

Progress Report and Recommended Next Steps:

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

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

- Stephen Crisp, 1691

Introduction:

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

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

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

How we got here: Why this report?

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

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

recommendations for future steps would be considered².

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

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

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

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

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

This is our report.

Respectfully submitted,

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

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

Report on the Gatherings on Spiritual Life & Ministry

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key Learning and Insights to Share

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

Without practice, without discipline, without continuous devotion, without failure, correction, re-dedication, re-orientation, [there is] no growth in the religious life... which is not an episode, or an event, but a life.

- Douglas V. Steere, in *Prayer and Worship*, 1938

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

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

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

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

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

1. We are reminded that Friends are engaged in a process of prayerful experimentation, learning, and discovery, and that this needs time. Even as we

continue to take steps forward into newness, and feel the Spirit urging us on, we encourage Friends to trust in the unfolding of God's time.

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

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

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

6. There is a cultural, worldly pressure and temptation to privilege *doing* over *being*, *activity* over prayerful *presence*. While action is needed in some places, we are reminded that sustained, prayerful attention and availability is also necessary. We

are called to abide in the dynamic tension between holding and doing, knowing that at the heart of our faith is paradox.

Recommendations for Permanent Board and Sessions Approval

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

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

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

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

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

- e. Consider reflections on state of society reports, statistical reports, and other news and information regarding the vitality and experience of local worshiping communities
 - f. Offer reports and updates about programmatic activities supporting local meetings in the past year, as well as plans and intentions looking ahead
 - g. Listening from this meeting, coupled with insights from the local meeting accompaniment body (see 1, above), and other opportunities, would inform the subsequent preparation of the NEYM State of Society report, which will be shepherded by the Clerk of Ministry & Counsel, supported by Friends they may be led to invite.
 - h. Would involve a variety of modalities for sharing and reflection, including some more directed and specific, and some more open and expansive.
- 3. As a regular part of Permanent Board meetings, and at Annual Sessions, host opportunities for the wider body of Friends in New England to learn about and celebrate Friends active in public ministry**
- 4. Offer regular opportunities for prayerful holding of the wider body of Friends in New England, for those led, and invite Friends to this discipline**
- a. The Clerk of Ministry & Counsel would work with the Presiding Clerk to invite Friends with a concern for prayer and eldership to hold the Yearly Meeting in prayer, both from their own homes and through simple in-person opportunities as this is possible, and as led.
 - b. This would involve inviting Friends to serve in this way, helping Friends know this is happening and how they can participate, encouraging opportunities for prayerful holding at particular times, and sharing prayer requests in a more consistent way.
- 5. The Yearly Meeting recognizes the expressed desire for opportunities for Friends serving in ministry and eldership to gather as led for “shop talk”, mentoring, mutual accountability, and learning**
- a. *In contrast with previous recommendations, these opportunities would not be initiated or formally organized by the Yearly Meeting. What follows is offered as an affirmation and reflection on what we have heard in our listening and discernment.*

- b. Guidance we have heard from experienced ministers and elders, that we feel is valuable to reflect to the wider body, and those who might consider hosting or attending such opportunities:
 - i. Opportunities need to be sufficiently focused and clear in scope to allow for deeper sharing and development of common language among Friends called to similar kinds of service (e.g. vocal ministry, eldership, pastoral counseling, prison ministry, witness). This allows for differences in experience to be acknowledged without forcing a “one-size-fits-all” approach.
 - ii. Opportunities should give attention to both creating conditions for trust and intimacy (relatively small size, space for sensitive sharing) and the need for prayerful holding, eldership, humility, and grounding through oversight.
 - iii. Friends offering invitations to such opportunities should be clear and explicit about the focus, format, and purpose, to help Friends understand if a particular opportunity might be nourishing or appropriate for them.
 - iv. It is hoped they will take a variety of shapes, at the leading of concerned Friends, or as hosted by local meetings and quarters.
 - v. We foresee the emphasis of these opportunities to be on personal faithfulness, on the journey of ministry and personal spiritual formation in Friends tradition as a long-term spiritual discipline, and on mutual encouragement, accompaniment, and accountability.
- c. As resources allow, and consistent with the criteria outlined here, the Yearly Meeting may consider light support for these activities through promotion, staff consultation, or funding for dependent care or travel expenses.
- d. The goal would be nurture a culture and ongoing practice of these kinds of gatherings of Friends called to ministry, eldership, and oversight in a variety of forms and rhythms

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

- a. Focus on developing capacity for religious education and spiritual formation *within local meetings*, possibly through peer circles and encouraging

engagement by Friends active in their local meetings with wider networks of religious educators.

- b. Lift up the existing tools, opportunities, and capacities the YM has developed in recent years for the nurture of spiritual life and service (e.g. the staff role of Quaker Practice & Leadership Facilitator; the calendar of programming opportunities and partnerships both in-person and online)
- c. Focus on increasing awareness, participation, and access to existing programming, including the Nurturing Faithfulness program and related opportunities; and shorter-term opportunities such as best practices in nominating; clerking and recording clerking workshops; faithful stewardship programming, and more

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

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

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

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

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

relevant equivalents, where applicable).

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

Proposed Process for the Yearly Meeting moving forward

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

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

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

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

Recommendations on Next Steps: This group, in consultation, discernment, and ongoing prayerful listening across the Yearly Meeting, will be responsible for

bringing to Sessions in 2025 a report on the experience and learning of the previous three years (2022-2025), and recommendations for next steps.

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Appendices

Appendix 1.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Permanent Board in November 2020, and the laying down of the Working Group on Ministry & Spiritual Life.

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

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

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

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

1. Regularly read and reflect on state of society reports;
2. pay attention to news shared in local meeting newsletters;
3. consider reports of Friends traveling and visiting (as well as visiting meetings themselves);
4. participate regularly in monthly local meeting leader calls, and contribute insights to planning for these calls;
5. call or email to check in with clerks of meetings on the life of the meeting overall;
6. meet and consult with the NEYM Presiding Clerk and Secretary (and the clerks of the relevant quarterly meetings, and others as appropriate) to support ongoing care and attention to the life of local meetings;
7. as needed or requested, provide specific support and presence with meetings [and quarterly meetings] in times of crisis or need for particular accompaniment;
8. Ensure appropriate integration and information-sharing within the group and with relevant partners (Secretary, Presiding Clerk, relevant staff), in ways that are consistent and timely, and that maintain appropriate confidentiality and care
9. Curate and moderate the “pastoral care” email list maintained by the Yearly Meeting, including promoting subscriptions, clarifying the scope of and guidelines for what

information will be shared, and considering how to strengthen the attention to prayer and care that this medium might provide;

10. Insights from this body would form an important stream informing the writing of the annual NEYM State of Society report;
11. Invite other Friends join in this work as needed, in support of particular situations or needs for accompaniment.

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

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

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

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

Gifts & experience needed: Spiritual and emotional maturity, gifts in oversight, pastoral care, and accompaniment, conflict resolution, prayerful holding, boundary-setting,

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

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

Clerk of Ministry and Counsel

Primary Function

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

This Friend will:

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

To keep the Clerk free for the essential work above, this Friend is asked to refrain from taking on other substantial administrative and project management tasks. Instead, the

M&C Clerk will be available to prayerfully advise and consult with staff and other volunteers as they carry out their duties.

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

Hours and Service Site

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

Accountability

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

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

Qualifications

- spiritual maturity and grounding in Friends faith and practice
- strong relationship with their local meeting
- evidence of a sustained gift in eldership
- depth of understanding of ministry, faith formation, Quaker practice, meeting life
- be a skilled, empathic listener, even while being able to hold a view different than the one expressed
- capacity to nurture trust
- consistent in clarifying and then meeting commitments
- be aware of key relational dynamics across NEYM
- be skilled at facilitating conversations among those holding differing perspectives
- communicate effectively in writing and in person
- be a good collaborator open to new methods and tools

Functions & Tasks

- Engage in regular listening for the spiritual condition and unfolding ministry among Friends in New England
- Receive and appropriately relay or refer requests made on behalf of Monthly and Quarterly Meetings
- Maintain supportive contact with Friends serving in public ministry
- Be in regular conversation with NEYM leadership about the spiritual condition of Friends and Friends Meetings and the nurture of ministry

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

Appendix 4. [Graphic](#) Reflecting Current and Proposed Support of Ministry & Spiritual Life



Yearly Meeting Support For Ministry & Spiritual Life

Connecting Friends in Similar Service [Current]

Friends with relevant gifts and experience partner with staff to host "peer circle" events and opportunities for Friends serving in roles such as:

- Clerking (and recording)
- Eldership
- Nominating: Naming & nurturing gifts
- Financial stewardship
- Ministry support & oversight
- Faithfulness groups
- Pastoral care
- Pastoral ministry
- Local meeting servant leadership

The Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator curates and regularly updates relevant resources (e.g. examples from local meetings, guidance from Faith & Practice) through neym.org

Offer Workshops, Trainings [Current]

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

In inviting presenters/leaders, emphasize skill-building, mentoring pairs (more experienced+less experienced), growing into leadership, new and diverse voices and perspectives

Existing; Proposed

Host annual "meeting for listening for the Life in our local meetings"[Proposed]

Each spring, host an open gathering to:

- worship together
- Reflect on local and quarterly meeting state of society reports, inform writing of state of society for Yearly Meeting
- Reflect on programmatic work and efforts to nurture spiritual life of local meetings in the past year
- Share upcoming opportunities to nurture ministry and spiritual life
- celebrate how Friends are experimenting, building capacity, and being faithful
- Listen to inform programmatic offerings in the coming year

Spiritual Formation, Religious Education [Current]

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

Care for Worship, Eldership, and Ministry at Annual Sessions

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

Provide Accompaniment for Local Meetings [Proposed]

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

Resource Groups to Support Yearly-Meeting-Wide Discernment [Current]

As needed, Permanent Board appoints "resource groups" to carry forward, support, and shepherd MM and QM discernment. RGs under the care of the Permanent Board, with integration, partnership, and support from relevant staff and volunteer leadership

Invite Regular Opportunities to Hold the Yearly Meeting in Prayer [Proposed]

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

Encourage Opportunities for "shop talk", mutual sharing, and encouragement among Friends called to ministry [Proposed]

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