

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

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

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

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

playing and songs. Children's Bookstore volunteers identified by their starry crowns brought a lot of joy to many younger Quakers and a lot of older ones too.

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

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

Wednesday Morning

2022-1103 Noticings

Friends noticed...

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

A Friend wondered...

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

2022-1104 Epistle (First Reading)

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

2022-1105 Report from Friends Camp

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

2022-1108 The Freedmen's Fund

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

Wednesday Afternoon

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

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

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

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

2022-1203 Report from FCNL Representative

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

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

2022-1204 Legacy Gift Committee

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

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

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

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

Recent grants have helped release **Dover Friends** for renovating Dover Meetinghouse to support their corporate leading to safely provide sanctuary to

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

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

2022-1205 Report on the Visit to Cuba Yearly Meeting

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

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

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

2022-1206 Message from the Clerk of Cuba Yearly Meeting

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

2022-1207 Faith and Practice (2nd presentation)

Phebe 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 have yet grappled with it.

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

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

2022-1208 Budget Final Approval

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

2022-1209 Nomination for Sessions Recording Clerk

Friends approved Megan Jensen as Recording Clerk for 2023-34.

Wednesday Evening

2022-1301 Welcome and Open Worship

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

2022-1302 Youth Program Epistles

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

Childcare

Rainer Humphries (Hartford), Child Care Coordinator, shared his appreciation for

the parents who trusted Child Care with their children. Rainer expressed gratitude to the parents and families for making this program successful. He noted that: This is the hour for hand washing. This is the hour for your turn on the slide. This is the hour for you to pick the next book, to read again and again and again. This is the hour to paint a picture, or draw, or add stickers to a piece of paper 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-dye, and capture the flag. They also enjoyed “Bible ten minutes”

JYM Grades 4-6

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

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

Young Friends

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

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.

2022-1303 BIPOC Report

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

2022-1304 Home Group Coordinator’s Message

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

Fran expressed gratitude for the facilitators.

2022-1306 Events Coordinator’s Report

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

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

2022-1307 Expressions of Thanks

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

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

2022-1308 Second Reading of the Epistle

Jean Rosenberg (Middlebury), Judy Williams (Hanover), and Robert Dove

McClellan (Fresh Pond) read the NEYM Epistle with revisions based on comments received earlier.

Friends approved the Epistle, with minor corrections.

2022-1309 Clerk's Closing Reflections

Bruce Neumann(Fresh Pond), Presiding Clerk, expressed his joy at having had the opportunity to work closely with the NEYM office staff and with the rest of the clerks table, as well as the Noticing Patterns of Oppression & Faithfulness Working Group, and the Right Relationship Working Group. He introduced Megan Jensen (Monadnock) as one of the new Recording Clerk, and Rebecca Leuchak (Providence), Rising Clerk.

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

2022-1314 Final Closing

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

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

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

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

Thursday Morning

2022-1401 Concluding Bible Half-Hour

This year those gathered at Castleton were asked to vacate our rooms soon after breakfast and before our last gathering. With all business concluded, we met again

one last time for Bible Half-Hour and open worship.

Throughout the week, Regina Renee's Bible Half-Hours fed our discernment and reinforced our willingness to listen to one another as we considered items of business. She was ill on Thursday and could not join us for this last meeting, but faithful to her leading, she had left for us the materials she had prepared. Through the week, she had delivered her message with enough power and clarity that Friends were able to take her materials and run the Bible Half-Hour in her absence, guiding us to sit with the queries and respond to the Bible readings she had selected. This proved to be the fitting culmination of her work and a sign of her faithfulness as we felt Spirit speaking through her teaching even in her absence. This final presentation looked back at the lessons we had heard through the week:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Presiding Clerk Report to New England Yearly Meeting Permanent Board on November 5, 2022

From Rebecca Leuchak

(she/her pronouns)

Member of Providence Monthly Meeting, located on lands that are within the ancestral home of the Narragansett, Mashantucket, Pokanoket and Nipmuc people. Our city and region are marked by the legacy of Rhode Island's economic foundation in the triangle slave trade. I acknowledge these realities as deeply important and not to be ever forgotten.

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

I am especially feeling joy to be with you after my stint with Covid. I know that many of you have had this challenge, either yourselves or among loved ones over these (almost) two years, and my heart goes out to you! During my time in rest and recuperation, I have been grateful for Friends' many expressions of concern and care. I have felt held, and in turn, hold in my heart Friends who need support, either in Covid straits or in facing other challenges to health and personal welfare.

During convalescence I did much thinking also about the health and welfare of our beloved Friends community and where we are heading in a world that is in turmoil. These times try and test us and it is right here, and I believe that it is right now, that we have received the precious gift of divine invitation to do God's work together. Here and now, I hear the call to heed the Great Spirit and find together our way to take action, to tend with healing energy our own Friends community, and joining with others, to do this reparative work in the wider community. To address directly with courage the brokenness of our world and to take up this labor with love, with joy, with creative enthusiasm.

I can report that the Coordinating and Advisory Committee has been laboring from a place of love, joy, and enthusiasm, taking up and reviewing many aspects of the work done across the Yearly Meeting. One of the charges of Coordinating & Advisory committee is to coordinate the work of Yearly Meeting committees. We are guided by Sessions to pay attention to how committee structures can best facilitate effectiveness in the work of our Yearly Meeting. With that perspective, we have taken a deep look at how to go about work in a number of on-going initiatives.

We bring the following recommendations to this Permanent Board meeting with hope that these will provide the structure and procedure that may allow Friends to engage in the work before us in effective ways.

- A Proposed Process for Reviewing the Governance Structure of Friends Camp in China, Maine.
- A Proposal for Coordination of Three Aspects of the Yearly Meeting's Work toward Right Relationship with Indigenous Peoples

In the coming months we will be continuing to work on the following issues that will be brought to you for consideration at future meetings of the Permanent Board:

- The Nurture of Witness
- Clarifying and strengthening pastoral care in New England Yearly Meeting
- Best support for the Legacy Gift Review Process

- Ways of building and moving forward in our Noticing Patterns practice

In other news, New England Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions planning has begun in earnest. I am involved with a small group of Friends in Sessions 2023 Theme and Speakers Team discernment and reach out to all of you for your thoughts about the condition of our Yearly Meeting and the themes that may give voice to that condition and future promise. Please engage with me in thinking about what we want and need.

As your presiding clerk, I serve ex-officio on the Moses Brown School Board, and am pleased to let you know that Katie Titus will be our new head of school beginning in 2023. To learn a bit about Katie:

<https://www.mosesbrown.org/katie/>

She has expressed her enthusiasm for getting started this way:

“There is good and important work ahead as we unify and strengthen the school community around its Quaker values and tradition. I look forward to building the necessary trust with all constituents in the coming months in order to lay the foundation of that work.”

Opportunities for strengthening the Friendship between NEYM and our Friends schools are never more promising than at points of transition, points of new beginnings. I hope that we may build in support of our Friends schools across New England during my tenure as your clerk.

Finally, on a golden warm fall day several weekends ago, I had the great pleasure of spending an afternoon with Friends of Salem Quarter hosted in fellowship, potluck, games, and music by Framingham Meeting. Thank you, Friends at Framingham for organizing such a special occasion! Truly a gift to all who attended. It is clear that we have big hearts and warm welcome waiting for us whenever we wish as New England Friends to visit with each other!

Let us all send that love out across our cherished New England Yearly Meeting and especially to those in need. For all of us need bear in mind that these are difficult times, and the support of our community is vital across this great Turtle Island. Indeed, what wondrous things can be realized by this community of faith we are building if we truly commit to building a lasting relationship in God’s love.

As I have said before, I hope that you will feel free to communicate with me. Anytime. Please know that my door is open. Please send me an email and let me know your thoughts and/or questions. You can reach me at: clerk@neym.org

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

In Love and Light,

Rebecca Leuchak
Presiding Clerk

Recommendation for Coordination of Three Aspects of the Yearly Meeting's Work toward Right Relationship with Indigenous Peoples

Report from the Coordinating and Advisory Committee to the Permanent Board
presented for discernment on November 5, 2022

At New England Friends' Annual Sessions in 2020 and 2021, we acknowledged our need to work in a more focused and intentional way towards right relationship with Indigenous Peoples in our own community and in our region. In 2020, Friends approved forwarding a Letter of Apology to Native Americans as well as a set of recommendations for further action to local meetings for reflection. At Sessions in 2021, the Apology was approved by New England Friends. Distribution of the Apology to regional Indigenous communities has been shepherded by the Right Relationship Resource Group which has brought sensitivity to complex cross-cultural relations. Their gifts were generously offered and well engaged in helping this initiative move forward. We are grateful for their work.

As directed by the Permanent Board, the Coordinating and Advisory Committee has with gratitude reviewed the work and assessed the structure of the current Right Relationship Group in light of developing events. After reviewing the proposal from the current Right Relationship Group, the Coordinating and Advisory Committee sees at this time the need for three specific charges that need each their own working structure for optimum effectiveness.

The Coordinating and Advisory Committee raises up the considerable work of the Right Relationship Group and understands that taking up the work of repairing and sustaining right relationship is challenging and on-going work.

We affirm that there is urgency in moving forward. Our Letter of Apology has been distributed and responses indicate the promise of growing relations. It is also apparent that the work is larger than any one group of committed Friends can do on our behalf. It is work that is needed on the local and yearly meeting levels. It is work that plumbs our deepest hopes and concerns.

As a result of our growing understanding of the various pieces of work before us and the varied nature and time frames and functions of that work, and the Yearly Meeting's directives, three separate imperatives and related needs have been identified. In all three we recognize the need for ongoing learning and reorienting of our worldviews and ways of being. We hope that these three collaborative bodies will continue to aid us to more clearly notice patterns of oppression and faithfulness in the reparative work we are seeking to do.

The three current needs for our Yearly Meeting are:

- **A Resource Group** to support and learn from local meetings in their work of building relationships with Indigenous groups.
- **An Advisory Group** with topical knowledge who can support the Presiding Clerk in seasoning communications and relations with Indigenous Groups, and
- **A Working Group** to define, develop, and recommend to the Permanent Board the Boarding School Scope of Work.

The Right Relationship Resource Group

The Right Relationship Group will remain a resource group, focusing on support, education, and awareness for local meetings as part of support for the entire Yearly Meeting. Serve as a resource to local meetings; provides expertise, guidance, accompaniment, and seeks to learn from the ongoing experience of local meetings; may also periodically report on trends/areas of perceived need.

Specific Charge: This group will serve as a resource to support local meetings in following their leadings to initiate and/or further develop relations with their Indigenous neighbors, and to help Friends learn from the ongoing experience of local meetings. We note the importance of having Friends knowledgeable about relationship building, with informed knowledge of inter-tribal complexities, and expertise in advising on workshops/programming. The Resource Group's on-going support of Friends and monthly and quarterly meetings' engagement and next steps as we move towards right relationship as local worshipping communities, and individuals who make them up, is highly valued.

Membership: The Right Relationship Group will remain under the care of the Permanent Board and the clerk of PB will appoint any additional members.

Expected Lifespan: This report sees the need for this Resource Group as on-going and its specific charge to be refreshed as relevant circumstances indicate necessary.

The Boarding School involvement Scope of Work–Working Group

Formed to conduct the discrete project of formulating the plan of research into New England Yearly Meeting's involvement and participation in the Friends Boarding School movement and to further write a specific report or proposal to execute that plan. This Group is proposed in response to the Approved Minutes of Sessions 2022:

"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."

Specific Charge: In consultation with the Archives Committee, this group will review and identify the resources needed to thoroughly research New England Yearly Meeting's (and its predecessors) engagement with and support for the boarding schools, including involvement of individual Friends and meetings, and to present a plan, including an estimated budget, to the Permanent Board at its meeting in February 2023. Note that, the boarding school era is post-Civil and Indian Wars until the mid-20th century; this group is not being asked to do a comprehensive review of all Quaker engagement with Native Americans since Friends' arrival on this continent.

Membership: This group will include a representative from Right Relationship, a representative from Archives and a member who has engaged with this research independently and will be under the care of the Permanent Board. Nominated by PB Clerk, approved by PB.

Expected Lifespan: Less than one year with report presented to the Permanent Board at its February 2023 meeting. Based on the group's report, the extent of its scope and charge may be extended beyond February 2023.

The Right Relationship Advisory Group

As responses to the Letter of Apology are received, the path for greater connection and communication is possible. With that in mind, the Yearly Meeting presiding clerk will have occasion to engage in relationship building, at times in concert with initiatives taken by other Friends' groups within the Yearly Meeting.

Specific Charge: The advisory group will assist the Presiding Clerk in responding to responses to the Apology and support the Presiding Clerk in seasoning responses to Indigenous groups as needed; to assist her in developing appropriate communications that are fully aware of and building on the relations already established between NEYM Friends and Indigenous communities as relevant. The advisory group will support the Presiding Clerk's care for and emerging skill in cross-cultural communication as she represents the Yearly Meeting in building relationships. Consultation in some matters of projects or programming may require additional consultation with the Resource Group as the clerk determines. Requests may require the discernment of the wider body of Friends, either at the Permanent Board or by Annual Sessions.

Membership: Constituted by the Presiding Clerk, in consultation with others (including Nominating Clerk), as needed.

Expected Lifespan: On going, with continuing review and discernment.

Ongoing communication and coordination:

The Presiding Clerk will regularly convene a check-in meeting with the clerks of the three groups to share updates, questions, and allow for coordination and guidance as needed.

Recommendation Conclusion

The Coordinating and Advisory Committee hopes that in recommending these three groups, Friends will find that we have identified the appropriate structural form for each of the specific three areas of work before us. And that by following the Forms of Service template that guides our Yearly Meeting's collaborative working structures, we have clarified the intended purpose of each group. In our work, we have prioritized the importance of carefully matching the work needing to be done to a specifically composed group of Friends who will proceed in collaborative service. Likewise we have tried to carefully determined time duration needed for the work. And we wish to support the work of these collaborative groups through external guidance, accountability, and review in order to increase these groups' ability to be effective in their service. We understand that these processes are varied and diverse, and that in addition to the formal work of the Yearly Meeting, essential and primary work is happening and will unfold in the relationships of meetings with Indigenous communities locally, as local meetings and as quarterly meetings.

Recognizing the ever growing, Spirit-led, creative, and fluid nature of this work of building relationship together, as we move forward, we as a Yearly Meeting may in time wish to adjust or suggest other structures that may better fit as new needs arise. We will remain open to possibility and in the meantime, concentrate on the work before us in these ways.

The Coordinating and Advisory Committee proposes these three groups as a fruitful step towards productive work of the Spirit moving forward.

These recommendations are presented to the Permanent Board at its November 5, 2022 meeting from the Coordinating and Advisory Committee.

To: The Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends
From: Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, Putney (VT) Friends Meeting
Re: Report in preparation for PB meeting on November 5, 2022

Nothing that happens “up at the top” or at “some remote center” or that is done in an office, or a committee room, will be very momentous unless in the last resort it stirs fresh life and brings new vitality into play in the local groups—the little cells—which constitute the Society.

The Society of Friends is not a yearly meeting...not an occasional conference, not a central office somewhere, not a series of committee meetings; it is primarily and essentially a widely scattered number of local meetings, little cells, where the actual vitality and power and future potency of Quakerism is being settled and determined.

We work in vain unless we keep our minds focused on these local units.

- Rufus Jones (China, ME), 1944

Dear Friends,

In what is now called southeastern Vermont, just downriver from the great falls called Kchi Pontekw in Abenaki, up the hill from the Putney Friends meetinghouse, the dry leaves are crunching underfoot, and night brings a dusting of frost on the fields. The raptors—many thousands of them—have mostly traveled through this place on their annual pilgrimage along the ridgelines and river valleys. As the angle of the sunlight shifts and our region turns toward winter, this “service year” for New England Yearly Meeting is well underway. Calendars are filling up and filled; plans and proposals are ready to be nurtured toward fruitfulness in the coming months. In phone calls, Zoom calls, letters, and an increasing number of in-person visits, I’m grateful for the stirrings of new life that I see and hear in our local meetings.

This past Tuesday, Friends from dozens of our meetings came together on Zoom for the monthly call for local meeting servant leaders. As we gathered in worship, Friends offered prayers for our meetings in this season. Here are some that were expressed:

holy accompaniment
healing and acceptance of loss
for a deepening of our meeting for worship
Deep listening to one another
A strategy for transitioning from a COVID stance to a new place
Not fearing conflict
To find greater unity in our actions and worship as we emerge from our COVID fears
That we reach out to those whose attendance has dwindled and tend to their needs
That we can navigate new uses for our resources while retaining our love for each other
Continued gathered energy
God’s Love for us is the same Love we are invited to offer each other
I pray that we can respect the dignity and goodness of each other
identify a new co-clerk
to be vibrant and welcoming
That we live more fully into our potential as a vital spiritual community
That we might be blessed with in person gathering continuing through this winter
that we may be safe, healthy and inclusive of those who join via Zoom

Trust and kindness
ever deepening, true listening....
Continue in love as we move forward as a blended Meeting
for right relationship with all things

I hope you will join me in holding these prayers for our meetings, as we prepare with humility for discernment on behalf of Friends across our region. Thank you for your service.

In my report in preparation for our last meeting, I reflected on the call to *subtraction* as a spiritual discipline. This is not only a call to be prepared to say no to taking on new things, but to consider where and how we might do *meaningfully less* as a countercultural spiritual act; a way to open space for fuller presence, depth of attention, resilience, and meaning in our lives and in our service.

I wrote about Friends' understanding that—at its root—the spiritual discipline of *simplicity* cultivates an available heart, an openness, awareness, and sensitivity to God's presence in our lives, and an unfolding of a willing capacity to respond to the tender movement of the Holy Spirit in our midst. This is not ultimately about to-do lists or better organizational structures or time management, but about the right ordering of our lives. It's about becoming more available to the Truth.

During the September meeting, a Friend asked if I had a sense of some concrete ways that we might more fully put into practice a spiritual discipline of subtraction and simplicity in our work together. This question has stayed with me.

At that time, I offered my sense, first and foremost, that cultivating this simplicity of heart arises from an ongoing practice of prayer and retirement, even if this is only glimpsed in a moment in the busyness of many of our days. I continue to feel the importance of each of us deepening our attention to prayer and centering as we seek to serve.

And I shared what I saw as some next steps—further discernment and planning by the Coordinating & Advisory Committee at a retreat in late September, as well as consultation with the staff team and other Friends charged with responsibilities for stewarding and shepherding the service of Friends through the Yearly Meeting.

At our meeting on Saturday, we will hear some recommendations on how the projects before us might be coordinated and carried forward. I hope Friends will receive them as the fruits of the careful and considered discernment that I believe they reflect. I trust we will hear more recommendations at our coming meetings about ways that the abundant hopes and commitments before us might be translated, prioritized, coordinated, or simply acknowledged and released. I take solace in the affirmation that we cannot do and be all things—even all good things—and we are never called to.

In my report to Annual Sessions, I shared a perspective on some of the fruits of Friends' work over the past decade, most specifically in the clear commitment to nurture the thriving of local meetings, and the growth and many steps taken to help us enact this intention in ongoing ways. I shared my conviction that we're now ready—and that it's time—to renew and deepen our efforts in alignment with this purpose.

This conviction remains clear in my mind, echoing the affirmation of Rufus Jones (China, ME Meeting) in 1944, in the quotation that appears at the beginning of this report. It's striking to me that Jones, a

key architect of so many central Quaker institutions of the 20th century (FUM, AFSC, FWCC...) would, in the last years of his life, speak so urgently and clearly about the need for us to measure the usefulness of our Quaker institutional work first and foremost by the actual fruits of that work in the life and ministry of local meetings. This, I believe “Uncle Rufus” would affirm, is a warning and an affirmation for our service.

Here's the thing: I think it would be unlikely that many Friends would object to this purpose in principle. In some ways, it seems self-evident and non-controversial. Do we want to support local meetings? Of course we do!

And yet, if we take this purpose seriously, as we increasingly “center” an attention to the thriving of the life of the Spirit in our meetings, and weigh our decisions and our investments of energy, time, and resources with this lens, it will mean acknowledging more of the trade-offs. It will mean a renewed recognition that choosing to do one thing deeply means choosing not to do others. For me, acknowledging the need to choose—especially among imperfect options—can be very uncomfortable. Sometimes this brings a resistance to act, in hopes of avoiding others’ reactions, or strong emotions. Inaction, too, is a choice.

When I listen for Guidance with as much humility as I can, and when I follow that Guidance to make these challenging choices, I so often find a greater inward freedom and aliveness for service on the other side. In that, I glimpse the fruits of the Spirit.

We cannot insulate ourselves from the responsibility of choice—whatever we do or don’t do, there will be consequences. We can’t get it “right” every time. We can’t make everyone happy. We can only be as faithful as we can, taking one step at a time, knowing that—in this grace shadowed life—we are never abandoned, never truly alone.

Here, then, a few further updates on some of those steps:

1. **Affirming growth into a new role, and an updated title, for Nia Thomas.** As I mentioned in my last report, in keeping with the Yearly Meeting’s discernment as reflected in our funding priorities, I have been working with the staff and Coordinating & Advisory Committee to discern ways to increase my focus on nurturing local meetings, particularly allowing for more attention to visiting, writing, and encouraging Friends serving in ministry and servant leadership roles in their meetings. A significant step in this shift has aligned well with the recognition of a reality that has been taking shape for some time: acknowledging and affirming a new scope and title for the role in which Nia Thomas (Northampton) serves on behalf of the Yearly Meeting.

As many Friends are aware, for the last few years Nia has served as *Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator*, with a particular focus on spiritual formation, training in Quaker practice, and shepherding our work on inclusive leadership development. Building on her experience and our shared learning during my sabbatical last year—during which she served as “Acting Secretary for Programs & Administration”—as of this new fiscal year beginning in October, Nia is more formally moving into the new role of *Program Director*, with more inclusive responsibility for shepherding the Yearly Meeting’s programmatic work.

This re-naming more fully reflects much of what she has already been doing, including providing day-to-day supervision to the Youth Ministries staff, providing programmatic insights, guidance,

and integration to Sessions planners, partnering with Friends sharing their gifts and experience through the many small and large programmatic opportunities offered through the Yearly Meeting, leading planning and supporting the launch of the third offering of the Nurturing Faithfulness program, and playing a key role in improving our evaluation and learning, to better inform our discernment and strengthen our work together. This fall Nia has also begun a manageably paced, part-time graduate certificate in program evaluation, which is already bearing fruit in new insights.

Some of this work is new and will bring new challenges. And yet I know that I and many Friends have seen consistently how Nia's service has exemplified a key intention for the fruits of faithful leadership as described in our approved priorities: "free(ing) the gifts of the whole in a community in which all are called to ministry."

I hope Friends will take the opportunity to celebrate this affirmation of Nia's growth in her gifts and service, and offer her your support and encouragement as we move into this new season together. Her contact information remains unchanged: nia@neym.org.

- 2. Request for support of a local meeting with resolution of a property and stewardship matter.** I was recently contacted by the clerk and recording clerk of Weare (NH) Monthly Meeting, seeking assistance from the Yearly Meeting in resolving a responsibility for a historic meetinghouse that is no longer an active part of the life and ministry of the meeting. This is the South Pittsfield Meetinghouse (located some 45 minutes' drive from Weare Meeting's primary place of worship), not the Henniker Meetinghouse (which is their current place of worship).

After conversation and review of documents and steps ongoing, it became clear that it might be helpful to the monthly meeting for the Permanent Board to assume responsibility for the historic meetinghouse building until its future can be resolved more permanently. The monthly meeting has minuted its desire to resolve its interest in the property, but before I felt clear to encourage them to proceed with a more formal request, guidance from the Permanent Board was needed.

I can give further context at our meeting, but **the request for consideration is whether the Permanent Board would encourage me, in consultation with the Clerk of the Permanent Board, to continue to work with the monthly meeting to effect a transfer of ownership from the monthly meeting to the Yearly Meeting, if Weare Monthly Meeting is led to formally minute such a request.**

- 3. Toward a Review of Governance and Program with Friends Camp.** Responding to a request from the Friends Camp Clerk, Treasurer, and Director, and consistent with a hope many Friends have affirmed in the last few years, Coordinating & Advisory Committee is recommending a proposed process for a review of governance and program review of Friends Camp. A document providing a framework and guidance for the governance and operations of Friends Camp was created by the Yearly Meeting in 2016, with the intention for periodic review. This is overdue, and I hope will both give short-term practical guidance and help both Friends Camp and the wider Yearly Meeting to engage deeply and generatively with the relationship, oversight, and programmatic approach of this vibrant and dynamic youth ministry under our care. **For more details, please refer to the attached document, which includes both a one-page summary of the overall process as envisioned (for affirmation), and a proposal for a more detailed**

charge for the first phase of the work (for approval). I will present these recommendations on behalf of Coordinating & Advisory Committee at our meeting.

- 4. Progress Report from the Anti-Racism Consultation Working Group (ARC WG).** At the request of the ARC WG, I can report that the group has continued to meet regularly and has prayerfully sought to carry out its charge. The group has discerned a set of criteria, and important considerations and questions, for seeking a consultant to accompany the Yearly Meeting; researched consultants with whom we hope to engage; and created an initial description for a scope of work to share with prospective consultants. Beginning in the coming weeks, members of the group will be contacting the consultants we have identified for preliminary consultations. **The current goal is to bring to the Permanent Board in February 2023 if possible, a further report and recommendation for approval of a consultant to work with the Yearly Meeting.**

As a reminder (from the approved charge of the working group), this group is charged:

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

I’m encouraged by the progress this group is making in fulfilling its charge, and by an orientation to the work that seems spiritually grounded, intentional, pragmatic, and detail oriented.

I’m hopeful that as this process unfolds it will provide fruitful responses to some of the questions and concerns Friends have been holding as this journey of growth, learning, and change continues. The ARC WG is being clerked by Leslie Manning in her role as Clerk of the Permanent Board.

- 5. Update on last fiscal year.** Though the closing of the recently ended fiscal year is not yet complete, some of the outstanding variables noted in my report in September do seem to have resulted in a larger than budgeted deficit for last year.

While importantly household and local meeting giving was largely consistent with last year (though household giving has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels), both support for necessary staffing transitions and the costs of Sessions having exceed Sessions income contributed to a projected shortfall. Our finances were insulated in part by remaining pandemic relief (PPP) funding, planned refunds of pre-paid health insurance premiums, and lower expenditures in some areas. One way to interpret this could be that we are belatedly experiencing financial impacts of the pandemic, after two years of less substantial disruptions to our finances. While several of the factors that contributed to a deficit this past year are one-time or rare occurrences, it will be important for there to be careful consideration of the implications of a changing financial, demographic, and behavioral landscape as we plan for future Sessions, both in 2023 and in the coming years (see items on Sessions below).

I understand the Treasurer will share a brief further report at our meeting, and a fuller report will be presented at the February Permanent Board meeting when the financial statements are finalized, and we have a more complete picture. The Finance Committee is aware of these developments and will be considering these questions in an ongoing way, both as it relates to the current fiscal year, and in developing the budget for the coming year.

6. **Two Items on Sessions.**

First, an update specific to Sessions 2023: Many Friends may know that at Sessions 2022, Friends were asked to check out early on Thursday morning to accommodate a change to the academic calendar for Castleton University (a change by the central administration for the Vermont state college system) that required new students to move into rooms being used for Sessions with a very short changeover. We recently learned that due to continued constraints on campus beyond the control of the local administration, we will face a similar challenge this year with our planned dates.

In consultation with Sessions planners, Coordinating & Advisory, and Castleton University, it has become clear that for several reasons, moving the dates of Sessions to a different week to create more spaciousness is not a viable option for us for 2023. We will need to consider shifting our dates (or our location) in future years.

For this year, we are proceeding with planning to begin Sessions with Friday arrivals on August 4, and will be exploring ways to move as many arrivals as possible to Friday evening. Already more than 1/3 of Sessions participants have arrived on Friday evening for several years, so at least in one way this is not as big a change as it might seem. We will explore in the planning process how we might move more events forward, starting Sessions formally earlier in the day on Saturday, and planning for checkouts and departures likely on Wednesday afternoon, rather than Thursday morning. While there will be many details to be explored and worked out, we are committed to doing that as part of the Sessions Planning process as it gets more fully underway this month, so that it can benefit from ongoing consultation with Friends responsible for the various aspects of Sessions.

More will be shared soon, as part of ongoing Sessions updates. For now, questions, comments, and suggestions can be shared with Phil Veatch, Clerk of Sessions Planning, at sessions@neym.org; I am also happy to respond to questions or to receive feedback at our meeting.

Second, about the context and dynamics of Sessions as a whole: I've previously shared my concern for the right ordering of resources of time, energy, attention, money, and exertion that Sessions in its current conception demands. Since we met in September, those concerns have been affirmed by the financial news, mentioned above, that the combination of additional costs, increasing demands on staff time, and reduced in-person attendance from Sessions contributed to what is likely a substantial operating deficit in the fiscal year which concluded at the end of September.

While it may not be a great comfort, it seems important for Friends to be aware that we as New England Yearly Meeting are not alone in facing challenges as the landscape of large Quaker

gatherings changes. Recent conversations with my counterparts in several yearly meetings have focused on the increasing pressures faced by such gatherings, of which New England Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions is among the largest in North America. While Sessions remains a vibrant and precious time, and while I am confident that the commitment many Friends feel to our Annual Sessions continues to be strong, it would be wise to prepare ourselves for the likelihood that the transitions and transformations in our world may call for new forms in the coming years, or at a minimum may require an increasing amount of Friends' resources and attention to sustain.

Just as the gathering of the Yearly Meeting in 1661 looked very different from the gathering of Friends in 2022, so future gatherings may call for quite different forms than the large-scale, multi-day, multigenerational, residential, campus-based annual event many of us have been familiar with for the past several decades. If the expectations Friends hold for facilities and services that will be provided as part of Sessions continue to grow as they have in recent years, these questions may become increasingly acute.

I'm grateful that Coordinating & Advisory and Sessions planners are aware of and considering these concerns and trust more insight may emerge with time. I wonder how this one event among so many can be more focused, simplified, and nourishing for the life of our local meetings and our common life as a regional spiritual body.

###

As a supplement for your awareness, I've been keeping notes on some of the questions I've heard Friends with a primary present commitment to service in their local meetings asking and wrestling with this past spring, summer, and fall. Here are a few of those questions:

- How does our understanding of God's will for us, as expressed in part in the Peace Testimony, relate to present conflicts like the ongoing war in Ukraine? Does our shared commitment to pacifism go beyond foreign policy recommendations about the efficacy of strategic nonviolence? Are we willing to take positions that may be unpopular, not only among those we are accustomed to disagreeing with, but with those with whom we are accustomed to agreeing?
- As a Christian tradition, what is our role as Friends in engaging with the growing and corrosive influence of Christian Nationalism in the United States?
- How can we respond with love and appropriate clarity when participants in our meetings seek to impose their perspectives on others, or engage in bullying to achieve their goals, regardless of what is affirmed as the sense of the meeting? How can we affirm the essential role of a willingness to yield to the Spirit, and to listen for the voice of God through one another, in Friends' corporate discernment?
- Given the continuing devastation resulting from the opioid epidemic in the towns and cities of our region, and the disproportionate impact on the rural poor, how can Friends in our meeting be a part of our wider communities' responses?
- How can we nourish the depth and grounding of our meetings for worship, in this third year of the pandemic? How are we caring for Friends exercising gifts of eldership and vocal ministry, whose service is so deeply needed in these times of disruption and anxiety for so many?
- What, fundamentally, do Friends believe? Where is the source of our hope? In a time of such change, what aspects of Friends tradition, theology, and practice should we sustain, and what can or should be let go or changed to accommodate the demands of the moment, or the insights of our times? How is the witness of our faith different from a secular political position?
- How can we restore or foster relationships among participants in our meetings, in a time of such exhaustion and loneliness for many? What is our role in responding to polarization and extremism in public settings, including in local government and political activity? What is the right balance or proportion of attention and energy now between interpersonal dynamics and concerns internal to the meeting, and relationships and ministry locally, beyond the meeting?
- How can our meeting address the tendency to self-isolate into social groups and activities where many rarely have opportunities to build relationships with people who hold very different views from our own, including those we find challenging or deeply wrong? How might some—who are led and able—develop relationships across these divides, even when there is deep disagreement?
- As newer attenders seek to become more active in our meetings, as we return to in-person worship, how do we reaffirm and establish healthy boundaries and shared expectations relating to child safety and safeguarding vulnerable people, caring both for people and the meeting?

Friends Camp Governance Review: Overview of Recommended Process

Phase 1. Focused Review of 2016 Friends Camp Governance (November 2022-February 2023)

- Recommend clearly indicated edits to document current practice, where no significant concerns or questions exist
- Identify inconsistencies in perspective and description of practice in FCG document
- Distill and present a list of outstanding “big picture” questions regarding the ministry of Friends Camp and its relationship with the wider Yearly Meeting which need to be answered by the Yearly Meeting

Phase II. Facilitated Listening and Reflection Process (February 2023-May 2023)

- Based on the “big picture” questions gathered in Phase I, engage in a facilitated listening process engaging Camp and Operating Division leaders and other stakeholders bringing needed perspectives.
- The focus of this facilitated listening process is to understand and affirm why the Yearly Meeting operates Friends Camp, and clarify what Friends hope that Friends Camp accomplishes, now and in the future.
- The primary outcome of this process is to create a simple, usable articulation of Camp’s “program theory”—how and why a program is expected to work, the connection between the activities of the program and the outcomes we hope to achieve—including how this program theory relates to and builds upon the overall purpose and priorities of NEYM.
- This process may include different approaches to collaborative listening including larger group interactive visioning sessions, focus group conversations, and one-on-one interviews.
- The resulting documents (which may include short text as well as diagrams) will be presented to the Yearly Meeting for approval.
- A charge for this group and nominations for service will be brought to the Permanent Board for approval on February 11.

Phase III. Integration & Implementation (May 2023+) (timeline TBD based on approved recommendations)

- Based on the approved program theory and recommendations from Phase II, it is expected that a working group with involvement from Friends Camp and the Operating Division would create recommendations for alignment of current practices (including legal, financial, personnel, and programmatic). Changes which would result in an enduring impact on the wider Yearly Meeting (for example, separate incorporation) will be brought to the Yearly Meeting for approval.

Phase I. Friends Camp Governance Review Working Group

Reason for Establishment and Charge/Purpose:

To begin the process of a substantive review of the governance and program theory of Friends Camp as a ministry of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends.

Pursuant to a recommendation from Coordinating & Advisory Committee to Permanent Board, this working group's charge (Phase 1 of a larger process) has four parts:

- 1) To conduct a review of the Friends Camp Good Governance (FCG) document,
- 2) to identify inconsistencies (both in perspective and in description of practice) in the current governance framework;
- 3) where possible, to make recommendations regarding suggested edits to the Good Governance document that the Permanent Board can approve at this time without further significant discernment;
- 4) To distill and present a list of outstanding "big picture" questions which need to be answered in order for a complete update to the Good Governance document,

The list resulting from Phase I will serve as a guide for a longer term, more in-depth and consultative review occurring over the next ~1 year.

Membership:

Initial markup will be conducted by the Friends Camp Director and YM Secretary, and will invite and incorporate input and comments from the Friends Camp Treasurer, the former Clerk of Friends Camp Committee, the Clerk of the Permanent Board, the NEYM Treasurer, the current Clerk of the Friends Camp Committee, and a Friend to review the document from the perspective of the Youth Ministries of the Yearly Meeting beyond Friends Camp.

Responsibilities:

- To review the existing good governance document.
- To submit a completed report, with recommended changes to the FCG document and list of big picture questions (see measures of success) to Permanent Board on February 11, 2023.

Supervision: (e.g., whom or which body, nature of relationship)

Accountable to Permanent Board, with interim guidance or clarification provided by Coordinating & Advisory Committee.

Reporting: (e.g., deadlines and recipients)

- Interim consultation with Coordinating & Advisory Committee/Friends Camp leadership as needed
- Final report and recommendations to Permanent Board, from Friends Camp Director and Yearly Meeting Secretary with affirmation from Coordinating & Advisory Committee, at the February 11, 2023 Permanent Board meeting (advance documents deadline 1 week prior)

Measures of Success:

- Acceptance and approval of report and recommendations to update Friends Camp governance document
- Identification of outstanding “big picture” questions regarding the relationship between Friends Camp and the wider Yearly Meeting that need further discernment and clarification.

Date projected to complete work:

Feb 11, 2023.

Process for laying down:

To be laid down by Permanent Board following final report, Feb 11, 2023.

Next Step Anticipated:

That a more detailed recommendation for a further process of facilitated listening and reflection (Phase II), along with nominations to serve as part of this listening group, will be brought by the Coordinating & Advisory Committee to the Permanent Board on February 11, to be charged and undertake Phase II of this process between the Permanent Board’s meetings on February 11 and May 20, 2023.

###

Noticing Patterns Debrief of Sept 17, 2022 Permanent Board Meeting
Held via zoom on Sept 22, 2002

Present: Leslie Manning, Newell Isbell Shinn (note-taking), Polly Attwood (convening), Melody Brazo, Fran Lightsom, Edward Mair, Gail Melix, Ellen Neelands, Mary Zwirner, Donn Weinholtz, Deana Chase, Susan Davies, Lisa Graustein.

Participants were asked to respond to four queries:

- 1) What patterns of oppression or faithfulness do you want to return to from PB in order to reflect on and learn from them?
- 2) What reflections or questions do you have about the Noticing Practice at the recent PB meeting?
- 3) What are you learning about the process of noticing patterns of oppression and faithfulness? Any Questions?
- 4) Guidance for the cleaning (of what we take back to the permanent board). These are notes, not minutes we've come to unity about, nor a verbatim account of what was said.

SOME PATTERNS NOTICED at Permanent Board (PB) Meeting of Sept 17

RSEJ Minute

Much conversation centered on consideration of the RSEJ minute, both on the floor of sessions and when revisited at PB. Some noticings and wonderings included:

- Did we do enough to hold and care for our friend who was in pain and sharing with us? ● Whether, when and how do we honor people's/a group's work when we have discerned it's time to lay it down or shift it in some way?
- At sessions the minute before laying down RSEJ was about laying down development and Friends were easy to do it, because Friends know and trust the YM's commitment to raise funds, whereas Friends don't necessarily trust or have the same confidence in carrying forward with racial justice work.

Nature of Silence

Friends lifted up some noticings around the "nature of silence" or "different kinds of silence" Silence that is . . .

- an absence of response and can leave people wondering, "have I been heard"?
- an indication of a deeper listening or holding
- a listening beyond the vehicle (person?) that is bringing the message.
- Sometimes is a genuine insensitivity and uncaring
- RELATED QUESTIONS
 - What is the nature of our silence?
 - Do we think we are hearing a person spoken through, or are we experiencing more of a human resistance to what we are hearing?

"One way of reading our history is that we have been buffeted by very charismatic leaders and when we don't agree we split. But there is in some instances a quality to our silence that is not just the absence of speaking. There are at times voices, sometimes hesitant, sometimes tremulous, that lift up a piece of what together we can hear. It is our duty, our responsibility, to all co-clerk. That is the beauty of our practice, that we are all clerking. *What is it we can hear*

together that lifts us up out of ourselves and makes it possible to hear truth and to live in that truth?"

NOTICINGS ABOUT THE NOTICING PRACTICE

- Part of the [noticing] practice is learning, part of what we are learning is how to speak more truth to each other. This isn't about moral judgment, it is about things that happen between us, that are real, and how we do and don't talk about them. How do we learn to turn the soil more, speak more directly and plainly, and seek truth together?
- At PB we were clearly under much pressure from the beginning of the day, without enough time to let a flourishing practice of noticing really develop. The practice itself, of noticing patterns, is a way of clearing and deepening.
- The way [NPWG] designed the [sentence] prompts [I feel, I see, I hear, I know, I wonder...] is as a way of pausing, checking in with ourselves and [listening for] what is going on, and we could do that in a small group where things could be discharged and things could be noticed that can be brought back to the whole Meeting.
- Can we envision business meetings of 60 or 400 people where we talk with small groups of two or three other people, take the opportunity for creating connection, checking in with each other and the Spirit, and then processing and developing what we are feeling, thinking, knowing with one another.

"I love the power of the pause, allowing a little more to come through."

WONDERINGS & QUESTIONS:

"Let's pay attention to where we get stuck"

Two places PB seemed to repeatedly get bogged down were:

- agenda items related to race and power
- agenda items related to governance and structure where folks brought very different levels of personal involvement and past experience to the consideration

"I noticed how much we talked about wove through notions of context and framing, how much information to present, who has it, what things mean."

Hybrid Meetings for Business

"How many of us feel competent about being in a hybrid meeting—both virtual and in physical space? Whether we are clerking or present as participants, we need to be able to hold both the space we are sitting in and the spaces in which all the other friends are sitting. *I don't know how to do that yet. I don't think any of us do.*"

In this new hybrid mode,

- How do we find a sense of the meeting?
- How do we feel the prayers of others?
- How do we find a pace for speaking, clerking, listening?

"I wonder how we can arrange our agenda and ourselves and our hearts differently, in order to hold the most important parts of our business and our hearts and how to support that?"

About Friends public witness/speaking:

"There have been times when the religious society of friends has been dead wrong about things, like the Indian Boarding Schools or solitary confinement in the prison system. I wonder if one of the reasons people are so silent (in terms of public positions) is because they wonder if we know what we're doing? Are we following the Spirit, or just doing what we think we ought

to do? It's a question almost everybody who clerks holds: who are we following?"

Time and Agendas

- I wonder if it is possible or faithful to do all that we are trying to do?
- I wonder how we could arrange our agenda and ourselves and our hearts differently, in order to hold the most important parts of our business and our hearts and how to support that?

"The tension between the clerk's responsibility to move the agenda forward and being dismissive is one of the biggest things we need to look at in moving this work forward."

Noticing Patterns of Oppression & Faithfulness Working Group Report to Permanent Board

Nov 5. 2022

History of NEYM Charge to Noticing Patterns Working Group (NPWG)

The original charge for a Noticing Patterns process came from NEYM Business Sessions 2018 to Ministry and Counsel and remains alive and at the heart of the spiritual wholeness and growth of New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM).

- *to identify people to observe, name, and reflect back to NEYM members and constituents long-standing patterns and practices that result in our complicity in oppression, patterns that to differing degrees are seen and unseen by and across the body of NEYM.”*
(NEYM 2018-53)

In December 2020, NPWG came under the care of Permanent Board (PB) which approved this addition to its charge:

- to expand NEYM’s capacity – as individuals, monthly and quarterly meetings, committees, and programs, and at yearly meeting sessions – to take up an active, persistent and loving practice of noticing and interrupting patterns of oppression and cultivating and affirming new patterns of faithfulness.
- to invite in people who are ready to join this work now and offer opportunities for ongoing training of and skill building with an ever growing circle of people who can engage in and facilitate this work across NEYM.

Reflections from Sessions 2022:

In service of this charge, this past summer, we worked with the Presiding Clerk to move away from having members of the working group “notice” for the body and instead had more invitation and space for every and any Friend to notice. This happened in different ways with some Friends using the sentence stems we offer and others sharing noticings in different ways.

In past years we have had a physical and e-mail box through which Friends can share what they are noticing at Sessions. Every year we have done this, we have felt overwhelmed by both the volume of what is shared

and the pain that Friends are expressing. It is beyond our charge to offer the pastoral care needed to honorably tend to these sharings nor is it in our charge to do more than lift them up. So, this year, we did not offer a way for Friends to share noticings with us via email or a physical box. However, several Friends did still reach out to members of the working group to share their noticings, pain, and sometimes request for support with navigating or addressing harm they were experiencing. We feel, deeply, the lack of a body that can tend to harm at both the pastoral level and the organizational level.

- Noticing Patterns is charged, in part, with lifting up moments of harm. *How do we expand the capacity of all of us to notice & interrupt harm we do to each other?*
- Once noticed, *how do we build the capacity to tend to and heal harm within our community?*

Several patterns emerged this summer that we want to lift up here with the hope that we will continue and deepen the patterns of faithfulness and that PB can ensure areas of concern are addressed in the coming year (*numbers are for ease of reference and do not imply priority*):

1. We notice the consistent faithfulness of the tech team and staff in making hybrid Sessions happen with deep concern for accessibility. The care with which cameras were placed so that Friends could hear and see those speaking, the level of practice and preparation, and the in-the-moment calm response to unpredictable tech issues are all acts of deep faithfulness. The addition of a screen dedicated just to live transcription also made business sessions more accessible to those on campus who are hard of hearing.
2. We notice that most often we center¹ the perspective and experiences of those who hold the most societal privilege:
 - a. white Friends talking about the lives and conditions of global BIPOC Friends and BIPOC communities while visitors from some of the lands being talked about were not invited to speak to us;

¹ “Center” in this context means whose lived experience, identities, worldview, and cultural norms are the space from which we are operating and acting. It is not about intention, but about the implicit viewpoint and ways of doing things that are dominant.

- b. the orientation to those on campus as primary and those on Zoom as secondary in both the messaging and in that those on Zoom had virtually no access to informal social spaces;
- c. wanting to share details of the tremendous harm done to Native Peoples as a means of convincing non-Native Friends to support the minute on Indian Boarding Schools (a few Friends intervened on this matter so that the presentation was substantially changed before it came to the floor of Sessions.)

In our own work, we have found the following questions incredibly helpful:

- i. *To whom is this item/event accessible? How do we know?*
 - ii. *Who does this item/event center? How do we know?*
3. While we notice the growing faithfulness of the Clerks' Table to pause for noticings during Business and then including those noticings in the Sessions Minutes, we also notice the number of times the focus was on moving through agenda items in ways that cut short this space and time to build relationships and move into deeper spiritual discernment.
 4. We notice Friends honoring the Covid and other health protocols and working diligently to respect each other's boundaries and needs regarding Covid practices. We honor the faithfulness of the staff and volunteers who worked to create practices and shared them in ways that allowed us all to step into keeping each other healthy.
 5. We notice the ways that the pandemic has created isolation among Friends and demanded even more work from our staff. We hold concern for how we can faithfully tend to the many needs of our community in ways that are sustainable for staff, leadership, and volunteers.

Going Forward:

As a working group, when we reflect on this past year and Sessions, we see some clear needs emerging that we want to highlight in this report. There are needs we, acting within our charge, can meet. And there are

needs that are beyond our charge that we hope Permanent Board can take up.

In the past year, NPWG supported the Noticing Practice in a number of NEYM spaces, many related to Annual Sessions 2022 –Theme and Speaker Team, Sessions Coordinating Team, Sessions Planning Team, and the faithful partnering with Permanent Board all year, including regular debriefs for learning, and a one-time meeting with NEYM Coordinating and Advising.

However, there is both the need and the desire among Friends to have more spaces outside of Sessions to offer Friends places to practice, unpack, and explore the practice of noticing. We have plans to offer a day long workshop in December for Mt Toby Meeting at their request and are looking to plan some NEYM-wide workshops in the later winter and spring. We are in touch with several meetings that are using the noticing practice in different ways and have heard from Friends throughout NEYM who want more tools for addressing different systems of oppression as they show up among our Religious Society.

A need we deeply feel that is well beyond our charge is the larger work of addressing systems of oppression within NEYM. Noticing is one practice in a larger web of support for change. Once patterns of oppression are noticed, there need to be people who are available to offer pastoral care to those who have been harmed. Another group is needed to discern what to do with all that has been noticed: *What are we ready/needing to change? How are we going to do that change? Which patterns of oppression are we going to address now?*

Additionally, when a group steps into naming patterns of oppression and talking about our cultural practices and ways of being together that can be harmful, those who have been most centered by those practices and ways of being can feel a sense of loss, threat, or disorientation. This can manifest as resistance to the process or noticings. Any group undergoing the practice of noticing and change-work needs to have strategies for responding to resistance that are consistent with the vision towards which we are working. Otherwise, we respond to resistance in ways that replicate the very systems of power that we say we want to interrupt and change.

Finally, in any change process, there needs to be a place for people to reflect on what we are learning along the way. While each system of

oppression has its own unique patterns and dynamics, all systems of oppression are intertwined and share parallel or common patterns of power-over. Taking the time and space to reflect and process learning - including resistance—along the way, helps the body increase its capacity for change.

All of these groups—noticing, pastoral care, discernment & action, working with resistance, and on-going learning—need to be working towards a shared vision. The vision is who we will be when we have uprooted the patterns of oppression and nurtured the patterns of faithfulness among us.

The vision is what we get when we do this work, and what we get is so much more than what we lose or fear losing. God holds for us a much more vibrant, inclusive, dynamic Beloved Community than we have yet experienced. Below is a graphic that outlines how these different groups work together to bring about the change we need, to bring about the realm of the Divine.

Wholistic Change Process



Our charge is clear, and it is but one part of this larger process. While the current groups that exist in place of NEYM Ministry & Counsel have care for supporting monthly meetings with pastoral care issues and when conflicts arise in their meetings, there is no body currently within NEYM that

is charged with how we hold conflict that arises at the yearly meeting level, how we make change, how we respond to resistance in ways that are aligned with our vision, nor how we support the on-going learning. When conflicts arise, both within Monthly Meetings and outside of them, stemming from patterns of oppression, who tends to them? *How are we organizing ourselves to tend to the gaps in our current form so that we can live into the vision that God is calling us to?*

While our vision exists across several documents, it has not been clearly articulated in one place so that we can all hold it. The [NEYM Purpose & Priorities](#) lays out a substantial part of our shared vision for who we are growing into. Our minutes on Repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery, Challenging White Supremacy, Addressing Climate Change, and committing to apologizing to Native Peoples of the northeast all hold parts of our aspirations of who we want to become as a Religious Society. And, Spirit also probably has some more things to reveal to us. Articulating this vision will help Friends throughout NEYM do the work to make it come true.

This is a complex and overwhelming time in our world. Speaking our vision clearly so that we can act together, in faithfulness helps us not only cope with the state of the world but act in ways that help us all move towards realizing the Beloved Community.

In faith, The Noticing Patterns Working Group

Polly Attwood (clerk), Melody Brazo, Melissa Foster, Lisa Graustein, Janet Hough, Becky Jones, Anna Lindo, L.V.M. Shelton, Pamela Terrien. Also, Susan Davies and Donn Weinholz (serving as elders from PB)

NEYM Nominating Committee report to Permanent Board – 5 November 2022

Dear Friends,

The Nominating Committee thanks you for your prayers and referrals of candidates to serve our yearly meeting. We deeply appreciate your gathering for a called meeting in October to consider Theme & Speakers candidates.

Because we would prefer to name the rising PB clerk, rising Treasurer, M&C clerk, and the Recording Clerk for annual sessions as soon as individuals have discerned they are clear to serve, we may need to return to you with names prior to the February Permanent Board meeting. Please let us know of any names that rise for consideration for these positions.

The membership of our committee is now seven. With joyful anticipation, we look forward to an additional eight members joining us when the Naming Committee has discovered who they are 😊

As committee shepherds, we support healthy committee work in alignment with the Purposes, Procedures & Composition of each committee. As the yearly meeting looks for ways to work more nimbly, the Nominating Committee strives to hold the big picture as new [forms of service](#) arise. We are mindful that Permanent Board has several working groups under its care, and have a concern about those that extend beyond 12 months. We wonder if/when an issue needs ongoing attention, how do we reevaluate and move the work to a standing committee?

At this meeting, we offer Eric Cleven and Carl Williams for second reading discernment for Theme and Speakers. We have heard no concerns about either, only affirmations.

Second Reading:

Theme & Speakers Team – Erik Cleven, Souhegan Preparative Meeting to begin immediately

Erik has experience with Friends both here and abroad, including having served as the clerk of Norway Yearly Meeting as well as the clerk of Dover Quarterly Meeting. Erik cares deeply about the experiences of Friends in local meetings, he listens deeply, and we believe his experience as a professor will also serve as a benefit to this team of Friends.

Theme & Speakers Team – Carl Williams, Plainfield Meeting to begin immediately

Carl Served faithfully for many years as a member of Ministry and Counsel of New England Yearly Meeting, as well as the clerk of Northwest Quarterly Meeting. Carl brings a grounding presence, and is skilled at listening for how the Spirit is moving among us.

Respectfully,

Jacqueline Stillwell

Clerk, NEYM Nominating Committee

Theme and Speakers Team

Description:

The Theme and Speakers Team consists of the Presiding Clerk, the Sessions Clerk and 4-6 other Friends chosen for their connectedness to the wider body of Friends, as well as their ability to prayerfully listen to those Friends' condition.

In September of each year, the Theme and Speakers Team and the Coordination Team will meet to consider the Sessions which just occurred, a process which includes reviewing sessions evaluation forms, to learn from the recent event.

Following this meeting, the Theme and Speakers Team will meet to discern the theme for the next Annual Sessions, taking into consideration their sense of the spiritual condition of the body of Friends who attended the previous Annual Sessions; their sense of how Spirit is moving (or impeded) in the wider body; and wider input. This theme should be a few words or a phrase, which will be a simple reflection of the work they believe the body needs.

The Theme and Speakers Team will also discern what guests should be invited to speak to the gathered body to support and deepen Session's engagement with the theme.

The theme and speakers are presented to and confirmed by the Coordination Team, after which the work of the Theme and Speakers Team is complete.

Current Situation:

Last year a new Sessions Planning Purpose, Procedure & Composition was provisionally approved. In that first cycle, the Theme and Speakers Team was not able to convene until December. The experience from the first year will inform this year's work, and help build functionality for the team. Ideally, the Theme and Speakers Team would be named and convened before the end of September 2022.

Gifts and Leadings:

The work of discerning a theme and discerning speakers can be considered to halves of a whole, and the Theme and Speakers Team needs Friends who have gifts in both directions. Friends with a sense of what we are yearning for and what we need to hear may bring depth to the discernment of the theme, while Friends connected to wider Quaker communities, like FGC, FUM, other Yearly Meetings, as well as bloggers, elders and mentors, would be helpful in naming and contacting potential speakers.

Durham Monthly Meeting of Friends
Durham, Maine USA

October 16, 2022

Beloved Friends,

We send warm greetings and prayers for health and safety with our dear attender, Kim Bolshaw. Kim came to us through her children and has stayed with us as they grow on. Kim has been an important member of our community, and we are happy to share her enthusiasm and warm hospitality with all of you.

Kim is an open, caring and responsible person in our meeting, and faithfully cares for our older building and grounds as our custodian. Kim is also a farmer, and cultivates food and beauty for all. We pray that her time with you is fruitful, and that the blessings of visitation, connection and celebration of the Life of the Spirit are warm and deep.

We hold you in our hearts and pray for you. May your time together be blessed.

In love and faith,

Leslie Manning
Clerk
Durham Meeting
New England Yearly Meeting

Approved at Durham Monthly Meeting on 10/16/22

July 9, 2022

Greetings to Cuban Friends,

Please welcome our member Frederick Charles (Fritz) Weiss into your worship and fellowship in connection with his participation as part of a delegation of visiting Friends from Portland Friends Meeting and other meetings in New England to Cuba in February 2023. The delegation will be attending the Cuba Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions and visiting our sister meeting in Velasco for the first time.

Fritz met with a clearness committee in early June, and then was heartily approved at our Meeting for Business to be a part of the delegation. Fritz and his wife Paula moved to Portland in 2019, and he and Paula jumped right into the spiritual life of our community. Fritz currently serves on our Meeting's Ministry and Council Committee, and is involved in many local, national, and international faith-based efforts to spread God's Light.

This will be Fritz's fourth trip to Cuba. Fritz is following a true leading to return to your country, as he has been visualizing himself in Cuba again, to see his Cuban brothers and sisters, and to experience the passionate worship of the Cuban Church.

We rejoice in this opportunity to send you our love, and strengthen our connections with the wider Quaker community, and to continue the Puente de Amigos relationship between NEYM and CYM that has been vibrant for more than 30 years. When Fritz and the rest of the delegation returns, we will be eager to learn from them of your activities and concerns.

We look forward to welcoming any of you to worship with us in Maine when circumstances allow.

Yours in Spirit,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert G. Linn". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and personal.

Co-Clerk, Portland Friends Meeting

July 9, 2022

Greetings to Cuban Friends,

Please welcome our member Hannah Colbert into your worship and fellowship in connection with her participation as part of a delegation of visiting Friends from Portland Friends Meeting and other meetings in New England to Cuba in February 2023. The delegation will be attending the Cuba Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions and visiting our sister meeting in Velasco for the first time.

Hannah met with a clearness committee in early June, and then was heartily approved at our Meeting for Business to be a part of the delegation. Hannah has been an active participant in our Meeting for several years, and has been a member since 2020. She has served on our Meeting's Ministry and Council Committee, and has been a leader in organizing the Millenials Group within our Meeting, with a particular passion for an intimate midweek Meeting for Worship.

Hannah has been interested in our sister relationship with Velasco Friends since it was formed and has served on the Velasco Sister Meeting Committee. She is fluent in Spanish. The question "Do I have a strong interest in spending time with Cuban Friends, to feel and understand their life, and to share with them in the life of the Spirit" speaks to Hannah. We feel that Hannah is being called to this delegation and it is our pleasure to recommend her as a visitor with Cuban Friends.

We rejoice in this opportunity to send you our love, and strengthen our connections with the wider Quaker community, and to continue the Puente de Amigos relationship between NEYM and CYM that has been vibrant for more than 30 years. When Hannah and the rest of the delegation returns, we will be eager to learn from them of your activities and concerns.

We look forward to welcoming any of you to worship with us in Maine when circumstances allow.

Yours in Spirit,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert B. Fain". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and personal.

Co-Clerk, Portland Friends Meeting

July 9, 2022

Greetings to Cuban Friends,

Please welcome our member Susan Mary Calhoun into your worship and fellowship in connection with her participation as part of a delegation of visiting Friends from Portland Friends Meeting and other meetings in New England to Cuba in February 2023. The delegation will be attending the Cuba Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions and visiting our sister meeting in Velasco for the first time.

Sue met with a clearness committee in early June, and then was heartily approved at our Meeting for Business to be a part of the delegation. Sue has been a loving and dedicated member of our Meeting for many years, and has served on many different committees during her time with us.

Sue has been holding a leading to visit in Cuba since the 1990s. She is fluent in Spanish (having been a Spanish teacher for many years). She has experience and is comfortable with programmed worship and with speaking about what drew her to Quakerism. We hope that her visit with Cuban Friends will be a blessing to them and to us.

We rejoice in this opportunity to send you our love, and strengthen our connections with the wider Quaker community, and to continue the Puente de Amigos relationship between NEYM and CYM that has been vibrant for more than 30 years. When Sue and the rest of the delegation returns, we will be eager to learn from them of your activities and concerns.

We look forward to welcoming any of you to worship with us in Maine when circumstances allow.

Yours in Spirit,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert H. Fein". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and personal.

Co-Clerk, Portland Friends Meeting







2022-11-05 PB Minutes with attachments

Final Audit Report

2023-03-02

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