



2023 Minutes

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

Three Hundred Sixty-Third Year
Castleton State College | Castleton, Vermont
August 4–9, 2023

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2023 New England Yearly Meeting Sessions Schedule

**Schedule (check the *Yearly Meeting News* daily for last-minute changes)
2023 Annual Sessions – Be Like a Watered Garden, Open to Grace and Loose the Bonds of Injustice**

	Friday 8/4	Saturday 8/5	Sunday 8/6	Monday 8/7	Tuesday 8/8	Wednesday 8/9
6:30 to noon			6:30–7 Early Morning Worship 6:45–8:30 Breakfast			
		8:00–11:00 Check-in 9:00 Bible Half Hour* 10:00–11:30 Workshops/ Reflection Groups	9:00 All-Ages Worship* 10:30 Bible Half Hour* 10:30–noon Check-in	8:30 Bible Half Hour* 9:15–11:15 Meeting for Business*	8:30 Bible Half Hour* 9:15–11:15 Meeting for Business*	8:30 Bible Half Hour* 9:15 Meeting for Business* 10:15 Final closing, youth epistles, and celebration*
Noon to 3:00		12:45 Obadiah Brown Ice Cream Social 1:00–4:00 Check-in 1:45 Opening Celebration*	1:15 Plenary*	11:15–12:45 Lunch		
		3:00–5:00 Meeting for Business*	3:00–5:00 Meeting for Business*	1:15–2:45 Memorial Meeting* Reflection Groups/ Free Time/ Workshops	1:15–2:45 Reflection Groups/Free Time/Workshops	<i>All dorms must be vacated</i>
3:00 to 7:00	3:00–5:30 Check-in		5:00–6:30 Dinner	3:00–5:00 Meeting for Business*	3:00–5:00 Meeting for Business*	
			6:00–6:30 Vespers			
7:00 to 10:00	7:00–10:00 Check-in 7:00 Dorm parties, ingathering snacks	7:00 Musical Plenary with Anna Fritz* 7:00–10:00 Check-in	7:00 Meeting for Business*	7:00 Block Party and Contra Dance Workshops/Interest Groups	7:00 Coffee House* Workshops/Interest Groups	

Items marked with * will be hybrid events held in the Casella Theater (Fine Arts Center)

Bookstores: Jeffords

General and Family Bookstore hours will be posted in the Yearly Meeting News

Locations of other events will be posted in the Yearly Meeting News

2023 Sessions Coordinators, Officers, Speakers, and YM Staff

Accounts Manager	Frederick Martin*
Bible Half Hour Speaker	Emma Condori Mamani
Children & Family Ministries Coordinator	Kara Price*
Clerks	Rebecca Leuchak (presiding), Megan Jensen and Susannah McCandless (recording), Adam Kohrman and Michelle Wright (reading)
COVID Safety Coordinator	Ginny Kristl
Events Coordinator	Elizabeth Hacala*
Resource Group Coordinator	Fran Brokaw
Office Manager	Sara Hubner*
Office Assistant	Maille Wooten
Hybrid Experience Coordinator	Kathleen Wooten
Pastoral Care Team Leader	Abigail Matchette
Plenary Musician	Anna Fritz
Plenary Speakers	Joseph and Jesse Bruchac
Sessions Committee Clerk	Phillip Veatch
Tech Team Coordinator	David Coletta
Yearly Meeting Treasurer	Robert Murray
Worship Coordinator	Kristina Keefe-Perry
Yearly Meeting News Editor	Liz Yeats
Yearly Meeting Secretary	Noah Merrill*

* = YM Staff

2023 Youth Program Coordinators and Staff

Child Care

Coord: Rainer Humphries
Abigail Adams
Darien Brimage
Jerry Carson
Peter Colby
Chloë Grubbs-Saleem
Chris Jorgensen
JJ Smith

Junior Yearly Meeting

Coord: MacKenzie Burpee
Beth Bussiere-Nichols
Brad Bussiere-Nichols
Luke Coletta
Rebecca Edwards
Newell Isbell Shinn
Sophie Jones
Leah Kelley

Cynthia Rankin

Joli Reynolds
Martha Schwope
Blair Tatman

Junior High Yearly Meeting

Coord: Lilly Campbell
Anne Anderson
Buddy Baker-Smith
Gretchen Baker-Smith
Stephen Ball
Dave Baxter
Merritt Bussiere-Nichols
Celadry Humphries

Young Friends

Coord: Drew Chasse
Hilary Burgin
Emily Edwards
Wendy Schlotterbeck

Minutes of the Annual Sessions

Opening Celebration, Saturday, August 5, 1:30–3:00 p.m.

2023-1 Welcome

Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak (Providence) opened the 363rd annual New England Yearly Meeting Sessions, with the theme, “Be like a watered garden: open to grace, and loose the bonds of injustice,” drawing on Isaiah 58:11.

The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail (New Revised Standard Version).

She welcomed Friends present at Castleton University and those present virtually, offering gratitude for Friends’ joining together in the midst of full lives, encouraging us by the grace of God to be fully in community with one another, quick to listen and quick to love. She invited Spirit to shine brightly through our stardust selves, that we might come into beloved community.

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

Recording Clerks: Susannah McCandless (Burlington/Middlebury) and Megan Jensen (Monadnock)
Reading Clerks: Adam Kohrman (Beacon Hill) and Michelle Wright (Putney)
Elders: Mary Chenaille (Worcester), Robert Dove McClellan (Fresh Pond), Suzanna Schell (Beacon Hill), and Willa Taber (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers)

Children of the recording clerks, Fox Jensen (Monadnock) and Lucretia McCandless Treleven (Middlebury), sometimes joined the Clerks’ Table throughout the week.

Rebecca reminded us to hold in the Light the many communities affected by historic flooding in the Northeast this summer.

2023-2 Land Acknowledgement

Reading Clerk Adam Kohrman (Beacon Hill) grounded our meeting with a land acknowledgement prepared by the Right Relationship Working Group for our gathering at the Castleton campus:

The people and the land are one, woven into a web of life—sky, tree, water, fish, mountain.

As we give thanks for this day and gather—remotely or in person—we respect the land and all our relations. We warmly acknowledge the Abenaki in every place, recognizing this as Ndakinna, homeland.

Our very name—New England Yearly Meeting—belies the reality that the Northeast was understood as Dawnland, a place for greeting each new day.

Indeed, wherever we find ourselves in North America we are on Native Land, understood by many as Turtle Island, whose peoples and places we recollect now.

We acknowledge and celebrate Indigenous presence and persistence in every place, and hold with sorrow the memory of past and ongoing violence.

Guided by Light and Love, may we truly be “open to grace, and loose the bonds of injustice,” may we center the expressed needs of Indigenous relations. Through land justice, language recovery, violence

prevention, and other reparative actions, may all dwell on the land in peace, with mutual respect and understanding.

2023-3 Roll Call

The reading clerks called the names of each worshipping body of the Yearly Meeting. Friends were invited to stand with their quarters and to wave as their meetings or worship groups were named. We welcomed families' new members and those who had passed through storms, literal and figurative, to be present among us. We celebrated Friends coming to Sessions for the first time, all the way up through those who had attended for a few or many years, some for half a century and more.

2023-4 Hybrid Practice

Tech Coordinator David Coletta (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers) offered suggestions for meeting worshipfully and well in the hybrid form. He encouraged Friends to share their name and affiliation each time they speak.

The Presiding Clerk shared her intention not to use individuals' names when inviting Friends in the room to speak, to disrupt patterns of privilege deriving from familiarity. She noted that she would perforce use names provided on Zoom accounts to recognize Friends present virtually.

Tech Support Team members for these Sessions were:

Bob O'Connor (Vassalboro)
Bre-anne Brown (East Sandwich Preparative)
Cornelia Parkes (Cambridge)
David Coletta (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers)
Emily Neumann (Cambridge)
Jennifer Newman (Beacon Hill)
Jennifer Swann (South Berkshire)
Katy MacRae (New Haven)

2023-5 Sessions Orientation

Phillip Veatch (Fresh Pond), clerk of Sessions Committee, shared new elements of Sessions this year, including COVID safety protocols and an encouragement for hand-washing. He oriented Friends to the general flow of the schedule in coming days, to key information and contacts shared on the back of name tags, and to other useful resources, such as the bookstore and medical assistance. "Whisper Buddies" are again available to help anyone to understand the context or peculiar vocabulary used in Friends' business.

2023-6 Invitation to Noticing Patterns

Melissa Foster (Framingham) and Polly Attwood (Cambridge/Three Rivers) welcomed Friends in a spirit of reflection and excitement, to participate in the fifth year of the holy experiment of Noticing Patterns of Faithfulness and Oppression. They invited us to release the fear of misspeaking, to feel softened to our own and each others' mistakes. Might we be open to new ways of being faithful, and open to deeper knowing, coming through body, mind, and spirit? The Working Group invited us to allot equal value to emotions, physical reactions, inner knowing, witnessing, listening, and curiosity about assumptions and messages being spoken. These practices offer a way forward in the hard work of undoing patterns

of harm and oppression. The working group will be available in person for dialogue after each business session, and virtually after the close of Sessions.

Current members of the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group are: Polly Attwood (Cambridge), clerk; Melody Brazo (Fresh Pond), Melissa Foster (Framingham), Lisa Graustein (Three Rivers), Janet Hough (Cobscook), Becky Jones (Northampton), and Pamela Terrien (Westport).

Serving as elders for Noticing Patterns: Susan Davies (Vassalboro), Permanent Board; and Mey Hasbrook (Durham), elder for Permanent Board with attention to the Noticing Practice.

2023-7 Pastoral Care

In a prerecorded message, Carl Williams (Burlington) and Abby Matchette (Burlington), from New England Yearly Meeting Ministry and Counsel and Pastoral Care, respectively, advised Friends that pastoral care will be available throughout Annual Sessions. They shared Friends' commitment to care for those showing up in person and virtually, through struggles and joys, and in the midst of frustration, grief, challenge, and distress.

Carl and Abby, who were both present on campus at Sessions, invited all to make use of all the tools for worship, self-care, wellness, and mindfulness we have available. They named meditation, rest, exercise, talk, prayer—and the possibility of reaching out to those present, or those not present, via phone. They reminded Friends to lean into relationships from their home meetings and know that the Sessions Pastoral Care Team would be available for support and spiritual renewal. Friends on Zoom were invited to call or email the Pastoral Care contact numbers and ask for support from the team.

2023-8 Worship Opportunities

We are coming together during a time of challenge, listening, and sifting. The coordinator of worship for Sessions, Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers) introduced a centering activity, inviting Friends to write a prayer or intention on a paper leaf, to be posted outside the auditorium to greet and inspire us as we gather, challenging and comforting us in the coming days.

She invited Friends to join Marian Baker (Weare), and Ruah Swennerfelt and Louis Cox (Middlebury), who are holding our early morning worship, and to join Youth Programs for vespers each evening at the open-air amphitheater. Vespers was led on successive days of Sessions by William Monroe (Providence), Peter Blood-Patterson (Mt Toby/Three Rivers), Jonathan Vogel-Borne (Cambridge), and Minga Claggett-Borne (Cambridge). Kristina announced a quiet alternative worship space available near the main meeting venue each day, for anyone who needed it.

2023-9 Youth Depart

The Presiding Clerk invited us to close our opening celebration in waiting worship. She emphasized that all we do can be worship, flowing in many forms, as we are all expressions of the Divine in every moment.

Mackenzie (“Kenzie”) Burpee (Wellesley), Sessions Junior Yearly Meeting Coordinator, came forward to introduce Youth Programs staff, and we held the children in worship as they left us to go to their own Sessions activities, nearly forgetting as we closed in song to release our Junior High and Young Friends, so fully present among us.

We sang *How Could Anyone Ever Tell You* (composed by Libby Roderick).

Friends Assembled Throughout the Week

2023-10 A Musical Plenary with Quaker Artist and Activist Anna Fritz

On Saturday evening, August 5th, classically trained cellist and folksinger Anna Fritz's music and ministry challenged and inspired Friends with haunting and beautiful cello and song. She brought the human element of current events to our ears and hearts. We are grateful. Cynthia Ganung (Wellesley), Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers), Jay O'Hara (Portland), Susan Davies (Vassalboro), and Julie Peyton (Portland, OR; Sierra-Cascades YM) served as elders.

This plenary can be found on the New England Yearly Meeting website and YouTube channel.

2023-11 Joseph and Jesse Bruchac Plenary

On Sunday afternoon, August 6th, we welcomed in ceremony author and scholar Joseph Bruchac, enrolled citizen of the Nulhegan Abenaki Nation, and linguist, educator and musician Jesse Bruchac, a leading teacher of the Abenaki language, musician, and filmmaker. They shared ways that relationships to place, time, and other beings are held through Abenaki language, story, and song. Abenaki, though an endangered language, is living, changing, and growing, including through the Abenaki language school Jesse Bruchac leads at Middlebury College. Friends were invited to consider a word for clock, *babizook-wazik* (Ba-bi-zook-wa-ZI(k)), "a thing that makes noise for no reason."

The Bruchacs shared teaching and trickster stories, and stories of how things came to be the way they are, speaking through words, drum, and flute. Joseph brought forward the voices of the four-legged ones, the winged ones, and the standing ones in ways that had us retelling those stories to one another. Friends experienced wonder, delight, and recognition at the universal truths that had been refashioned and shared in ways that invited us to lean into ways of understanding ourselves and our human and non-human others in the context of relationship.

One story Joseph Bruchac shared during the plenary related to the origin of mosquitoes, who arose from the ashes of the lazy man. A Friend asked how to resolve Western theological and philosophical agonizing over why a beneficent God had created mosquitoes to torment humans. Their error, Joseph replied, arose in conceiving that humans are the center of the universe.

Jane Jackson (Cambridge) and Gail Melix, Herring Pond Wampanoag (Sandwich), both on Zoom; Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers), and Mary Zwirner (Beacon Hill) sat as elders. The Bruchacs also visited with two youth yearly meetings on the following day.

A video recording of this plenary can be found on the New England Yearly Meeting website and YouTube channel.

2023-12 Bible Half Hours

Emma Condori Mamani, of Santidad Amigos (Holiness Friends) Yearly Meeting, Bolivia, shared Spirit-infused examination of Old and New Testament stories as our Bible Half Hour speaker. A language teacher and Quaker author with a Master's degree in Divinity from Earlham School of Religion, Emma travels widely in the ministry, and is a founder and current director of the Friends International Bilingual Center in La Paz. During the week she visited our youth sessions. Several of the stories she chose centered those who were outcast, or seemingly without power, who were compelled by Spirit to act. In accessible, engaging language, Emma related these stories to her own life and faith journey, and through them, invited us to consider our own spiritual relationships. Bringing us precious water of living faith

from a place perilously dried by changing climate, she asked us to consider deeply, What is the Holy Spirit asking of us?

Each day, Friend Emma, who chose to deliver her messages in English, opened with a prayer. Next, she shared two English-language versions of her chosen Biblical text for the day, for the richness those multiple versions of story offer. Then, she led us from scripture, through elements of her own remarkable spiritual journey, to a pair of queries that insistently invite us to examine our own journeys in generative silent worship.

On Saturday, Emma spoke on 2 Timothy 3:15–17. She asked, How has God spoken to your condition through a Bible passage as you heard it or read it? How can we open ourselves so the power and love of God can work through us? An 8-year-old Friend was so engaged by Emma's Saturday morning offering that he became determined to attend all the adult meeting sessions, hoping the dialogue would be as rich.

Sunday, after intergenerational worship, Emma read from Luke 19:1–10. She shared her experience of encountering God and the Light of Christ, and placing God at the center of her life, such that she carries "the transforming love of God still in my heart." She brought two queries: When did you hear Christ calling or inviting you in order to visit you by saying, "come down," just like Jesus did with Zaccheus? How has that direct experience of the Divine made you love mercy and practice justice? Emma's message evoked deep sharing among Friends of encounters with the Divine.

We sat Monday with the story of Joseph's coat of many colors, and his brothers' envy, in Genesis 37:3–5 and 26–28. We wrestled with queries that bore very directly on the matters central to our laboring in our meetings for worship for business during these sessions. Where have you seen people being mistreated by others? How did you feel about that, and how did you respond to that? How as Friends can we bring the Light of Christ to the situations where there is no mercy?

Emma invited us to consider the witness of another outcast Tuesday, in Joshua 2:1–4 and 12–13. Bringing the story of Rahab, she asked, "How have you opened yourself to the grace of God to work through you? What helps you to open yourself to the grace of God to work through you?"

Closing an arc that invited us to be transformed, Emma Condori Mamani concluded her ministry with New England Friends on Wednesday, reading from Esther 7:3–6. She invited us into openhearted relationship with the Divine, asking us, "Are you willing to say, 'Here I am, Lord, to be healed by your power and love?' What would that require from you? Are you willing to say, 'Here I am, Lord, to be your eyes and hands in this world?' Where do you see needs around you?"

We are grateful to Emma for the fullness of her ministry, in our time together at these Sessions and in her broader witness. How are we called? How can we meet her in faithfulness, grace, mercy, and justice?

Emma's elders accompanying her sharing throughout the week were Minga Claggett-Borne (Cambridge) and Beth Collea (Dover). Melissa Foster (Framingham), Mey Hasbrook (Durham), and Betsy Cazden (Providence) served as elders for the body.

Video recordings of these Bible Half Hours can be found on the New England Yearly Meeting website and YouTube channel.

Meeting for Business, Saturday 3:00–5:00 p.m.

2023-13 Opening

After a short recess, Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak (Providence) reconvened Friends in worship for the conduct of the business of Sessions.

Reading Clerk Michelle Wright (Putney) read the land acknowledgement to invite us into right relationship in our deliberations: *We acknowledge with humility and gratitude that we are meeting on Ndakinna (n-DAH-kee-NAH), homeland of the Abenaki peoples. By grace, may our discernment lead to greater peace and justice.*

The meeting was held in prayerful care by elders LJ Boswell (Putney), Jane Jackson (Cambridge), Carole Rein (North Shore), and Jean Rosenberg (Middlebury).

2023-14 Recording for Faithfulness

Friends approved the recording clerks' request for permission to digitally record sessions of worship for the purpose of the conduct of Friends' business, via text transcript, to support clarity and faithfulness of the written minutes of our proceedings, with the transcript recordings to be retained only until such time as the 2023 Minutes of Annual Sessions are finalized, likely in late August 2023.

2023-15 Economy of Approving Minutes

Friends approved the following request from the recording clerks: In order to lighten the burden on Friends' ears, and conserve time for our most worshipful work as a body, at these Sessions we will generally not hear back minor minutes of record or procedure. Instead, we will only take time to hear and approve minutes of decision or minutes that otherwise seem to demand a clarity of unity. This will leave some margin for judgment about which minutes call for shared approval. We welcome Friends to ask us to read back any you believe should be heard by the full body.

2023-16 Welcoming Visitors

The reading clerks welcomed visitors from other yearly meetings and those attending Sessions as a representative of an organization. A list of visitors we received throughout the week, in person and virtually, follows here.

Pamela Bergquist, (Cambridge; Stillwater, Ohio Yearly Meeting of Conservative Friends)
 Jennifer Bing, American Friends Service Committee
 Peter Blood-Patterson (Mt Toby/Three Rivers), Quaker Spring Planning Group; Woolman Hill
 Lauren Brownlee (Bethesda, Baltimore Yearly Meeting), Friends Committee on National Legislation
 Associate General Secretary for Community and Culture
 Hilary Burgin (Beacon Hill), executive director, Quaker Voluntary Service
 Margaret Cooley (Mt Toby), Woolman Hill executive director
 Buffy Curtis (Mohawk Valley, New York Yearly Meeting), Friends Peace Teams
 Nancy Delle Femine (North Carolina Yearly Meeting)
 Ashleigh Dodd (Orlando Monthly Meeting, Southeastern Yearly Meeting)
 Maggie Fogarty (Dover), American Friends Service Committee–New Hampshire
 Sara Gada, Friends Publishing Corporation
 Stuart Green (Patapsco, Baltimore Yearly Meeting)
 Lu Harper (Rochester, New York Yearly Meeting)

Johanna Jackson (Three Rivers), Friends General Conference
 Karla Jay (Iglesia Amigos, Indiana Yearly Meeting, and the New Association of Friends), Global Ministries Coordinator, Friends United Meeting
 Michael Jay, (Raysville Friends Church, Western [Indiana] Association of Friends)
 Enrique Jovel (Junta Anual de El Salvador)
 Margaret Lee (Friendship Friends, North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative)
 Lianet Levya Gonzalez (Junta Anual de la Iglesia Los Amigos Cuáqueros en Cuba)
 Lyle Miller, Goshen, Indiana; Everence
 Judith Nandikove (Friends Church of Nairobi, Nairobi Yearly Meeting), Quaker Religious Education Collaborative
 Jennifer Newman (Beacon Hill), executive director of Beacon Hill Friends House
 Shawn Patrick (Tanzania Yearly Meeting)
 Nikra Alex (Tanzania Yearly Meeting)
 Ann Pomeroy (New Paltz, New York Yearly Meeting)
 Nicole Santos, Friends Committee on National Legislation, major gifts officer
 Lee Andrew Sayles (Ujima Friends Meeting)
 Nathan Shroyer (Chester River, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, attending Dover)
 Earl Smith (Stillwater, Ohio Yearly Meeting of Conservative Friends) Quaker journal *What Canst Thou Say*
 Jackie Stillwell (Monadnock), executive director of Right Sharing of World Resources
 Miriam Swartz (Mt Holly, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting)
 Ruah Swennerfelt (Middlebury), Quaker Earthcare Witness
 Marvea Thompson (Brooklyn, New York Yearly Meeting)
 Margaret Veatch (North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative)
 Steven Willett (Manchester & Warrington Area Meeting, Britain Yearly Meeting)
 Pamela Williams (Germantown, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting; worshipping at Burlington), Fellowship of Quakers and the Arts

2023-17 Choosing Pentecost

New England Yearly Meeting Secretary Noah Merrill (Putney) offered a message to the body. He contrasted two old stories from our tradition, the tower of Babel and the transforming power that descended from the feast of Pentecost. He invited Friends to consider the ways these two communities responded to deep uncertainty, the longing for safety, the aspiration to create a new world of righteousness out of the recent memory of sorrow and fear.

We often find our own stories echoing these ancient stories. We, too, have a choice to make, in Sessions as in all our lives. We can seek security through control, trust in our own works, our own pride—or find abiding reassurance in the ways that we are connected, “held in an unshakable belovedness overshadowed by a boundless grace and unmerited forgiveness.” We heard a call to surrender to a deeper foundation of faithfulness, humility, and joy.

A time of silent worship followed, as the body let this message settle into our hearts and inflect our business together. The full text of Friend Merrill’s ministry can be found in the appendix to these minutes [see page 43].

2023-18 Spiritual Life Listening Group Report

Carl Williams (Burlington), clerk of New England Yearly Meeting Ministry and Counsel, and Leslie Manning (Durham/Three Rivers), outgoing clerk of Permanent Board, shared an update on the Spiritual Life Listening Group. Friends were encouraged to re-read the report distributed in the Sessions Advance Documents.

In reference to our return from COVID-19 restrictions, these Friends reminded us that when patterns are disrupted it takes time to find a new way. Carl acknowledged the loss of loved ones and shared physical presence during the pandemic. It has knocked our outlines asunder and invited us into new ways of being. Let us stand together in love.

2023-19 An Appreciation of the Gifts and Service of Maggie Edmondson

The body then heard and accepted a minute, drafted by the Spiritual Life Listening Group, celebrating the gifts and service of retiring Friends' Pastor Maggie Edmondson (Winthrop Center):

We wish to recognize and appreciate Pastor Maggie Edmondson of Winthrop Center Friends Church, who will be retiring at the end of this month after 27 years of service. Many of us, far outside the circle of her home church, have benefited from her ministry, her Bible Half Hours here at our Yearly Meeting and at the Friends General Conference Gathering, and her long service with our Faith and Practice Revision Committee.

Maggie's gifts of faithfulness, presence, and wisdom are a blessing to us all. Her witness includes her work on Decolonizing Faith with Wabanaki REACH and as a founding member of Decolonizing Quakers. Maggie has long been engaged in interfaith work in her area, and her compassion, care of creation, and tireless work for justice are deeply appreciated by her many colleagues and friends.

Maggie, we wish you well and are so grateful that you have blessed our community with your faithful service. As you sing at the end of your meetings for worship:

“Go now in peace, go now in peace,
Let the love of God surround you,
Everywhere, everywhere,
You may go.”

2023-20 Treasurer's Report

With gratitude for the joy he found in service and acknowledging that his right term of service is drawing to a close, Yearly Meeting Treasurer Robert Murray (Beacon Hill) invited Friends to consider whether they are now called to rise to serve New England Yearly Meeting as Treasurer.

Robert acknowledged that we are in a time of natural ebb in energy and dollars, and in need of changing the tide from ebb to flow, in order to sustain the good work of New England Yearly Meeting.

The Treasurer suggested that maintaining New England Yearly Meeting's monetary reserves is part of a sacred obligation to make New England Yearly Meeting a safe and comfortable place to work for its staff. These reserves are attenuated, at just a third of our prudent limit of three months' cushion, after multiple years running over budget.

Friends were encouraged to consider what gifts they have to offer to New England Yearly Meeting. The position of treasurer is one of oversight, a few delightful hours a month working with staff, serving on Coordinating and Advisory, and participating in the Permanent Board committee meetings. If you can read a financial report, you can be treasurer. Are you called?

2023-21 Budget Recommendation

Treasurer Robert Murray (Beacon Hill) and Scot Drysdale (Hanover), clerk of Finance Committee, brought to Permanent Board and to Sessions what they characterized as the painful but necessary rec-

ommendation to balance our budget by ceasing any donations to Quaker umbrella and other outside organizations for 2024.

Scot invited Friends to speak their concerns and questions, and welcomed alternate suggestions for balancing the budget with integrity.

Many keenly felt the importance of well-supporting our beloved youth programming and New England Yearly Meeting staff and would not consider these as a place for further budget relief.

Some Friends questioned why we have not turned to the Legacy Gift Fund, a potential source of approximately \$1 million in the New England Yearly Meeting coffers. This Fund has been designated to nurture leading edge and grassroots ministries among Friends for nearly 10 years now. Many Friends would be loath to let that charge be set aside. Legacy Gift funds were initially designated by the body, so further discernment of their best use does remain in Sessions' purview.

We heard that New England Yearly Meeting staff have been in dialogue with many of our sister organizations; a decision by New England Friends not to pledge contributions as usual will come as a disappointment but not a shock.

We hear our responsibility to deeply consider where we may have the ability to increase our fiscal and energetic contributions to New England Yearly Meeting, and/or what we are willing to lay down. A Friend exhorted us to be prophetic communicators in our monthly meetings, carrying this message of urgency. What are our priorities, and might we have untapped capacity?

A working group has been charged with discernment on New England Yearly Meeting's contributions to external organizations before any decisions are made about that budget allocation.

Friends were encouraged to participate in a listening session later in the week.

2023-22 Closing

We closed in waiting worship, intending to reconvene Sunday afternoon at 3:00 p.m. A Friend recalled to us the Secretary's invitation to take up the spirit of Pentecost as "a homecoming of amazement and joy," as we live into our ministries and opportunities for giving to the Yearly Meeting. The Presiding Clerk led us out of worship with Maggie Edmondson's favorite closing song, *Go Now in Peace* (Natalie Sleeth).

All-Ages Worship, Sunday 9:00–10:15 a.m.

2023-23

Christel Jorgenson, Amy Greene, Holly Lapp, and George Capaccio (all of Cambridge) and Rebecca Leuchak (Providence), with design support from Leo Bray and Yani Bray (Cambridge) and Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers), led us in a joy-filled, interactive intergenerational worship on Sunday morning. We were convened in song by Hazel and Oona Spottswood (Burlington) and Clara Gardner (Cambridge). Christel Jorgenson (Cambridge) and Rebecca Leuchak (Providence) embodied author Mo Willems' characters Gerald and Piggy to act out *Waiting is Not Easy*, where impatience gives way to wonder.

People of all ages reflected on their experience of expectant waiting in worship: At times Friends found themselves accompanied in the stillness, and sometimes we were just waiting. In closing, we were knit

together as we meditatively passed balls of Eden Grace's yarn, linking Friend to Friend, weaving a web of connection between us.

All-ages worship was held by Betsy Roper (Cambridge) and LJ Boswell (Putney).

Meeting for Business, Sunday 3:00–5:00 p.m.

2023-24 Welcome and Opening

Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak led us into worship with a song, *Give Light* (composed by Greg Artzner and Terry Leonino).

We heard announcements and welcomed visitors, and the Reading Clerks shared a daily land acknowledgement: *We acknowledge with humility and gratitude that we are meeting on Ndaakinna (n-DAH-kee-NAH), homeland of the Abenaki peoples. By grace, may our discernment lead to greater peace and justice.*

Rebecca invited us into silence to hold awareness of the anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima on this date, and Nagasaki three days later, in the year 1945.

Elders for this session were Phebe McCosker (Hanover), Lynn Taber (Fresh Pond), Allison Randall (Keene), and Lucy Meadows (Beacon Hill).

2023-25 Volunteers to Visit Youth Programming

The Presiding Clerk extended an invitation to Friends to visit Youth Yearly Meeting Sessions and to offer the body a report on Wednesday morning of any insights and observations gathered from the experience. The following volunteers accepted:

- Childcare: Ruah Swennerfelt (Middlebury)
- Junior Yearly Meeting K–3: Patricia Crosby (Mt Toby)
- Junior High Yearly Meeting: Patti Muldoon (Cambridge)
- Young Friends: Polly Attwood (Cambridge)

2023-26 Epistle from Friends United Meeting

Reading Clerk Adam Kohrman (Beacon Hill) read out a richly detailed excerpt from the epistle from the 2023 Friends United Meeting Triennial.

2023-27 Friends United Meeting Report

We heard an appreciative report on the triennial of Friends United Meeting (FUM), United Society of Friends Women International (USFWI), and Quaker Men International (QMI) from delegates Kristina Keefe-Perry and Nahar Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers), Frederick Martin (Beacon Hill), Jennifer Smith (Concord), Sara Smith (Concord), Diane Weinholtz and Donn Weinholtz (Hartford), Stefan Walker (Fresh Pond), and Anna Lindo (Framingham).

In worship-sharing groups and plenaries, Friends were embraced in fellowship with more than 600 Quakers from more than 40 yearly meetings around the world. The experience was complex—in turns inspiring, challenging, humbling, and enriching. All delegates returned blessed with a new perspective on being Friends in the global context of Quakers, heartened to confirm that in our essence we are truly more alike than we are different.

Delegates also felt fortunate to have the chance to witness firsthand the gifts and ministry of Friend Marian Baker (Weare) in her commitment to abiding relationship with so many East African Friends.

And, too, Friends remembered Friend Eden Grace, yearning for her insight and companionship in this journey among places and Friends she knew from her long service with FUM ministries.

The traveling reports closed with a video epistle from Young Friends on their experience at the Njoro Precious Schools and the FUM triennial.

We settled into waiting worship, letting the epistle and Friends' sharings settle on our hearts.

2023-28 No Way to Treat a Child Presentation

The Presiding Clerk invited forward Friends asking the body to endorse the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) No Way to Treat A Child campaign, cautioning that attendees sensitive to images of violence could participate from a dedicated separate space, in order to listen to the presentation without seeing possibly triggering visuals.

Scott Rhodewalt (Northeast Kingdom), a Yearly Meeting representative to the AFSC Corporation and former member of the Committee on Racial, Social, and Economic Justice, offered gratitude for his sense of accompaniment of the Ramallah Friends School in Palestine by Quakers in relationship with the school over the many years since its founding by Quakers Eli and Sybil Jones in 1869.

Friends heard powerful testimony about the Israeli State's record of systematic human rights abuses of Palestinian children, as documented and denounced by AFSC's No Way to Treat a Child Initiative. From the body, a Friend reminded us that, when exhorting Friends to address injustices, it is counterproductive to equate or compare harms.

Representatives from Northwest and Vassalboro Quarterly Meetings, and Burlington, Midcoast, and Northeast Kingdom Monthly Meetings, read minutes in support of the initiative. Friends were urged to support legislative efforts to pass HR 3103: Defending the Human Rights of Palestinian Children and Families Act.

- Howie Gentler (Northeast Kingdom), minute from Northwest Quarter
- Diane Dicranian (Midcoast), minute from Midcoast
- Joann Austen (Vassalboro), minute from Vassalboro Quarter
- Linda Schneck (Northeast Kingdom), minute from Northeast Kingdom
- Anita Rapone (Burlington), minute from Burlington

Susan Rhodewalt (Northeast Kingdom) spoke about the rights of children.

2023-29 Support for the No Way to Treat a Child Initiative and Congressional Bill to Defend the Human Rights of Palestinian Children and Families

Friends approved a request from the presenters that New England Yearly Meeting embrace AFSC's No Way to Treat a Child initiative by asking all monthly meetings to engage actively, as led, to encourage their Congressional Representatives to cosponsor the current Representative Betty McCollum (D-MN) bill, H.R. 3103: Defending the Human Rights of Palestinian Children and Families Act.

2023-30 Closing

Friends worshipfully closed the meeting, intending to reconvene at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting for Business, Sunday 7:00–9:00 p.m.

2023-31 Opening

The Presiding Clerk welcomed Friends back into worshipful business with a brief land acknowledgment: “We acknowledge with humility and gratitude that we are meeting on NdaKinna (n-DAH-kee-NAH), homeland of the Abenaki peoples. By grace, may our discernment lead to greater peace and justice.”

Recording Clerk Michelle Wright (Putney) read the 2023 epistle from Monteverde Friends Meeting in Monteverde, Costa Rica.

Our elders for this session were Madeleine Vaché (New London), Cynthia Ganung (Wellesley), Maille Wooten (Lawrence), Robert Dove McClellan (Fresh Pond) on Zoom, and Mary Chenaille (Worcester).

2023-32 Reflections on Leadings of Spirit in the Realm of Technology

David Coletta (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers), Legacy Gift recipient, spoke about his faith journey to connect his urge to respond to widespread experiences of empathy, grief, isolation, and hope during the COVID-19 pandemic with a leading to seek a form of service through a career in technology.

Supported by a Legacy Gift grant and a committee of care, he has developed that leading into a ministry helping people to connect with each other and to Spirit in held virtual and hybrid spaces.

Traveling among Friends, he has heard burnout, joy, and creativity in caring for our worship at home. He reflected back our grief at the loss of physical presence and companionship, and for the loss of Friends. David heard frustration at the flaws in our tools, but also recorded transformation: he reminded us that technology is only technology until we use it without thinking about it.

He encouraged us to share in his vibrant vision of Friends using appropriate digital technologies to cultivate fellowship among distant Friends and diverse faith-seekers using hybrid meeting spaces, and young families brought to Quaker meetings by inclusive, accessible messaging online, seeking us out by websites, in social media, and more.

David welcomed invitations to visit monthly meetings and worship groups to assist with practical and spiritual insight about our use of technology in support of our ministries as Friends.

2023-33 Nominating Committee Report

Jackie Stillwell (Monadnock), clerk of Nominating Committee, before presenting the Nominating Committee report, took a moment to appreciate that every attendee to Sessions is in service to Friends in different capacities. Some roles are named and others arise in so many other ways. It takes all of us contributing our pieces of the puzzle to bring our collective vision to fruition.

The meeting approved nominations for several New England Yearly Meeting roles (as included in the Advance Documents), and Jackie encouraged Friends to communicate any concerns, joys, and recommendations to members of the Nominating Committee.

For reappointment to Permanent Board, until 2024: Eleanor Warnock (Northampton)

For reappointment to Permanent Board, until 2028: Martin Forsythe (Beacon Hill), Edward Mair (Amesbury), and Willa Taber (Fresh Pond)

For Permanent Board, until 2028: Allison Randall (Keene)

For Archives & Historical Records, until 2028: Andy Grannell (Portland)

For Recording Clerk, until 2024: Susannah McCandless (Burlington/Middlebury)

For reappointment to Legacy Gift Committee, until 2024: Sarah Gant (Beacon Hill) and Susan Rockwood (Midcoast)

For reappointment to Legacy Gift Committee, until 2025: Mary Link (Mt Toby)

For Nominating Committee, until 2026: Christopher Gant (Beacon Hill), Kathy Malin (Smithfield), Beth Hansen (Westerly), Martha Schwope (Wellesley), Tim Lamb (Worcester) (Tim was not listed in the Advance Documents.)

For Youth Ministries, until 2026: Nancy Corindia (Hanover)

For American Friends Service Committee, until 2026: Hal Weaver (Wellesley)

2023-34 Earthcare Ministry Transition

Leslie Manning (Durham/Three Rivers), clerk of the Permanent Board, reminded us that Friends have said we need to be clear about what work we engage in, and why. Integrity requires us to follow through on our discernment, whether that is to pick up new work or to lay down what does not serve anymore.

Permanent Board has recommended that the New England Yearly Meeting Earthcare Ministry committee be laid down, given that the standing committee structure is not working well for this ministry; and to affirm and lift up the still-forming EarthQuaker Justice Team intended to coordinate, invigorate, and support the environmental witness work being done by Friends throughout New England Yearly Meeting.

Ruah Swennerfelt (Middlebury) read the proposed vision and mission:

Vision

Expressing our gratitude for the beauty of the sacred gift of life and acknowledging our utter spiritual and physical dependence on the health of our planet, we seek guidance of the Spirit to secure protection of the rights of all life to pure water, clean air, a stable and just climate, and a healthy ecosystem for current and future generations. We recognize the imperative for leaving space for wild nature and biodiversity.

Mission

As led by the Spirit, we will follow this mission by working towards systemic change through education, outreach, and advocacy; and rapidly reducing emissions of greenhouse gases; ending our use of fossil fuels, including products made from them like plastic and non-biodegradable chemicals; and supporting work on the passage of the Green Amendment in New England states. We will seek opportunities to challenge New England Yearly Meeting to join us in carrying out this vision, and we will offer information about our mission and worshipful connection to nature.

Friends noted that the exact nature and charge of this EarthQuaker team is still in discernment. It will not be a nominated committee, and the reporting expectations are not yet established. The Friends

proposing the EarthQuaker team observed that the request may not be ready for approval at this time, because of some pertinent questions that arose and felt inadequately addressed. They committed to bringing the item back to a later business meeting.

2023-35 Update on Racial, Social, and Economic Justice and the Antiracism Working Group

The clerk of Permanent Board gave an update on the status of the Antiracism Working Group, which was established when the Challenging White Supremacy group was laid down.

New England Yearly Meeting is acting on the working group's recommendation to hire an outside consultant with a more neutral perspective and fresh eyes, to observe and provide recommendations at every level of the New England Yearly Meeting organization for places needing care, improvement, and attention in racial justice and fair practices.

The Antiracism Working Group is not yet clear to put forward the name of a specific consultant, but the work is active and alive. The Permanent Board, in coordination with this consultant, expects to produce recommendations and reports informed by that work of accounting and discernment.

2023-36 Update on Active Ministries among New England Friends

Outgoing Permanent Board clerk Leslie Manning reported on one aspect of the Yearly Meeting's nurture of ministry and spiritual life of Friends, reminding the body that there are Friends among us who are recorded in the ministry.

They are active and some have been following their calling for a considerable number of years. She shared that she has been in regular contact with those whose travel minutes had been endorsed by the Yearly Meeting and these recorded ministers are regularly reporting back to us through presentation to the Permanent Board.

Friends who are interested in learning of their work and getting updates may consult the minutes of the Permanent Board's meetings, available on the New England Yearly Meeting's website.

2023-37 Request to Hold Friends in the Light

Leslie raised up the names of two Friends whose absence is particularly noted today, and the Meeting was encouraged to send cards, messages, and prayers:

Ralph Greene (China) has held a long career as a Recorded Minister in Maine; this would have been his 63rd annual New England Yearly Meeting Sessions, but his doctor forbade his attendance this year. Many Friends carry appreciation and gratitude to Ralph for his long service and witness to a faithful life.

James Varner (Orono) lost his son to a heart attack on Mother's Day. The funeral was delayed by international bureaucracy until the Tuesday of Sessions. We were asked to hold him and his family in the Light.

Leslie concluded with a prayer.

2023-38 Youth Ministries Committee Purposes and Procedures Revision

The meeting approved a revised version of the Purposes, Procedures, and Composition document for Youth Ministries as shared in the Advance Documents.

2023-39 Closing

Friends closed this meeting, intending to reconvene Monday at 9:15 a.m.

Meeting for Business, Monday 9:15–11:15 a.m.

2023-40 Opening

The Presiding Clerk opened our Monday morning meeting for worship for the purpose of business with the song *Singing for Our Lives*, written by Holly Near after the assassination of Harvey Milk. The first line is “We are a gentle, angry people.”

Elders holding the meeting during this session were Alison Randall (Keene), Mary Zwirner (Beacon Hill), Lynn Taber (Fresh Pond), and Wendy Sanford (Cambridge).

2023-41 Remembering Friends Absent from Us

Reading Clerk Michelle Wright (Putney) and Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak (Providence) invited Friends to share the names of some of those not present, so that we could write to them and hold them in our hearts.

Friends shared the following names. We miss these Friends among us!

Ralph Greene (China), Annie Patterson (Mt Toby/Three Rivers), Betsy Muench (Durham), Mary Gilbert (Cambridge), Wendyl Ross (Wellesley), Pam Holt, Pamela Cole (New Bedford), Jerry Sazama (Storrs), Jane Jackson (present via Zoom) and David Bonner (Cambridge), Jan (present via Zoom) and Ken Hoffman (Mt Toby), Heidi and Gina Nortonsmith (Northampton), Julie de Sherbinin (Portland), Sara Sue Pennell (Cambridge; present virtually), Sue Reilly (Portland, present via Zoom), Fritz Weiss (Portland), Paula Rossvall (Portland), Kevin and Betty Ann Lee (Westport), and Carol Baker (Westerly).

2023-42 Cultivating Healthy Responses to Conflict in Our Yearly Meeting

Out of worshipful business on Sunday evening, several Friends rose up to name personal experiences and share the pain of conflict being allowed to linger, unaddressed, within the New England Yearly Meeting community.

Faithfulness demands that we lean in, rather than avoid the hardship of facing conflict. This is an opportunity for healing, learning, deepening, and transformation of relationships. But it demands structure, support, and tender care that is lacking within our body at this time.

We need to transform conflict at every level of our body. In particular, we hear that there is a call for a clear structure or path that supports a healthy response to conflicts when they arise outside the structure of the monthly meeting. Friends heard a clear request for this concern to be taken up. Many would like to have the opportunity to participate in a threshing session on the matter.

The Presiding Clerk is committed to holding this concern, and is in the process of carefully discerning a group of Friends, drawn from the New England Yearly Meeting body, plus the clerks of Ministry and Counsel Committee and Permanent Board, to gather and begin a process of listening and seeking response to this concern.

The individual members are not yet identified, but Friends are eager to hear the names of this intended group, in order to begin this process with the needed transparency. The Presiding Clerk will take that into consideration, if possible, within the time constraints of our sessions, and has heard a clear request that the discernment of the composition of that group be broadly held.

2023-43 FWCC and FGC Reports

We heard a report from Christel Jorgensen (Cambridge) and Julie Peyton (Portland, OR; Sierra-Cascades YM) on the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC). Chris traced how her worldview, coming from a small unprogrammed meeting, was blown apart at the 1985 World Gathering of Young Friends, by meeting Friends from around the world—their faith, their miracles, their struggles. She was convinced by the breadth of Friends that it could be worth investing her life in Quakerism.

Chris invited Friends to support FWCC's Global Campaign, a response to the organization's growing realization that affording attendance at transformative convenings should not be the limiting factor to Friends coming together. A travel and technology fund is working to create more equal access to participation. FWCC also focuses on interpretation and translation and is updating a multilingual glossary of Quaker terms. Chris particularly invited younger Friends to consider becoming New England Yearly Meeting representatives to FWCC, based on her own transformative experience.

Carolyn Hilles-Pilant (Beacon Hill), New England Yearly Meeting's representative to Friends General Conference (FGC), shared FGC's mission.

Johanna Jackson (Three Rivers), FGC Communications Associate, is visiting our Sessions with a special concern for intergenerational outreach. Many Friends have attended an FGC gathering, which Carolyn described as spiritual revitalizing for the entire family.

FGC shares information about Quakerism, resources, and connections, available on their website, including both spiritual and practical tools for meetings and individuals. FGC thus acts as a landing place for seekers. Quaker meetings can be a welcoming space: "inclusion and welcome seem to be a theme for us right now," as Monteverde Friends shared in their epistle read earlier in these Sessions. FGC is encouraging seekers to find us and share in the Spirit of the Living God.

2023-44 Report from New England Yearly Meeting Representatives to Friends United Meeting

Friends received a report from the Friend's United Meeting (FUM) Board Representatives Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers), Jennifer Smith (Concord/Three Rivers), and Frederick Martin (Beacon Hill). Reflecting on movements of the Spirit in their service, they noted that this Session's stirrings around healing, deepening, and transforming ourselves and our relationships by humbly engaging conflict are alive in their experiences with FUM.

Each speaker shared about the palpable progress felt by Friends who are reaching out to nurture connections across differences. By their own experience, and affirmed by FUM peers and leaders, their witness and presence are making inroads of slow but perceptible changes in anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes and actions in the FUM body.

From Frederick Martin we heard how, at the jointly-held Quaker Men's International (QMI) meeting in Nakuru, Kenya, an East African Quaker leader offered a brave and prophetic message in an environment where homophobia is widely powerful, culturally and politically.

The leader drew a marked, emotional reaction from his listeners when he compared Jesus' ministry to the outcasts with the "dehumanizing legislation and deadly homophobia" of present-day Uganda. His ministry closed with the exhortation, "Nowhere, nowhere in the Gospels can I find a place where Jesus excluded anyone."

Though individually courageous, this Friend made clear that he did not stand alone in his convictions but had been influenced by others in leadership positions among African Quakers and FUM more broadly.

We were challenged by Jennifer Smith to consider an advice once shared with her by beloved, departed Friend Eden Grace from a pamphlet: What if the true meaning of mission is to find out what God is doing and join in?

We heard how building and continuing relationships with Friends in their own place, in their own culture, meeting them where they are, can awaken change over time.

2023-45 Closing

Friends closed with a brief settling worship, intending to reconvene at 3:00 pm.

Memorial Meeting, Monday 1:15–2:30 p.m.

2023-46 Memorial Minutes

In solemn worship, Friends heard excerpts from the memorial minutes of Hugh Barbour, Richard Bullock Jr., Clarence Burley, Ian Chase, Emily Chasse, Jan Church, Steven John Correia, Frances Crowe, Paul Diamond, Anne "Kiki" Eglinton, Penelope "Penny" Jackim, Allen David McNab, Margaret "Teddy" Milne, and Kenneth Perkins. The full memorial minutes are appended to these minutes. We bore witness to the gifts of these Friends. They are our guides, our beloved friends and wise counselors, our elders, the tenders of our faith and of our meeting communities. Their many forms of witness both challenged and comforted us and stand as reminders to listen to those who bring challenges to us now. They are become our spiritual ancestors, and we will do well to keep them present in our hearts.

The Memorial Meeting was held by elders Melissa Foster (Framingham), Allison Randall (Keene), Wendy Sandford (Cambridge), and Mary Zwirner (Beacon Hill). Carl Williams (Plainfield), clerk of Ministry and Worship, held care of meeting, with a sensitivity tempered by the loss of his own son to Covid.

Meeting for Business, Monday 3:00–5:00 p.m.

2023-47 Opening

Supported by elders Robert Dove McClellan (Fresh Pond), Carol Rein (North Shore), Lucy Meadows (Beacon Hill), Isaiah Grace (Beacon Hill), Allison Randall (Keene), and Kathryn Olsen (East Sandwich), the Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak opened Monday afternoon meeting for worship for the purpose of business with the song, *Joy is Like the Rain* (Sister Miriam Therese Winter).

2023-48 Australia Yearly Meeting Epistle

Reading Clerk Adam Kohrman read out Australia Yearly Meeting's epistle. It called for centering Indigenous knowing and tender attention to our radical roots, as we work to decolonize ourselves and our work: "Accept no boundary to sustaining and sharing the earth for the future."

2023-49 Welcoming Visitors

Friends welcomed visitors to this session from other Yearly Meetings or representing Quaker organizations, asking them to rise and introduce themselves.

2023-50 Quaker Indigenous Boarding School Research Group Report

With gratitude and sorrow, the meeting heard a report from the Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools Research Group—Betsy Cazden (Providence), Andrew Grant (Mt. Toby), Janet Hough (Cobscook), Gordon Bugbee (Beacon Hill), Evan McManamy (Providence), and Emily Neumann (Cambridge)—about learnings uncovered so far in their charge to research the extent and nature of New England Yearly Meeting's historic involvement in the founding, funding, promotion, and operation of genocidal Indian Boarding Schools in the United States. The Working Group is trying to answer a question Indigenous people have been asking us for a long time: What did you do with our children?

Members of the working group shared their personal experience of delving into original documents in libraries and archival collections and the power of hearing those voices from the past.

In response to requests made by the working group, Friends approved two decisions:

- The Yearly Meeting encourages individuals and meetings to learn about and support passage of Senate bill S.1723: The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.
- New England Yearly Meeting, in its 363rd Annual Sessions, held August 5th through 9th, 2023, endorses the passage of Senate bill S.1723: The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. The Presiding Clerk and Secretary will send this endorsement, and New England Yearly Meeting staff will share it.

The working group expects to be able to draft a preliminary report of findings in response to requests from the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition and the Department of the Interior in the coming year. The body charged the Permanent Board to receive and approve this report, and the Yearly Meeting Secretary and Presiding Clerk to distribute it on behalf of the Yearly Meeting. Notice of such action would be shared with the Yearly Meeting by newsletter and reported at next year's Sessions.

With deep gratitude, the body approved its support of this working group continuing for the coming year. We want to ensure that this matter and our learning about New England Friends' part in it stays alive among us, so we ask that the group revisit their work with a report at the 2024 New England Yearly Meeting Sessions. The working group expects their research to be complete within this time frame, although it may be extended if need be.

2023-51 Reaction to Quaker Indigenous Boarding School Research Working Group Report

Many Friends present felt intensely compelled to speak to the bearing of this work on our identity as a faith community, and galvanized to engage the work that still lies ahead of us.

The previous minute records the progress of the working group in their charge to collect information, and our responses to their requests. We see that our further, separate work is to process that information, together.

Our learnings about New England Yearly Meeting's participation in Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools are not a history exercise. This matter is alive for us in the most fundamental ways now.

It raises profound—for some, even faith-shaking—questions about how today, just as for Friends of the past, what we might believe in the moment to be our best, most devout discernment can be tragically fallible, capable of producing disastrous consequences. We are still, as then, vulnerable to the patterns in which we are entrenched, and to the limits of who is welcomed to participate.

We need time and loving, faithful humility to consider this deeply.

2023-52 Legacy Gift Committee Report

Mary Link (Mt Toby) and Sue Rockwood (Midcoast), co-clerks of the Legacy Gift Committee, introduced the rest of the committee: Jennie Isbell-Shinn (Mt. Toby), Lori Martin (New Haven), Karen Reixach (Keene), Sarah Gant (Beacon Hill), Megan Christopher (Wellesley) (not present), and Leslie Manning (Durham/Three Rivers), ex officio as Permanent Board clerk.

The co-clerks reported that the Legacy Gift Fund continues to be a vital resource supporting ministries in New England Yearly Meeting. The committee seeks not just to distribute grant funding, but to provide “the channels through which the living waters can flow,” connecting means, expertise, care, and oversight to affirm and lift up ways in which the spirit is moving within New England Yearly Meeting.

In the past year, the Fund has nurtured ministries concerning earth care, economics education, racial justice, diversity training, technology, and more. It has provided funds affording traveling in ministry and fellowship, as well as meetinghouse capital improvements.

This year, New England Yearly Meeting also asked the committee to apply its expertise in funding oversight to the administration of the newly created Bodine-Rustin Fund, in honor of two Quakers whose lives stood in witness against discrimination towards LGBTQ individuals and communities.

Bayard Rustin was a civil rights activist and humanitarian leader who worked closely with Martin Luther King. As an openly gay black man, his witness was public; this came with the cost of legal and personal persecution, but also allowed him to live his truth with integrity and candor.

By contrast, Tom Bodine was a publicly closeted gay man who served as Presiding Clerk of New England Yearly Meeting and member of the Friends United Meeting board in the 1960s and 1970s. Tom's witness was private; he made a conscious choice to live hiding a basic truth about himself. As he wrote, “I decided it was best to live out a lie. Not from cowardice, I like to think, but because my being out to gay friends and closeted to straight friends enabled me to be a go-between and help both sides grow in understanding.”

Inspired by these two Friends' different forms of witness, the Bodine-Rustin Fund was created to identify, raise up and financially contribute toward organizations with LGBTQ+ supportive missions. Mary Link and Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers) reported that seven groups were proposed for funding this year: two in Africa, and five based in New England. This fund is intended to be fully distributed each year, so Friends were encouraged to consider contributing financially—as well as continuing to send suggestions of groups to support.

In closing, the Legacy Gift Committee encouraged individuals and meetings carrying ministry or spirit leadings (especially those with a carbon-reducing or other environmental focus) to apply this coming cycle, or to participate in an upcoming online workshop on financially supporting ministry.

2023-53 Legacy Gift Review Committee Report

Mary Link (Mt Toby) and Suzanna Schell (Beacon Hill) presented a report from the Legacy Gift Review Committee. When the Witness and Ministry Fund was established in 2014, Friends agreed to review the Fund after 10 years, so a committee has been set up to collect and compile data and reflections, and to make recommendations to the 2024 Sessions regarding the future use of the Legacy Gift monies.

This committee has been meeting faithfully over the past year. They have sent letters with questionnaires to all grantees, monthly meetings, and other New England Yearly Meeting contacts. Many New England Friends have been touched by a Legacy Grant, and the goal is to include reflections from as many people as possible in this review. They encouraged Friends to allow them to complete their charge as scheduled for next summer, to allow time for those voices to be heard and for recommendations to be earnestly discerned.

2023-54 Nominating Committee Report

Jackie Stillwell (Monadnock), clerk of Nominating Committee, began by reading the purpose statement of the Nominating Committee as an introduction to her report to the body:

“In order to help Friends answer God’s call, the Nominating Committee identifies, encourages, and nominates Friends with the gifts and skills needed to serve in a wide variety of volunteer roles on behalf of the Yearly Meeting. In this work, the Committee seeks to remove barriers to the full expression of the spiritual gifts and skills given through each Friend, for the building up and thriving of local Friends meetings.

This work includes, in its fullness, understanding the vision of the Yearly Meeting and what is needed to live into it; leadership development and capacity-building; nurturing a culture of healthy evaluation and feedback; and expressing gratitude and recognition for faithful service in its many forms.”

Members of Nominating Committee reported with gratitude their personal experience of discerning nominations for New England Yearly Meeting. While an often-challenging task, it delivered unexpectedly joyful opportunities to tap into the ways God is working in Friends’ hearts—to see, name, and nurture gifts among us.

2023-55 Unity Agenda

Friends approved the Unity Agenda as presented in the Advance Documents.

2023-56 Closing

Friends closed with worship, intending to reconvene Tuesday, August 8, at 9:15 am.

Meeting for Business, Tuesday 9:15–11:15 a.m.

2023-57 Opening

Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak opened the meeting with the Pete Seeger song *Step by Step*, and a prayer guiding Friends to come together with a sense of welcoming love and grace in times of turmoil and great joy.

Our reading clerks offered announcements and Reading Clerk Adam Kohrman grounded the meeting with a brief land acknowledgement: *We acknowledge with humility and gratitude that we are meeting on Ndaकिनna (n-DAH-kee-NAH), homeland of the Abenaki peoples. By grace, may our discernment lead to greater peace and justice.*

This session was held in Spirit by elders Jane Jackson (Cambridge), Jean Rosenberg (Middlebury), Janet Hough (Cobscook), Evan McManamy (Providence), and Wendy Sanford (Cambridge).

2023-58 Gifts In Service to A Conflict Response Process Working Group

Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak asked Friends to advise her on the gifts and qualities to seek out when identifying members for a working group tasked with developing a stronger, healthier conflict response practice in the New England Yearly Meeting body.

Drawing from our Sessions theme, and the context provided in the preceding verses of Isaiah 58, one Friend pointed out that we are instructed, “If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,” then will we feel the grace and “be like the well-watered garden,” suggesting that we must identify Friends who hunger and thirst for righteousness and also remember that grace comes with the work of our hands.

It seems essential to find and center some persons who (as did Rahab in our Bible Half Hour reading) inhabit liminal spaces, those whose identities place them on the margins, such that they can see dynamics that those of us in the center cannot.

The working group would be well-served by including Friends who have some professional or other relevant training and experience in holding spaces for mediation, restorative justice, etc. It was noted that New York Yearly Meeting has engaged a conflict resolution facilitator. Perhaps we could learn from their relevant experience.

We would welcome the involvement of Friends who have developed the gifts and practical skills of holding space for transformation, who are able to be present in a way that provides a level of safety and comfort in the midst of difficulty, and who have the grace to begin by listening, to honor and respect the pain, the words, the experiences of others.

We should seek out those who have done the work on themselves to be comfortable with situations of conflict, to have come to understand and manage their own trauma enough to be able to see others’ needs, who bring a degree of humility and are not tied to a particular outcome, with some willingness to be wrong, to yield to the spirit of God.

To get to the root of our conflicts, we need the insight of those who understand something about the dynamics of power and privilege and how fear manifests as controlling behaviors among us. And, too, the

ability to understand how interpersonal conflict manifests our values, what we believe, our identities, systems and cultural patterns. The intersection informs how we move through conflict.

We hope the group will include people of prayer, willing to pray out loud among Friends. And we would like to see members invited into the group who are tuned into somatic awareness—ways of wisdom that are not just intellectual but tuned into the body's way of knowing.

We were reminded that the goal is to restore meaning, to create a path for addressing conflict. Individual offenders or the specific conflict are not the target. The community as a whole has a concern for recognizing systemic issues that lie below the moment's concerns.

And we were reminded that conflict among us that interferes with our ability to be faithful is not a new problem. We need the long view of Friends with an awareness of how conflict has affected our Society through its history, and with the willingness to crack open the fear to find the gift that has been given.

With appreciation, the Presiding Clerk assured the body that she is carrying this concern, and encouraged Friends to email any further advice about how to proceed or suggestions of specific working group member names.

2023-59 Staff Reports

Friends heard reports from New England Yearly Meeting staff, summarizing or expanding upon those found in the Advance Documents.

2023-60 Staff Report—Office Manager

With eagerness to speak only what was necessary, Sara Hubner (Gonic), Office Manager, simply extended her deep, enthusiastic appreciation for all her co-workers and volunteers, who are so wonderful to work with and make her job more pleasurable and productive.

2023-61 Staff Report—Accounts Manager

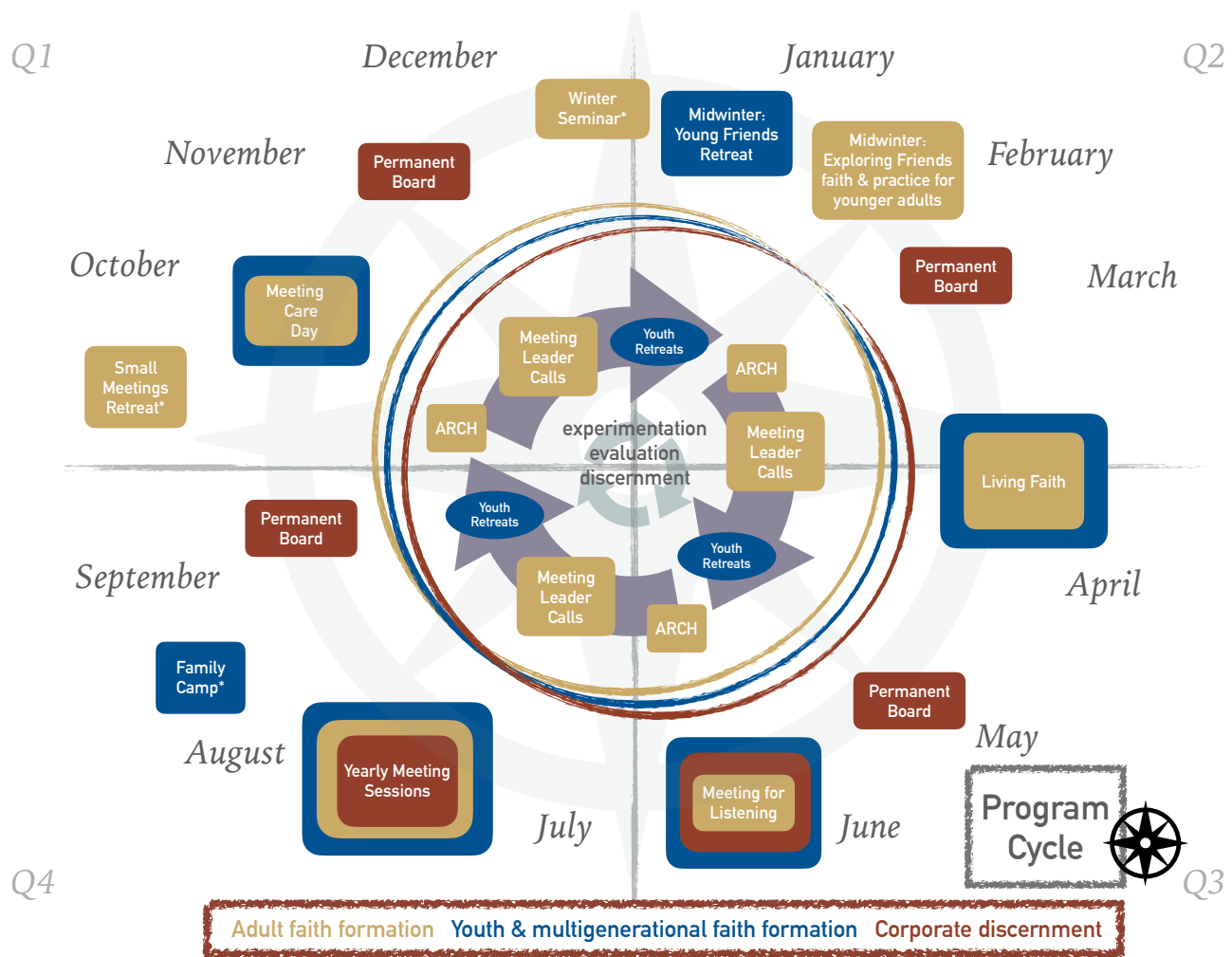
Frederick Martin (Beacon Hill), Accounts Manager, acknowledged though that his written reports focus more heavily on accuracy and clarity, for Truth must be the foundation, he also wanted to speak more broadly to the Spirit of love that is between us, and the role money can play in that. Often spending is a place where our heart and our spirit meet the physical world. Money isn't needed to act, but money can be used to enact the Spirit, and Frederick celebrated the joy he feels when he can be a witness to that faithfulness in the New England Yearly Meeting.

2023-62 Staff Report—Program Director

Nia Thomas (Northampton), Program Director, offered an infographic [see next page] to visually review the annual cycle of New England Yearly Meeting programming, whose offerings touch on one or more of three primary intentions: adult faith formation, youth and multi-generational faith formation, and corporate discernment.

Some of the programming supported by New England Yearly Meeting includes:

- Monthly meeting leader calls, connecting the formal and informal leadership of different local meetings with each other
- Aging Resources, Consultation, and Help (ARCH), with coordinator Patti Muldoon (Cambridge)



- Youth and young adult Friends retreats
- Legacy Committee workshops on ministry and money
- Different anchor programs for each season, such as Living Faith in spring, the Meeting for Listening in early summer (focusing on listening to the spiritual life of local meetings), Meeting Care Day in fall (offering in-person workshops on service to one's meeting), and hopefully the return of an online-accessible winter seminar focusing on small-group reflection aimed at longtime Friends and curious seekers to Quaker faith

Nia noted that programming is not the purpose of Quaker faith, or the Yearly Meeting, but it is one way to attend to our faith and fulfill our purpose. The offerings from New England Yearly Meeting intentionally vary through the year, and from year to year. Programming decisions are guided by the Quaker theory of change, informed by ongoing discernment and learning. These are the practices that open us more fully to God's guidance and courage.

There are items (noted with an asterisk on the infographic) that are carried as ideas, dreams, or hopes, and are still in discernment, such as:

- Retreats for small meetings at Woolman Hill
- Family camp and other opportunities for spiritual nourishment aimed at families with young children

- Some kind of practical support for strengthening the bridge between the Spirit and faithful practice alive at Friends Camp and that of the rest of the wider yearly and monthly meetings

Nevertheless, we must continually remind ourselves that not everything we could do as an organization is something that we *should* do. Faithful, spirit-led programming requires careful discernment about what we are called to do as a body or as individuals, and what we have the capacity for, as well as assurance that the programming serves the Yearly Meeting's core goals and purpose.

With gratitude for this faith community, and for signs of increasing capacity among us, Nia hoped to see Friends over the next 12 months—perhaps at a workshop, a monthly call, or maybe at Meeting Care Day, November 11th at Moses Brown School.

2023-63 Staff Report—Children and Family Ministries Coordinator

Kara Price (Storrs), Children and Family Ministries Coordinator, oversees Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) and Junior High Yearly Meeting (JHYM) retreat programs for children in elementary and middle school. She also provides other programming and support for children and families throughout the year as needed.

Kara described this year as a mix of blessings and challenges. The greatest blessing is the children and families who show up and devote themselves to ongoing relationship with each other. To be able to do so in person again after the isolation of the pandemic has been a great joy.

Another blessing has been the long history of this program. Young staff have been able to draw on a cohort of experienced Friends for mentorship, guidance, and wisdom—and even to call some back into service as returning staff—to help maintain a continuity of spirit and programming with a wonderful mix of new and seasoned staff.

With some sadness, this year Kara has made the decision to reduce youth programming offerings, in consideration of real limits of energy and time available.

Hosting fewer retreats could free more of the coordinator's working time to provide support in other ways to children and families throughout the year, such as supporting youth ministers in their local meetings.

Furthermore, the reality of Kara's capacity as a single parent with physical health complications at this time required some hard choices to be made.

With gratitude for support from the Yearly Meeting and many experienced Friends, JYM and JHYM each have three enriching retreats planned in the coming year, one for each season (plus Annual Sessions in summer). She appreciates the efforts parents make to get our children together, and expects the coming year will bring more deepening, creative opportunities for Friends of all ages.

2023-64 Exhortations for Financial Generosity and Faithfulness

In response to the treasurer's report and the Finance Committee's austere budget recommendations, Friends Isaiah Grace (no current monthly meeting), Peter Blood-Patterson (Mt Toby/Three Rivers), Jay O'Hara (Portland), and Henry Wilhelm (Northampton) rose to address us. Reflecting on his family's ministry, in which he was raised, with Friends United Meeting, Isaiah quaked as he spoke to the role that money plays in enabling the work of the Spirit, and invited us to close the budget gap through our donations while at Sessions.

I am compelled by the Holy Spirit to come and speak to you this morning. I did not choose this. I have felt deeply moved, and I want to share some of what the Spirit has led in me.

We have heard again and again of the amazing wonders that our community is capable of doing both here in New England, and across the world. And we have heard of the joyous things that are transpiring, thanks to our financial commitments.

I'm here in front of you to invite you to change the narrative and to enter into excited and joyful anticipation with me of the amazing things that we will achieve together through the Holy Spirit. My life and my existence is a testimony to 27 years of approved budgets. I would not exist, if it were not for your generosity. Henry and I are both standing here before you as living proof of your work, and of the work of God in all of us. [...]

And I want to invite you to revel in that excitement. And I want you to contemplate the terrifying budget which we have been asked to consider. And I would love to lift the burden of the Finance Committee. To make commitments to ourselves and to each other and to the world To give freely and share in the joy and bounty of God's creation, and to live faithfully as we continue to enact the work of the Holy Spirit. Which unfortunately requires money.

Peter offered several methods by which Friends might contribute.

2023-65 Closing

Friends closed, holding this passionate entreaty on their hearts. Henry Wilhelm (Northampton) gently reminded us to give funds according to our means, with reflection on what we can yet give, and without judgment if we have already given all we can.

Meeting for Business, Tuesday 3:00–5:00 p.m.

2023-66 Opening

The Presiding Clerk opened our business with a song, *Little Bit of Light* (Carol Johnson), and from the Reading Clerk we heard the land acknowledgement that grounds our work: *We acknowledge with humility and gratitude that we are meeting on Ndakinna (n-DAH-kee-NAH), homeland of the Abenaki peoples. By grace, may our discernment lead to greater peace and justice.*

The meeting was held in prayer by Jane Jackson (Cambridge), Madeleine Vaché (New Lond), Allison Randall (Keene), and Mary Link (Mt Toby).

2023-67 Budget Final Approval

Scot Drysdale (Hanover), Finance Committee clerk, presented some observations and suggestions informed by the very well-attended listening session held on the 2024 budget.

He reported that there were many expressions of unhappiness with the proposed canceling of expected contributions to outside and Quaker umbrella organizations. He celebrated that many voices shared great optimism that we have the capacity and the will to raise funds adequate to pay for what we are really called to do.

And he acknowledged that the resistance to this austerity budget seemed to need some accommodation in order to achieve unity. He suggested that Friends could consider a measure to pledge donations at the end of the fiscal year, if sufficient donations in excess of expected income were realized.

Though it is understood that we are in a condition of budget deficit, and need long-term, sustainable growth in our fundraising, Friends share a strong call to live into a sense of holy abundance, and, referring especially to the Legacy Gift Fund, to be sure all the resources we do have are well-used, not hoarded.

Friends who are present here among us at Sessions have vividly heard—some for the first time in earnest—the urgency of New England Yearly Meeting’s financial deficit, and the call to dig deep and donate as generously as possible, because there is very little in our budget we are willing to sacrifice to austerity cuts. The meeting has heard that it will be important to communicate this to Friends not here this week. We know we can fund-raise what is needed, but our record for the past few years is not giving assurance that we will. We can only with integrity approve a budget that we will fund in reality.

After much deliberation, and weighing of several possible solutions, Friends approved the 2024 New England Yearly Meeting budget as proposed by the Finance Committee.

The Meeting additionally approved an addendum that if New England Yearly Meeting reaches the end of the fiscal year (September 30, 2024) with a surplus, 75% of that surplus will be used to fund support for external/umbrella organizations, up to the budgeted \$45,975 we have given annually for a number of years. The remaining 25% of that surplus would go into reserves.

One Friend stood aside, for the first time in his long service among us. This Friend was not alone in carrying a concern that when we have the abundance we need but hold our resources in artificial restriction, we may be giving over to a fear of scarcity in a way that is not truly faithful to Spirit.

Fully funding crucial programming, ministries, expected support of worthy organizations, and especially revitalization of our youth programming are all of great importance to us. We must each discern what steps we can take to contribute to financial recovery becoming an actuality.

2023-68 Cuba Yearly Meeting Epistle

We heard the 2023 epistle of Cuba Yearly Meeting, read by clerk Jorge Luis Peña over Zoom and in translation by Recording Clerk Susannah McCandless (Burlington/Middlebury). The epistle records the Clerk’s exhortation to “be the Quaker sowers of hope that the world needs,” “seeing hope as the horizon of our lives.” Friends received the epistle with warm expressions of gratitude for the fruits of long relationship through our Bridge of Love, and for the opportunity to connect during these Sessions, in the face of many practical obstacles.

2023-69 Faith and Practice Revisions for Ministry and Counsel Chapter.

Marion Athearn (Westport) presented some proposed revisions for sections of Faith and Practice, and received suggestions from the body about further refinements to the advices.

The preliminary draft of the 5th chapter of Faith and Practice, on Ministry and Counsel, was approved by the meeting. Friends are encouraged to begin using this draft in place of the 1985 edition. As we live into its advices over the coming year and more, Friends and meetings are invited to send feedback to the Faith and Practice committee, to inform an eventual final draft.

2023-70 Noticing Patterns

Members of the Noticing Patterns Working Group Polly Atwood (Cambridge) and Melissa Foster (Framingham) offered an activity for the meeting. They invited us to use the work of noticing as a tool for listening, with an encouragement to lay down fear or attachment to right and wrong, and to humbly listen to experiences across the body.

They asked Friends to settle in, listen to their own hearts and minds, and respond to the query, “What is a noticing of a pattern of oppression or faithfulness that has been rising for you in this meeting?” Voices rose to offer appreciation and gratitude for many forms of faithfulness, and some gentle suggestions of places we might need to shine light and loving curiosity on patterns that reinforce oppression.

One Friend acknowledged positive progress in giving consideration to neurodivergent learning styles and encouraged us to go further—to examine our inclination to admonish attendees who could not readily engage the “wall of text” Advance Documents in preparation for Sessions. The audio podcasts are a very helpful accommodation for many, but may not be accessible to all.

Friends were appreciative of the deep listening observed in Sessions, and appreciative for hearing youthful voices with enthusiasm for budget discernment and fundraising.

Earlier we heard a request to reconsider language referring to “disability.” A Friend asked us to sit with our discomfort with that word, and to think about why it arose.

The Presiding Clerk’s choice to call on Friends not by name nor by physical appearance was affirmed as an inclusive practice.

A Friend remembered with regret that at some moments the body’s discernment of the budget agenda item devolved into “a bit of an undisciplined rabble”—which appeared to do harm that may have been gendered.

A Friend appreciated the moment of faithfulness when voices fervently urging Friends to donate more generously to New England Yearly Meeting were tempered by reminders to welcome class and economic diversity among us, and not to create a culture of shame or pressure for those who lack financial access.

One Friend observed that, logistically, it is hard for clerks to simultaneously watch for raised hands in the auditorium and on Zoom. Perhaps there is a better solution for this.

The Noticing Patterns group thanked the body for its faithfulness! They noted, language we use for noticing does not need to take any particular form. We heard faithfulness in gratitude, and oppression in sadness.

2023-71 Epistle First Reading

Members of the Epistle Committee, Jay O’Hara (Portland), Beth Hansen (Westerly), William Monroe (Providence), and Emily Savin (Three Rivers, present on Zoom), presented a first draft of the 2023 New England Yearly Meeting Epistle for the body to consider, and welcomed suggestions as they edited a draft for final approval.

2023-72 Closing

Friends closed with waiting worship, intending next to convene Wednesday at 9:15 a.m.

Meeting for Business, Wednesday 9:15–10:15 a.m.

2023-73 Opening

The meeting opened with the song, *We Shall Be Known*, by Karisha Longaker, shared by Jay O'Hara (Portland) and Peter Blood-Patterson (Mt Toby/Three Rivers), and an acknowledgement and blessing of our presence and work here on Ndakinna: "We acknowledge with humility and gratitude that we are meeting on Ndakinna (n-DAH-kee-NAH), homeland of the Abenaki peoples. By grace, may our discernment lead to greater peace and justice."

Our elders were Maggie Fogarty (Dover), Janet Hough (Cobscook), Allison Randall (Keene), and Kathryn Olsen (East Sandwich).

2023-74 Welcoming Visitors

We welcomed visitors, who rose and introduced themselves.

A Message from Havana Friends

Kirenia Criado Perez, clerk of Havana Monthly Meeting and Matanzas Theology Professor, offered a message of gratitude and invitation to New England Friends.

Other Cuban Friends leaders added their voices.

Thank you for the opportunity to be present among you—all are invited to come sojourn among us. It is easier for you to come here than for us to go to you, because of the complexity of visas. We pray that you come together, return safely home, and leave with your batteries charged to serve God. God bless you.

Reading Clerk Adam Kohrman (Beacon Hill) read a message from Havana Friends

To New England Yearly Meeting in Sessions from Havana Monthly Meeting.

Dear family,

We want to take advantage of this opportunity to send you greetings from Havana Monthly Meeting and to ask that the strength of the Spirit continue guiding you on that path of faith and community.

We want to thank you for the love that is manifested in the shape of the Puente de Amor and that nourishes us in a brotherhood that helps us walk hand in hand knowing we are accompanied and loved.

Today that bridge has faces, names, and histories that we treasure like pearls of great value in our lives.

Our meeting has felt the voice of God as one of the branches of world Quakerism and although we have the identity and color of our Cubanness we are very close to the branch that you live and bear witness through as New England Yearly Meeting.

Thank you for the love and care that for more than twenty years you have shown us. Thank you for bearing witness to the Light and for inviting us to continue showing the face of God as a Quaker Cuban church.

Dear brothers and sisters

Never tire of affirming hope
Don't renounce your dreams
Continue searching for the key
That opens life
That releases joy
That provokes peace and
Justice.
Keep trusting
That with our clay God
Makes miracles and that love is the light that illuminates any darkness.

God bless you.

Havana Monthly Meeting

2023-75 A Report from the Worship Coordinator

Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers), Sessions Worship Coordinator, offered some closing reflections to send Friends out into their everyday lives carrying the worshipful learnings and nurture we garnered this week as a gathered body. She pointed out that all who entered this building today walked past the wall of paper leaves inscribed with prayers and intentions by members of New England Yearly Meeting present at Castleton this week. She invited all to take a leaf (or two) home with them—and the next time any of us are worshiping, maybe over Zoom, we can remember the way we held each other here.

Kristina also drew our attention to the Friends sitting in the front of the auditorium and also some accompanying us over Zoom—elders centering down and holding the seed, holding each of us, the worshippers, the speakers, the faithful discerners, in the light of God.

Eldering is a special practice among Quakers to support us in centering our gatherings on listening for the Divine guidance we need. To find out more about it and about how to bring this practice into more of our business and activities at home meetings, Kristina encouraged Friends to turn to resources such as Friends Janet Hough, Bruce Neumann, Elaine Emily, and Mary Kay Glazer's *An Invitation to Quaker Eldering*.

In a closing prayer, Kristina entreated us: So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for God (Romans 12:1, *The Message*)

2023-76 Reports from Visitors to Youth Programming and Sessions

Ruah Swennerfelt (Middlebury) visited for a morning with the early childcare program. Her overarching impression was one of love—love shown by the young Friends who gently welcomed her to their song circle, love shared between children celebrating a birthday with books, and love in the engaging, smiling guidance of the staff who tended to them.

Patricia Crosby (Mount Toby) visited the K-through-3 Sessions in the Castleton Gym. She saw the children delight in time shared with Abenaki storytellers Joseph and Jesse Bruchac, and admired the gentle patience staff had for the happy disorder of young Friends making crafts, eating snacks, and rolling

around like puppies! She observed that with 17 children in just that one group, New England Yearly Meeting is definitely doing something right to have drawn so many young families to Sessions this year.

Marion Baker (Weare) joined the K-through-3 Sessions, not as a visiting representative, but to share a Godly Play story activity with the children. She reported that children continued to approach her around campus and at the dining hall throughout the week and observed that helping with youth programming can be a wonderful way for non-parents to build up these relationships and connections with a younger generation of Friends.

Patti Muldoon (Cambridge) visited the 4-through-6 Sessions, rather than Junior High Yearly Meeting (JHYM), and brought a report of shared joy and story, and patient accompaniment by an adult for a child taking space from the group.

Polly Attwood (Cambridge) reported that she had not visited Young Friends (YFs). When she consulted with Young Friends Interim Coordinator Drew Chasse (Mt Toby), Polly learned that the group had been accompanied lovingly but unevenly. Neither the YFs nor JHYM'ers had consistent holding by the same adults/young adults, as understaffed resource people were coming and going as they split their time between the two groups. Drew expressed reservations at the prospect of another adult visitor.

2023-77 Concern for the Wellbeing of Children and Youth

We hold sorrow at the contrast between these joyful reports of the tender care of Quaker children and what we have been learning about New England Friends' role in Indigenous reeducation camps separating children from families and culture.

Alive in the body at these Sessions was a concern for the children of now who are our future, and the children of the past who are asking us to keep holding them. This concern extends to the inherent importance of the wellbeing of all children with whom members of the body feel a connection. Friends lifted up Palestinian children in Ramallah and elsewhere, children in Bolivia whom Emma Condori Mamani serves, the many children our spiritual forebearers deeply harmed in Indigenous Boarding Schools, young initial recipients of Bodine-Rustin funds in North America and East Africa, and our yearly meeting youth programming.

What is the implication of the lack of staff support for our youth programs in light of our budget discussions. How might we be led in Spirit to use the Legacy Gift Fund monies as a resource to support programs for youth, as ministry work that builds our community? Given New England Friends' ability to so rapidly replace a budget shortfall, what does faithfulness to our youth—to all these youth—look like?

2023-78 Report from Events Coordinator

Elizabeth Hacala, Events Coordinator, shared a brief report on her experience planning and coordinating Annual Sessions this year. Four hundred and two Friends attended.

This year was the fifth time Elizabeth served us as Event Coordinator. In allegory, she told the Story of the Orange: Two people have one orange. To be fair, they sliced it down the center and each took a half. Only afterwards did they realize that one wanted to eat the flesh, and one wanted to make candied peel. If they had spoken and listened more, they could both have had all of what they wanted.

Elizabeth tells us she understands her job as one of asking the necessary questions: why people want things and what they want to accomplish, so that we can best meet the real needs of Friends deep down.

Friends are grateful for the way she has brought care, creativity, and curiosity to her role in New England Yearly Meeting Sessions.

2023-79 Report on Reflection Groups

Fran Brokaw (Hanover) reported back on coordinating Reflection Groups during Sessions, with a wonderful abundance of eager and skilled facilitators working both in-person and on Zoom. Most in-person groups were small, with just 5 or 6 participants. She heard particular hunger and gratitude for the parenting group, which intends to keep meeting. The LGBTQIA+ group was self-organizing; the hybrid Spanish-language group had a dozen participants, enabling joyful sharing with Cuban and other remote Friends. Fran noted a need for better scheduling in a time-limited Sessions: reflection groups conflicted with other important program elements, precluding broad participation.

2023-80 Report and Feedback About the Experience of Zoom Virtual Attendees

Don Peabody (Middlebury) reflected on the experience of virtual attendance at these Sessions, the interaction between the "3D on-label programming crew and 2D off-label [virtually present] crew." His household appreciated the block party, a raucous, joyful experience addressing what they miss most, the ability to sit and talk and play and pray and connect with our beloveds." The technical glitches experienced were not damaging to the spirit of connection: Spirit was abundantly available and evident. Praise God!

2023-81 Budget Announcement

Isaiah Grace (Beacon Hill) brought an update to the body, celebrating that after hearing reports of budget shortfall in the New England Yearly Meeting annual budget and pay-as-led admission to Sessions, with heartfelt exhortations for attendees to consider what more they could give, a number of Friends came forward with more than \$24,000 of donations over just one day, as well as new pledged monthly contributions that will total more than \$6,000 in the coming fiscal year. Hallelujah!

Closing Ceremony, Wednesday 10:15–11:15 a.m.

2023-82 Singing Our Children into Fellowship

The closing ceremony for the 2023 New England Yearly Meeting Sessions began with singing *Dear Friends* (a Plum Village round) to welcome our children's groups as they joined the gathered body at the Castleton Fine Arts Center.

2023-83 New England Yearly Meeting Epistle

Friends approved the 2023 New England Yearly Meeting Epistle on a final reading from the Epistle Committee, Jay O'Hara (Portland), Beth Hansen (Westerly), William Monroe (Providence), and Emily Savin (Three Rivers).

Two Friends stood aside from the body's approval, feeling clear that they could not with integrity accept the phrasing characterizing our Yearly Meeting as having no process for dealing with conflict.

2023-84 Youth Epistles

With gratitude, the body received blessed epistles from our youth Sessions. The full texts of these epistles are appended to these minutes:

- Childcare Epistle, presented by Rainer Humphries (Hartford)
- JYM K–3 Epistle, presented by Eowyn Hebert (Framingham), Greta Terrien (Westport Meeting)
- JYM 4–6 Epistle, presented by Clara Greene (Cambridge), Abbie Haineswood (Putney), Paul MacRae (New Haven), Alex Poynter (New Haven)
- Junior High Yearly Meeting Epistle, presented by Nahar Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers) and Alice Allen-Harvey (Durham)
- Young Friends, presented by: Anion-Conifer Gilbert (Cambridge), Sage Paterson (Concord), Brennan Schifman (Providence), and Emily Edwards (West Falmouth), Resource Person
- Young Adult Friends Epistle, presented by Lilly Campbell (Three Rivers), JHYM Sessions Coordinator; Drew Chasse (Mt. Toby), YF Sessions Coordinator; Rainer Humphries (Hartford), Childcare Sessions Coordinator; Celadry June Humphries (Northampton), and Sal Emi Link (Mt Toby)

2023-85 Reflections on the Role of Youth in Our Yearly Meeting

In epistles from Young Friends and Young Adult Friends, as well as in worshipful messages and informal conversations throughout our time at Sessions, we heard gratitude for the staff who plan programming and accompany our young Friends, gratitude for these young Friends who show up and share their Light with us all, and gratitude for the grounding experiences of loving presence, acceptance, and challenge available in New England Friends youth programming for our youngest through adulthood.

We also heard real concern that the wider Yearly Meeting is not valuing—or at least not adequately showing that it is valuing—the essential necessity and worth of the youth Yearly Meetings.

Young Adult Friends gave witness to powerful, nurturing experiences they had growing up supported by New England Yearly Meeting youth programming, and a pressing caution about their sense of the deterioration of Yearly Meeting support for that programming for the current generations of children and staff. Many Young Adult Friends are feeling isolated, keenly grieving the loss of community following their aging out of youth programming, and although they are continuing to find purpose in service as staff to youth programming, they feel overwhelmed by the challenge of carrying that understaffed and under-resourced ministry.

These gatherings of our children and younger Friends cannot merely be dismissed as childcare for the convenience of the Yearly Meeting. As we heard from the young adult Friends epistle, “We fear that the wider New England Yearly Meeting community sees our ministry and the youth programs as auxiliary to the Yearly Meeting, that the youth programs provide a service that allows the adult Yearly Meeting to do business, when the reverse is equally true. We feel that the youth programs are in large part the purpose and life of this Yearly Meeting.”

We heard the exhausting, depleting struggle to be truly seen, respected, included, and supported in their ministries and development as a community of Friends.

We heard the call to action found at more length and with greater eloquence in epistles from our Young Friends and young adult Friends.

2023-86 Closing

Mey Hasbrook (Durham) offered the Presiding Clerk a gift, a token crafted from local pine and cedar, bound in yarn from Eden Grace, inviting us to ground our worship for business as an ongoing faith community on what and who is our now and our future. May we center on the generations rising with

wisdom of what the young can see and know, what we can see and know when we listen deeply and respond.

Holding expectant waiting for those voices, we heard lines from a Carrie Newcomer song: “It will take a change of heart for this to mend, but miracles do happen every shining now and then, if not now, if not now, tell me when.”

We closed intending, God willing, to meet again in August of 2024.

Approved Budget

New England Yearly Meeting FY2024 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed—Summary

Approved by Finance Committee 1/28/2023 and 4/22/2023

Category	FY2022	FY2022	FY2023	Δ FY23 to FY24 Budgets	FY2024 Proposed Budget
	Actuals	Budget	Budget		
Income					
4010 Individual Contributions Total	176,749	230,225	230,225	(7,225)	223,000
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions Total	330,575	373,000	373,000	(31,000)	342,000
4025 Unallocated Income			31,000	(31,000)	0
4030 Organizations Contributions		0	0	-	0
4050 Interest and Dividend Income	11,749	9,000	12,000	-	12,000
4070 Books & Other Sales Income	10,650	17,000	17,000	(6,500)	10,500
4080 Retreat Program Fees	13,185	47,000	47,000	(9,500)	37,500
4085 Sessions Program Fees	117,821	221,300	227,400	22,075	249,475
4090 Change in Fair Market Value	-816	0	0	-	0
4099 Net Assets Released To/From	52,967	15,000	30,000	(25,000)	5,000
Total Income	712,879	912,525	967,625	(88,150)	879,475
Expenses					
Total 5000 Staff	486,606	452,112	493,684	10,158	503,842
Total 5100 General & Administration	106,159	105,715	93,615	(6,166)	87,449
Total 5300 Travel & Conferences	12,362	35,300	35,300	(13,000)	22,300
Total 6000 Programs	189,116	285,680	284,300	(28,288)	256,012
Total 6140 Books & Other Sales Expense	7,585	14,500	14,500	(6,500)	8,000
Total 6200-6590 Support of Other Organizations	42,890	45,975	45,975	(45,975)	0
Total Expenses	844,719	939,282	967,374	(89,771)	877,603
Net Operating Income	(131,840)	-26,757	251	1,621	1,872
Other Income					
9940 Other Income - Transfers from other funds	184,870				
Total Other Income	184,870				
Other Expenses					
9950 Other Expense - Transfer to other funds	74,707				
Total Other Expenses	74,707				
Net Other Income	110,163				
Net Income	(21,677)				

New England Yearly Meeting
FY2024 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed—Detail
 Approved by Finance Committee 1/28/2023 and 4/22/2023

Category	FY2022	FY2022	FY2023	Δ FY23 to FY24 Budgets	FY2024	Notes
	Actuals	Budget	Budget		Proposed Budget	
Income						
4010 Individual Contributions						
General Fund Contributions	151,232	204,225	204,225	(6,225)	198,000	
Equalization Contributions	25,517	26,000	26,000	(1,000)	25,000	2
4010 Individual Contributions Total	176,749	230,225	230,225	(7,225)	223,000	
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions						
General Fund Contributions	322,214	350,000	350,000	(17,000)	333,000	1
Equalization Contributions	8,361	23,000	23,000	(14,000)	9,000	
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions Total	330,575	373,000	373,000	(31,000)	342,000	
4025 Unallocated Income			31,000	(31,000)	0	
4030 Organizations Contributions		0	0	-	0	
4050 Interest and Dividend Income	11,749	9,000	12,000	-	12,000	
4070 Books & Other Sales Income	10,650	17,000	17,000	(6,500)	10,500	
4080 Retreat Program Fees	13,185	47,000	47,000	(9,500)	37,500	
4085 Sessions Program Fees	117,821	221,300	227,400	22,075	249,475	2
4090 Change in Fair Market Value	-816	0	0	-	0	
4099 Net Assets Released To/From	52,967	15,000	30,000	(25,000)	5,000	3
Total Income	712,879	912,525	967,625	(88,150)	879,475	
Expenses						
5000 Staff						
5010 Salaries & Wages	381,651	349,425	378,053	2,935	380,988	4
5020 Payroll Taxes	28,118	25,201	27,392	1,754	29,146	
5030 Benefits				-		
5033 Health Benefits	38,772	36,873	45,123	4,076	49,199	4
5035 Retirements	35,743	32,943	35,806	2,293	38,099	
5040 Disability	1,092	1,500	1,100	-	1,100	
5045 Workers' Compensation	757	720	760	-	760	
5050 Spiritual Retreats	100	1,200	1,200	-	1,200	
5060 Staff Development	373	4,250	4,250	(1,000)	3,250	
5070 Sabbatical & Paid Leave				100	100	
Total 5030 Benefits	76,837	77,486	88,239	5,469	93,708	
Total 5000 Staff	486,606	452,112	493,684	10,158	503,842	4
5100 General & Administration						
5110 Administration						
5120 Bank Expense	6,369	7,000	7,000	-	7,000	
5130 Contracted Services	26,013	31,900	22,000	(4,000)	18,000	
5135 Accounting Services	2,500	2,500	0	-	0	
5140 Legal Services	2,500	2,500	2,500	-	2,500	
5145 Infrastructure	5,000	5,000	5,000	(5,000)	0	
5150 Liability Insurance	5,423	5,250	5,250	-	5,250	
5160 Payroll Service	6,288	5,200	5,500	-	5,500	
5170 Recruiting Expense	205	0	0	-	0	
5180 Rent	9,350	9,350	9,350	-	9,350	
5190 Misc. Expense	251	0	0	-	0	
Total 5110 Administration	63,899	68,700	56,600	(9,000)	47,600	
5200 Office						
5220 Archives Office Expenses		0	0	-	0	
5220 Cleaning Services	242	265	265	34	299	
5230 Maint - Equip & Hardware	73	1,250	1,250	(750)	500	
5240 Postage	3,585	3,750	3,750	-	3,750	
5250 Office Equipment	2,574	3,250	3,250	(1,750)	1,500	
5260 Office Supplies	1,595	2,500	2,500	(900)	1,600	
5270 Printing & Copying	9,184	14,500	14,500	(5,000)	9,500	
5280 Software & Updates	21,231	7,000	7,000	12,000	19,000	
5290 Telephone	3,540	4,500	4,500	(800)	3,700	
5295 Misc. Office	235	0	0	-	0	
Total 5200 Office	42,260	37,015	37,015	2,834	39,849	
Total 5100 General & Administration	106,159	105,715	93,615	(6,166)	87,449	

New England Yearly Meeting
FY2024 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed—Detail
 Approved by Finance Committee 1/28/2023 and 4/22/2023

Category	FY2022 Actuals	FY2022 Budget	FY2023 Budget	Δ FY23 to FY24	FY2024 Proposed Budget	Notes
5300 Travel & Conferences						
5310 Travel - Committee		3,000	3,000	(1,600)	1,400	
5320 Travel - Clerk		4,500	4,500	(2,000)	2,500	
5330 Travel - Programs	3,175	3,700	3,700	(600)	3,100	
5335 Travel - Representatives Travel	2,060	6,700	6,700	(4,700)	2,000	
5350 Travel - Staff	7,128	17,000	17,000	(4,100)	12,900	
5360 Travel - Ministries		400	400	-	400	
Total 5300 Travel & Conferences	12,362	35,300	35,300	(13,000)	22,300	
6000 Programs						
6110 Sessions Room & Board	126,044	186,850	192,950	(23,508)	169,442	2
6112 Retreats - Room & Board				-		
6114 Room Rental	8,575	17,530	13,550	(3,550)	10,000	
6150 Food Expense	8,835	17,430	15,930	(5,930)	10,000	
Total 6112 Retreats - Room & Board	17,410	34,960	29,480	(9,480)	20,000	
6125 Program Expenses				-		
6105 Honoraria - Speakers/Wkshp Ldrs	15,930	22,000	22,000	2,000	24,000	3
6107 Honoraria - Volunteer Leadership	8,250	15,000	15,000	-	15,000	
6115 Equipment Rental	6,545	6,000	6,000	500	6,500	
6121 Supplies and Other Expenses	8,893	9,300	7,300	1,700	9,000	
6165 Pre-Sessions Expense	1,100	1,000	1,000	500	1,500	
Total 6125 Program Expenses	40,718	53,300	51,300	4,700	56,000	
6130 Committee Expenses - General	1,965	6,350	6,350	-	6,350	
6134 Childcare	210	2,000	2,000	-	2,000	
6137 Committee Day Expenses		0	0	-	0	
Total 6130 Committee Expenses - General	2,175	8,350	8,350	-	8,350	
6160 Program Support				-		
6163 Friends Camp	2,769	2,220	2,220	-	2,220	
6167 Religious Education & Outreach		0	0	-	0	
Total 6160 Program Support	2,769	2,220	2,220	-	2,220	
Total 6000 Programs	189,116	285,680	284,300	(28,288)	256,012	
6140 Books & Other Sales Expense		0	0	-	0	
6142 Books	3,311	14,500	14,500	(6,500)	8,000	
6145 Other Items for Sale	620	0	0	-	0	
6147 Consignment Sales	3,654	0	0	-	0	
Total 6140 Books & Other Sales Expense	7,585	14,500	14,500	(6,500)	8,000	
Total 6200-6590 Support of Other Organizations	42,890	45,975	45,975	(45,975)	0	5
Total Expenses	844,719	939,282	967,374	(89,771)	877,603	
Net Operating Income	(131,840)	-26,757	251	1,621	1,872	
Other Income						
9940 Other Income - Transfers from other funds	184,870					
Total Other Income	184,870					
Other Expenses						
9950 Other Expense - Transfer to other funds	74,707					
Total Other Expenses	74,707					
Net Other Income	110,163					
Net Income	(21,677)					

Notes:

- The Sessions portion of this budget reflects steps under consideration to both reduce expenses and increase income for Sessions 2023 and 2024.
- FY23 Meeting contributions expected: \$325,600 for general fund, based on pledges so far. \$3K net increase over last year.
 - Sessions fees based on 5% increase 2022-23 and 6% increase 2023-24, and attendance of 455 adults and 100 kids/youth at Castleton. Does not include online attenders (80?) at approx \$11K income at same rate increase.
 - Funding the Honoraria Supporting Volunteer Leadership is being phased in over three years;
 - in FY2024 \$5000 will come from reserves. The expense is being tracked in the new subcategory "Honoraria - Volunteer Leadership"
 - Staff expense calculated with COLA of 6.1%, annual change in CPI for New England as of December 2022. Staff expense budget has increased \$97.5K over FY2020 budget. Of that increase:
 - 49% is due to cost-of-living-adjustment consistent with yearly meeting personnel policy (COLA: 2.22% FY21, 0.5% FY22, 6.3% FY23, 6.1% FY24)
 - 24% is due to merit raises and other shifts in compensation reflecting scope of responsibilities
 - 17% is due to changes in benefits, mostly health care premiums consistent with yearly meeting personnel policy
 - 9% due to other reasons such as overtime hours by hourly program staff around Sessions & retreats, payroll tax for raises, etc
 Budgeted annual staff hours have stayed the same from FY2020-2024, at 12,104, or 5.8 FTEs; which is down from FY19 at 12,672 hours or 6.1 FTEs, not counting FY19 Shoemaker-funded positions.
 - Following the 2022 plan of the Financial Contributions Working Group, Support of Other Organizations is presented with only a total line.

Unity Agenda Items

Bank Resolutions

The following resolutions are brought by the Finance Committee:

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

Revised Purposes, Procedures, & Composition Youth Ministries Committee

Purpose

The Youth Ministries Committee serves to regularly engage in on-going listening across the Quaker youth ministries “landscape” in New England. Based on their listening, the Committee regularly identifies both the growing edges of Quaker youth ministry in New England and current needs related to the spiritual development of Quaker children, youth, and families. The Committee act as storytellers and advocates, sharing relevant takeaways from their listening with the wider Yearly Meeting.

The Youth Ministries Committee provides and encourages opportunities for connection which strengthen the web of relationships between meetings, ministries, and ministers serving children, youth, and families.

Annually, (or more frequently if needed), the Youth Ministries Committee reviews and, as needed, recommends revisions to NEYM’s Child Safety Policies.

In these ways, the Youth Ministries Committee plays an essential role in nurturing the faith life, spiritual growth, safety, and leadership of children and youth of New England Yearly Meeting. The work of this committee also helps to ensure the vitality, health, safety, and relevance of the youth programs offered by the organization of NEYM, as well as youth ministries offered within and across the web of local meetings in our region. This work happens in the context of both family and community, in same-age and in multi-generational groups.

It is the committee’s intent that New England Quakers’ youth ministries enable young people to grow into adulthood with a full sense of belonging to both a local circle of Friends and the Yearly Meeting as

a whole. The committee encourages ministries which provide a foundation of Quaker faith and experience, fostering an active spiritual life.

Procedures

The committee is responsible for conducting an annual review of the NEYM Child Safety Policy and its implementation.

- As requested, the committee consults on the right ordering of administrative aspects of NEYM youth programs: health, safety and welfare of children; policy and procedures; and ethical and legal issues.
- The committee communicates to the broader Yearly Meeting about the needs of NEYM youth, families, and youth workers.
- The committee meets regularly, virtually or in person, as the needs of the committee dictate. The committee reports annually to Sessions on the health of the programs, status of the Child Safety Policy, and other issues in our care.
- For local meetings, the committee offers opportunities for connection and networking, and, as possible resources, collaboration, and guidance for the health and welfare of children; policy and procedures; ethical and legal issues; program design and curriculum; outreach.

Composition

- Committee membership should reflect the diversity within the Yearly Meeting. Gifts that we seek for the committee include skills in pastoral care for children and families, and skills in youth programs and youth work, including program evaluation and planning. Committee membership should include people with familiarity with the NEYM retreat programs.
- Members are named for 3-year terms, two people in each class for a total of six named members. Friends may be appointed for a second, consecutive 3-year term, after which they should take a year away from the work. Members are named by the Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee.
- The youth ministry staff—Children and Families Ministries Coordinator, Teen Ministries Coordinator, the Program Director, and the Friends Camp Director—are *ex-officio* members of this committee. Because of the high level of staff participation in the work of this committee, YMC needs to remain mindful of the risks of over-burdening staff.
- Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee, in consultation with the committee members, names the clerk of Youth Ministries Committee. This nomination is approved by the Yearly Meeting. The Youth Ministries Committee coordinates with and has linkages to the Meeting Accompaniment Group, and Permanent Board.

Minute to Authorize Edits and Corrections

Friends authorize the presiding, recording, and reading clerks to make and approve edits, clarifications, and corrections to the minutes of NEYM Sessions 2023.

Approved Nominating Slate

Permanent Board (50)

2024

Chase, Deana (West)
 Gant, Christopher (Bhill)
 Harrington, Ian (Cam)
 Reuthe, John (Vass)
 Schwope, Martha (Well)
Warnock, Eleanor (NHam)

2027

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

Archives & Historical Records (6)

2024

Crosby, Eileen (Mt Toby)
 Quirk, Brian (Law)

2027

Cazden, Betsy (Prov)

2025

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

2028

Forsythe, Martin (Bhill)
Mair, Edward (Ames)
Randall, Allison (Keene)
Taber, Willa (Fpon)**

2026

Allen, Kimberly (Durh)
 Davies, Susan (Vass)*
 McCandless, Christopher (Burl)
 Zwirner, Mary (Bhill)

Board of Managers of Investments & Permanent Funds (10)

2024

Philbrook, Erik (Well)*

2027

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

2025

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

2028

2026

Wernette, Tim (Win)

Clerks' Table

2024	2025	2026
Kohrman, Adam (Bhill), Reading McCandless, Susannah (Mbur), Recording	Leuchak, Rebecca (Prov), Presiding Wright, Michelle (Putn), Reading Jensen, Megan (Mon), Recording	

Committee for Nurturing Friends Education (6)

2024	2025	2026
Bourns, David (Prov)* Douthit, Zona (Prov) Ekk, Vicky (Prov) Smith, Megan (Prov)	Steele, Ariana (Prov) Tripp, Dawn (Alln)	

Faith & Practice (16)

Armstrong, Doug (Mon) Athearn, Marian (Wprt) Cogbill, Rachel Walker (Pfld) Edmondson, Maggie (Wint)	Edwards, Eric (Wfal) Godway, Eleanor (Hart) Hawthorn, Margaret (Mon) Hilles-Pilant, Carolyn (Bhil)	McCosker, Phebe* (Han) Reilly, Sue (Port)
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Finance (10)

2024	2025	2026
Maurer, Philip (Nham) Sprogell, Sarah (Durh) Wooten, Kathleen (Lawr)	Drysdale, Robert Scot (Han)* Olsen, Kathryn (ESan)	Keith, Doug (Hart) Corindia, Thomas (Han)

2027	2028	
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Treasurer:

2023 (continuing through transition) Murray, Robert (Bhill)	2026
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Friends Camp (7 to 15) (named by Friends Camp Nominating)

2024	2025	2026
Baker, Carol (Wrly) Bornstein, Natalie* Keller, Edie (Vass) O'Connor, Bob (Vass)	Kaviar, Molly (Camb) Marstaller, Mimi (Durh) Monahan, Kate Reuthe, John (Vass) Rogers, Mike Spivey, Robb (Brun)	

Friends Camp Nominating (5) (3 named by NEYM Nominating, 2 named by Friends Camp Committee)

2024	2025	2026
Burgin, Hilary (BHil) Anna Hopkins and Natalie Bornstein, appointed by Friends Camp Committee	Keefe-Perry, Kristina (FPon)	

Legacy Gift Committee (9)

2024	2025	2026
<i>Gant, Sarah (Bhill)</i>	Christopher, Megan (Well)	_____
Reixach, Karen (Keen)	Martin, Lori (NHav)	_____
<i>Rockwood, Susan (Mid)*</i>	Isbell Shinn, Jennie (MVin)	_____
	<i>Link, Mary (Mtob)*</i>	

Meeting Accompaniment Group (5 to 7; 5-year terms)

2028	2028
Baker-Smith, Gretchen (Wprt)	Gant, Sarah (Bhil)*
McArthur, Hugh (Han)	Grannell, Dorothy (Port)
Wilson, Morgan (Fram)	
Woodrow, Honor (Putn)	

Ministry and Counsel Clerk

2025
Williams, Carl (Pfld)

Nominating Committee (15) (nominated by Permanent Board)

2024	2025	2026
Stillwell, Jacqueline (Mon)*	Lindo, Anna (Fram)	Gant, Christopher (Bhill)
_____	Smith, Sara (Con)	Malin, Kathy (Smit)
_____	_____	Hansen, Beth (Wrly)**
_____	_____	Lamb, Tim (Worcester)
_____	_____	Schwope, Martha (Well)

Puente de Amigos (9)

2024	2025	2026
Fogarty, Margaret (Dov)	Lindo, Richard (Fram)	_____
Stone, Carolyn (Well)*	Schmidt, Maxine (NHAm)	_____
Kinsky, Deena (Matt)	_____	_____

Racial, Social and Economic Justice (under review)

Sessions Planning Clerk

2025
Veatch, Phillip (FPon)

Sessions Theme and Speakers Team (5; one-year term)

2024		
Godway, Eleanor (Hart)	_____	_____
Hasbrook, Mey (Durh)	_____	

Supervisor to the YM Secretary

2023 (continuing through transition)	2026
Reuthe, Elizabeth (Vass)	_____

Youth Ministries (6)

2024

Eller, Jessica (Port)
Sanchez-Eppler, Karen (Nham)

2025

Dawson, Janet (Fram)

2026

Corindia, Nancy (Han)

Representatives to Other Friends Organizations**American Friends Service Committee Corp. (4)**

2024

Steele, Rebecca (Port)
Woodrow, Peter (Port), convenor

2025

Barker, Mark (Conc)

2026

Weaver, Hal (Well)

Friends Committee on National Legislation (6)

2024

Cazden, Betsy (Prov)

2025

Grace, James (BHil)

2026

Friends General Conference Central Committee Representatives (8)

2024

Hilles-Pilant, Carolyn (Bhill)

2025

2026

Friends Peace Teams Project (2)

Claggett-Borne, Minga (Cam)

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

Fogarty, Maggie (Dov)

Walker, Stefan (Nham)

Weinholtz, Diane (Hart)

Heath, Ruth (Con)

Weaver, Hal (Well)

Weinholtz, Donn (Hart)

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

Keefe-Perry, Kristina (Fpon)

Smith, Jennifer (Conc)

Friends World Committee Representatives (7)

2024

Williams, Carl (Pfld)
Hopkins, Mary (Fpon)
Goldberger, Judy (BHill)

2025

2026

Friends World Committee Representatives to 2024 World Plenary (one in person; one virtual)**Quaker Earthcare Witness (1)**

Haines, Christopher (Fpon)

Coming Home

It's good to be together, Friends.

If there's one thing I know, it's that stories matter. As human beings, we are made of stories. Stories shape our actions, our memories, and our identities, our relationships with ourselves and one another. In them, we find meaning, direction, and purpose for our journeys in this world.

Stories help us understand where we have been. They help us to know where we stand in the present and what matters now. And, for good or ill, the stories we choose to tell—the stories we come to inhabit together—shape our encounters with the world in the time to come. The stories we tell become the stories we live.

This is especially true for us as participants in a spiritual tradition which calls us to support one another in living a different Story, one that may lead us into ways of being which can seem a great distance from the stories that are loudest or most visible in our wider society.

And so: Here we are at the 363rd Annual Sessions of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends.

Part of how I understand what Friends have done as part of our Sessions for so many years, and what we are invited to do together over these next several days, is to participate in a kind of annual storytelling festival. An opportunity to share stories of how the Spirit has been alive and active in our lives in recent months, how God has been with us, blessed us, and changed us, and how we sense Love calling us to live out a shared vocation in the world.

We are invited to listen together for how our personal stories, and especially the stories of the life and ministry present in our local Friends meetings, are part of one greater Story—a story about the unfolding of Love, continually being born in Creation.

The stories we tell become the stories we live.

In recent months, I've been returning in prayer to two stories drawn from the living roots of our tradition, and I've felt to share them with you. They're old stories. They're stories about a People yearning for a new society, about humans in search of a home that can hold them amidst the anxiety and suffering of a changed and changing world. Maybe they could be stories about us, too.

Here's the first story—one of the earliest to be written down, and older still:

The sun rose on the wreckage of the Ark. It was after the catastrophe of the Flood, in the wake of the disaster. As the waters receded, the people went out, seeking a new home in a changed and changing world. They felt lost. They felt alone. They grew afraid.

In time, they gathered together in one place, on a great plain between two rivers. By digging, shaping, and storing, they began to learn—with surprise and delight—that they could forge a life of greater security and stability for themselves.

Slowly the chaotic mud of that place became orderly bricks, shaped by pressure and hardened by heat. There, on the plain, they built a city. There, they hoped, they could create a new society. In this place, they would make a home for themselves.

The canals and earthworks they built made possible an abundance of food and shelter. Soon their storehouses were filled. Together, they celebrated the beautiful work of their hands. And they began to dream great dreams.

They forged new ways of living to mend the harms of history, a new community where everyone would have a place. The common language they created enabled learning and teaching, planning and building. They were making a new way together. They felt less alone. And they grew less afraid.

Soon, they came to understand that they didn't need to depend on external power or outdated superstitions—they could rely on the creativity and the power they found in themselves and one another. They saw that their community—and the structures and systems they were building to support it—could make new things possible. More than ever, working together, they could channel and grow the energy of the people to make the vision they shared more fully expressed in the world.

The people carried the enduring memory of the terror of powerlessness, and of the chaotic rivalries and senseless suffering that had nearly destroyed the world. They were never going back. Through the insight and understanding they now held, things would be different.

In this city they were building, they would create a better world. Here, people would learn to be more just, more generous, more peaceful, more free. They knew this would be difficult, but working together, nothing would be impossible. As long as they believed in themselves, and supported one another and their vision, their home would thrive. Here, they would create the world they so yearned for.

Whenever they grew tired or discouraged, their faith in what they had built would sustain them. Their city would become a beacon, a light in a despairing world, a beloved community that would endure.

And so they built a tower, rising up to heaven. They called it “Bab-il”—the gate of the gods.

It was only later that someone first called their dream by another name. That name is “empire.”

Some of us may have heard the rest of this story—or maybe, in some sense, we may have lived it. We may recognize some echoes of this story in ourselves.

You see, as they had grown in the wonder of their own gifts, they had forgotten the Giver.

With time, the very web of life that sustained them began to unravel as they strained to meet the ever-growing, overflowing desires and demands among them, driving them ever onward to conquer and control. They became ever more watchful for threats from without—and from within. Resentment and grievance festered; rivalry and suspicion came to rule relationships. As trust eroded, confusion and division descended.

And so—the Tower of Babel fell.

Despite the miracle of their imaginations and the wonders they created together, they had proven themselves unable to be their own gods.

In the wreckage and ruin of the Tower, the people who had placed their faith in themselves were once again scattered—fearful, lonely, and disconnected.

And yet, their devotion to a world remade in their own strength and wisdom remained. We are their descendants. We are building Babel still.

Here’s the second story. Still ancient, but closer to our own time:

The sun rose on the city of Jerusalem, on the wreckage of a movement. The people Jesus had called his “Friends” had traveled with their Teacher, sharing in his proclamation, teaching, and healing. They had participated in his betrayal and abandonment, and had witnessed the catastrophe of his torture and execution. In the midst of their despair, they had been astonished by a newly alive Presence, in the discovery of a divine Friendship which had come to them again, despite everything.

It was during the feast called Pentecost, when people from the corners of the earth gathered seeking nourishment for body and soul. These “Friends,” this ragtag band of holy fools, were all together in one place, in an upper room in the midst of the city.

In prayer, they waited. In a time pregnant with possibility and longing, they shared what they had, abiding in gratitude and love in this changed and changing world.

So when tongues of fire descended from heaven on every head, their willing and prepared hearts welcomed the Holy Spirit into their lives as the living presence of forgiveness and steadfast Love. The gravity of this Love drew them down from the height where they were gathered, out into the streets of the city. There, they met travelers who had come from many nations—a reflection of the fullness of humankind in a place, in a moment.

Moved by a strength that was not their own, these first Friends shared with those they were meeting the story of discovering this Friendship—this intimacy and unity with God and with another—that had come to reorder their lives. Their speech sounded strange to those around them. Yet everyone whose spirit was willing heard, in the language of their own heart.

In this meeting, the pilgrim travelers who heard these first Friends speaking discovered for themselves a place of refuge in which to abide—a strength, stability, and peace unlike any they had experienced before. Bearing all that they carried, they received a deep assurance that each one of them was—truly always had been, and always would be—held in an unshakeable belovedness—a belonging and care that no person, group, society, or power could ever take away—not even death.

Overshadowed by a boundless grace, an unmerited forgiveness beyond measure, they came to recognize how their long nurtured rhythms of desire and action—many shaped and transmitted across gener-

ations—had separated them from the Love of God. They found the grip of these long-held habits of the heart weakening.

Gradually, their addiction to striving and rivalry lost its hold on them. They began to be less ensnared by the urges and anxieties that had shaped their lives. Liberated from the need to control, fix, and perfect, they experienced a new freedom, an inner spaciousness, a sense of wholeness and resilience beyond what they had known.

They found themselves relating to their world differently. It was as if they had been given a new mind, and new ways of perceiving. Old wounds were not taken from them, but as a deeper healing came they came to know that all that they had suffered was held and shared, in the deepest sense, in God's infinite care.

In response to the overflowing of this Love, they laid down burdens. In response to this Love, they took new burdens up. They discovered that even their own wounded and wandering hearts could become instruments of this universal Love.

Near at hand, they felt the presence of the Living Spirit that had come upon them, who could guide them toward a new Way.

As their relationship with this Spirit deepened, they grew into unity with one another as well, a new connectedness as a family in faith. Day by day, those who had ears to hear and whose hearts had grown tender received a new identity—a new kind of self-understanding and self-expression—one not earned or imposed, but one freely given. This transcendent oneness embraced and encompassed their blessed diversity, bringing each aspect of who they were to a new fullness. Within, through, and among them, a new society was being born. They were being welcomed home.

But the journey didn't end with their own homecoming. They came to see themselves as a humble, essential part of one great Story, unfolding across the ages. They discovered it was impossible to journey for long in the guiding presence of this Love without being moved to share it.

This homecoming, they now knew, could never be confined to one place, one group, one institution, one city. They could not be saved in isolation, outside of the world as it existed. Instead, they were given to participate in God's revealing of a new Creation in their midst.

And so they went out—into the streets and into the world—encouraged by the Spirit to expect, recognize, and respond to this same Life at work in every heart. In each grace-filled encounter, they welcomed those whose hearts were open into fellowship with the Life and Power, a fellowship which bore the fruits of the Spirit.

Across a changed and changing world, their surrendered lives bore witness to a self-giving Love, here and yet still being born. And daily, they chose this path they were being given to discover, so filled with suffering, struggle, and sacrifice. For the sake of the joy that was set before them, they embraced the world as it was—and joined in God's continuing labor toward what it was becoming.

In the years that followed, many more fellowships were gathered, distinguished by an astonishing diversity, care for the vulnerable, and equality across differences unknown in the experience of those around them. The love and joy palpably present in these communities—even and especially in the midst of suffering and persecution—were signs of a new society made possible by this common unity, this mutual foundation, this shared Friendship.

Now, in every place, in every life, in every moment, the invitation to this Friendship remains. We are their descendants. This homecoming waits for us, still.

Those who built the tower to heaven and those on whom the Spirit descended are ancestors to us all. Each in their own way, the stories of Babel and of Pentecost offer distinct visions of a People yearning for a new society, of choices always before us, and of enduring consequences. At Babel, we seek to build a shelter through struggle and striving in our own power. At Pentecost, through surrendering to Grace, we are welcomed home. The first story is the founding myth of empire. The second heralds the birth of a new family in faith.

And now, in our own time and context, we're returning to the place where each of these stories begin. As the sun rises on this day for us, we find ourselves once more in the midst of the ancient wreckage—reeling from catastrophe, after the disasters of these years. In so many aspects and circumstances of our lives, we are seeking a renewed society, yearning for a home that can hold us.

Moment by moment, as at Babel, our wills claw and clamber over one another in rivalry, suspicion, and fear. Our urgent, distorted, self-important visions eclipse the humble, patiently waiting invitation to a life in faith. In our hubris and shortsightedness, we who bear the image of God seek to make God in our own image. We strive to make ourselves into gods, with the best of intentions, with the most beautiful illusions, for the most compelling purposes. It's an old, familiar story—one of the first to be written. The tower on that Mesopotamian plain fell. But its ruin stands waiting in the city of our hearts, ready to be rebuilt—brick by brick by brick—today.

And moment by moment, the Spirit waits to come upon us as it did at Pentecost, shattering the towers we build within, bringing us down to a new foundation of humility, surrender, and relationship with God, and so with one another and all Creation—and sending us forth bearing news of great joy.

Both at Babel and at Pentecost; and here, now, today—there is work to be done. But the story that animates us in this work makes all the difference.

Friends across generations have known that the journey of faithfulness requires discipline and practice. Our distinctive ways of worship and discernment offer a time-tested way of removing distractions and focusing our prayerful attention as we learn to more deeply receive and respond with our lives to the Love of God.

We need other tools as well: Research and study; administration and stewardship; policy, processes; organizing and advocacy; programs and training—dedicated and diligent work of every kind—each play a meaningful part in how we respond to the leadings and cares we are given. These capacities and tools are expressions of gifts from our Creator, part of the fearful and wonderful way in which each of us is uniquely made.

And yet—there is always the risk, in our humanness, that all these things can become ends unto themselves. Earlier generations of Friends warn us to take care of the ideological frameworks and abstract theories that they would call “notions”, and the allure of too much outward striving, lest as we grow in the beautiful form, we dwindle in the Life. Action and urgency are seductive; for many of us they can and do offer a reprieve from anxiety and loneliness. I know they have for me.

Some time ago, a Friend put a collection of the minutes of New England Yearly Meeting over recent years into a “word cloud” generator—the one where words are arranged and displayed at a size reflecting their relative frequency in the whole body of the text. The resulting constellation of words led to a striking revelation: The word at the center of this page reflecting our corporate discernment and life together, far larger than all of the others, was not “Love”. It was not “Friend”. It was not “community”, or “faith”, or “justice” or “peace”, or “God”, or “Spirit”. It was “work.” Work.

There is something addictive about an undue reliance on work, a distortion that comes from disordered attention to simply getting things done, to getting more done, or through work, an attempt to exercise some kind of control in an uncontrollable world. Like all addictions, an unhealthy reliance on work and our own capacities to remake the world can eclipse our sight and distract our hearts, closing us off from God's Presence with us. And this is true no matter our intentions, no matter the goal or the vision we embrace.

Because according to our spiritual ancestors, the root sin at the origin of what some call empire is not injustice. It is not discrimination or oppression. It is not violence or hatred or ignorance or jealousy or exclusion or greed. According to our spiritual ancestors, the root sin—the root distortion of our hearts that leads to empire, Friends—is what they called pride.

Translated from the ancient words for this spiritual condition in Hebrew and Greek, “pride” in this sense is living as if our own expectations, cravings, emotions, and experiences are at the center of the universe, that each of our own small and separated senses of self form the axis on which the spinning world turns. Pride is a spiritual distortion that asserts that it is us—and not the wellspring of our life, the fountain of all Being—it is us ... that is and should be of ultimate concern.

Pride is the opposite of surrender, the mortal enemy of gratitude. It is the antithesis of humility, and the nemesis of right relationship. It is the death of joy. And pride is the ground and spring of the systems and structures of oppression, exploitation, and violence, the powers and principalities of this world which have been called empire.

Taking the path of pride is always an option. It's an easy, compelling, and rewarding way—at least until it's too late. And yet, even in the midst of Babel, another journey awaits: a way of yielding, a pilgrimage of faith.

Bearing all we have suffered and lost, all the troubles we have known, all the sin and evil committed by or against us, we are invited to find our rightful place in a society of surrendered hearts, a fellowship of unfathomable, unearned, and undeserved grace, forgiveness, and joy. We're invited to come home to a community of those discovering themselves beloved beyond measure, each one of us at once betrayer and betrayed, traitor and Friend.

This fellowship is born from an abiding: it grows in, with, and through communion with this common Life, this Seed Pattern of Grace. And this Love's presence is known by its fruits—the fruits of the Spirit—in the imperfect lives of those who humbly choose to seek it.

At the heart of the testimony of the Religious Society of Friends across the centuries, for which so many have laid down their lives, is this enduring conviction: The self-giving Love of God, and no other power, can make us truly free.

This Love cannot be summoned to endorse our cause. It cannot be domesticated to meet our demands, or invoked as an afterthought to spiritualize our schemes. This Love can only be waited upon, welcomed, allowed, embraced. It is when we are ready—if we are willing—to surrender to this Love, and to allow ourselves to be shaped and formed in this Love's image, that we begin to become who and whose we were created to be.

Daily we are offered a choice: to strive for the citizenship forged in Babel, or to welcome the fellowship given at Pentecost. Truly, these are not times or places; each is an orientation of the heart. Only we can choose where we give our loyalty. And this choice of allegiance matters.

So may we remember that this week together for Sessions is a time for choosing. In the coming days, we will be offered many opportunities to communicate, with our words and actions, the stories where we make our homes, the stories by which we are being formed. Whether in our moments of celebration, in quiet encounters, in play and rest and grief and inspiration and discernment, I believe we are being invited—especially now—to keep our prayerful attention turned to the orientation of our hearts. Which story will we choose in this moment, and the next? Where will we—each of us—give our allegiance? Even now, are we turning toward Babel, or Pentecost?

Maybe this time, in this wreckage, we don't need to build a tower. Maybe this could be a season overcome by tenderness, a homecoming of amazement and joy.

—NOAH MERRILL

Staff Reports

Secretary

Dear Friends,

This is a season of paradox. Our Quaker spiritual ancestors invite us to anchor ourselves in the unshakeable hope of a Love that is still being born in the world—even as we mourn the losses of so much of what we have known and turn our attention, with prayerful discernment, to what the Holy Spirit might reveal of our condition and might require of us now. What a good time to gather together, seeking to abide in that which is Eternal.

It's a season for gratitude and celebration. In these Advance Documents, I encourage you to give particular attention to Nia Thomas' Program Director's report (page 52), and to the update on the Yearly Meeting's continuing experiments in supporting ministry, eldership, and the spiritual life of local meetings (page 8). I give thanks to all who have played a part, and to the One who moves through it all, for the continued focusing, clarifying, and strengthening of our offerings to help Friends meetings across our region to thrive. We have learned and grown so much in recent years, Friends. We have been given many gifts. And we have many opportunities before us for service.

It's also a season for stewardship and pruning. With the disruption and reorientation throughout our society, many of us find ourselves with less time and energy and fewer financial resources to share in service than in the past. In Friends' stewardship of the Yearly Meeting—the programs, services, staffing, and channels for volunteer service—Friends are discovering that we simply are not able to faithfully and fully sustain the number and scope of activities that many have come to expect—certainly not in some of the ways that have worked in the past. We need to adjust what we are doing and how we do it; we have already been adapting and learning in many ways for years. And there is more to do. Along with skillful labor and intentional design, this will take prayer, tenderness, persistence, and courage.

There is grief and loss in this season, a testament of love and gratitude for gifts of service, relationship, and faithful stewardship given in the past. We need to allow and acknowledge our griefs and losses. And yet, we are not called to make our homes there. If we allow it, this season also offers relief, and curiosity, and an opportunity to deepen our attention to what is truly ours to do at this time. Seeking to be faithful now to the same Spirit, rather than trying to keep things the same, is our most loving response to the faithful service of those who came before us.

We can't do it all. Trying to sustain activity beyond our capacities is a path to exhaustion, with resentment and shame close behind. We are not called to a spiritu-

ality of urgency, reactivity, and burnout. Friends have understood for generations that busyness is the mortal enemy of the spiritual life. I am reminded that we truly will not be given more to do by the Spirit than we can carry with God's help. We are offered an invitation to acceptance, to prayerful discernment of what is required now, and to pruning of what is no longer ours. Saying a real "yes" to just a few essential things makes our "no" possible.

This may be an easier message to hear and respond to in our personal lives than in our meeting life, or in our shared stewardship of the institution of the Yearly Meeting. And yet, for the wellbeing of our religious body—and for us as persons who make it up and who are shaped and formed by its influences, for good or ill—the corporate dimension of this pruning matters deeply. In releasing demands on our institutional structures, may we find more spaciousness for attention to the subtler and quieter rhythms of our faith journeys, not only in the formal activities of Quaker groups, but in the whole of our lives.

I pray this will be a season for renewing commitment to our inherited disciplines and rhythms in practices of worship, discernment, and life together. At their roots, these are not tired, outdated, or foolish forms, nor obstacles to faithfulness or new life. They are the fruits of the lived experience of Friends who through them found guidance, grounding, clarity, cohesion, and courage. When practiced in the Spirit, they anchor a corporate spirituality of resilience.

In recent years, especially in the context of the pandemic, many Friends have discovered that difficult and complex decisions can be made quickly and creatively, and that uncertain and changing circumstances may require departing from our long-established practices. There is much that is good in this.

And: this does not mean that all decisions should be quick; or that we should dismiss our tradition when it seems to ask more of us than what seems like an easier or faster approach; or that urgency and advocacy should replace prayerful seasoning, corporate discernment, and yielding to the often slow work of God among us. In discerning the most important matters, may we remember that the essential question is not whether a decision moves quickly or slowly, or even as we would like it to, but whether the Truth we discover in the searching has taken root in us deeply enough that our living might be changed by it.

These years have been hard on us, as persons and families, but also as communities of faith and practice. Beyond our activities, there is a deeper need for rediscovering ourselves as part of one Body. Where our social cohesion and relationships have thinned and frayed—both

within meetings, and between and among them—how can we each join in rhythms of life that serve the weaving and mending? Trust is precious—difficult to weave, easy to unravel. Where trust has been undermined, how can our own personal commitments to Friends’ shared practices of worship and discernment nurture it? Do we examine our habits of heart, speech, and action prayerfully, with care for how we—each of us—might help build up the unity of the Body in the Spirit?

In the present climate, it feels especially easy for us to be influenced by the polarization, urgency, and anxiety that permeates much of our wider society. I pray that each of us might redouble our inward watchfulness for how these kinds of influences may affect us. Let us seek to listen before we speak, to seek first to understand, and to mind the orientation of our hearts. Other voices within me—voices that are not the Guide—urge the logic of the World, not of the Spirit. It is sometimes tempting for me to dismiss these promptings as small things, and to indulge them, but they are corrosive to my soul, and to the life of my spiritual community.

I hope we will each be wary of the distorting potential of these other voices. Whatever my experiences, whatever the depth or substance of my concerns, when I nurture resentment in myself or cultivate a habit of tearing down, rather than seeking to build up, I embark on a road that leads to othering, contempt, and division. Friends have been down this road in our history. It is an easy road to travel, once we first begin. Followed, it leads to ruin.

I continue to hold in my heart the imperfect, willing, beloved human beings among us who have accepted a call to servant leadership among Friends. In these turbulent times, many Friends are experiencing heartbreak, exhaustion, and disillusionment, suffering in love for the communities they serve. It’s helpful for me to remember that these Friends are called to serve the Body—not to meet individual demands, or to become scapegoats for anxieties and frustrations, but to nurture the life of the Spirit present among us in our meeting communities as a whole. I find myself asking: What is my—and each of our—personal responsibility to those who serve on our behalf? How might I—and we—be an encouragement to them, as they seek to encourage us all? Knowing we are already forgiven and beloved beyond measure, may we embrace, in whatever ways we may be given, a new season of humility, and of gratitude.

Perhaps the greatest fruit of the pruning that I pray we might experience is the capacity to focus more deeply on what is essential. I hope we will renew our attention to meeting one another where we are in our journeys and supporting each other’s formation and growth in gifts for service throughout our lives. This orientation offers both a present path and blessing for our journey together, and a prospect of nourishing fruits to come. I am grateful for Friends responding to the call to articulate and lift up the core invitation and purpose of our

fellowship, even in changing times. When we become more clear about what we are inviting people to, and why we are led to offer this invitation, it becomes more and more possible to remove barriers to those seeking to join this adventure of life together in the Spirit.

I want to close with gratitude again, for so many Friends whose preparations throughout the year are setting a table for us for Annual Sessions 2023. I remain grateful for the opportunity to serve alongside them—and you, dear Friends—in this work of Love.

In the Spirit in which we can never be separated, may we remember—and freshly experience—an invitation to this shared journey of Friendship. May our time together in the coming days be gathered in the Presence of the Friend. And may we be blessed in the meeting.

—NOAH MERRILL

Accounts Manager

Although the most disruptive times of the pandemic are receding in the rear-view mirror, the financial repercussions for the Yearly Meeting—and the Accounts Manager’s duties—continued to reverberate this past year. My fall and winter were mostly devoted to closing the books, as usual, and then to analysis of the deficit in our operating results in this “new normal” since our return to in-person Sessions—recalling that truth is the primary spiritual goal of bookkeeping, even when these truths may be difficult. That analysis then informed the calculations for the “new normal” FY24 budget. Another reverberation of the pandemic’s financial effects requiring much analysis was the possibility of qualifying for Employee Retention Tax Credits—still in process with our payroll service as of early July. We also brought the funds recalculation project to a conclusion, presenting its final summary, with recommended adjustments, to Permanent Board for approval in February. With that project finished, we turned to beginning a search for a CPA firm to do an independent review of the Yearly Meeting’s books. We began saving for such a review several years ago, before the pandemic, seeing it as a prudent step for a growing organization under normal circumstances. I hope that as we go forward, the outside point of view will prove helpful in providing clear, honest, accurate, and useful financial records.

—FREDERICK MARTIN

ARCH Coordinator

It’s been less than a year since New England Yearly Meeting brought me in as our first Aging Resources Consultation and Help (ARCH) Coordinator. Based in New York Yearly Meeting, ARCH currently has six part-time coordinators and one interim director. This is its first expansion. I join NY staff meetings as well as meet regularly with Nia and other New England staff as needed.

Let me tell you more about ARCH and how I have begun my service.

In 2007, the Friends Foundation for the Aging (FFA) was founded, funded by the closing of NYYM's boarding home for older people. ARCH funding continues to be provided by FFA, along with individual donations. FFA's original plan was for NYYM to assist older people. Way opened when two retired Friends—already experienced in a wide range of aging services—formed a working group to design the program that became ARCH. Goals include encouraging more Friends to complete their health care proxies and incorporating Quaker values with end-of-life decision-making.

In a few years ARCH grew geographically and a visitor-training program was developed. Strategic planning brought additional focus. ARCH expanded to serve those who are growing older while incarcerated. Recently all coordinators have added specializations in specific areas such as grief and loss, aging with cognitive disorders, caregiving, and working with age groups 60-79 and 80+.

Last fall New England Yearly Meeting applied for an FFA grant to expand ARCH to our region. I attended the fall ARCH Foundations training program, which also includes an opportunity for community monthly check-ins. During the Foundations course other New England Quakers were welcomed along with NY members, and ARCH online programs have already drawn Quakers from other yearly meetings.

My service began with facilitating an end-of-life group for NY, concurrently with another for New England. Now I'm facilitating a monthly end-of-life reflection group for NEYM that welcomes Quakers to join on a drop-in basis. Having developed community guidelines and a resource list, we are now alternating between sharing time with queries and discussion of Pendle Hill Pamphlets, starting with *On Hallowing One's Diminishments*. Members now offer leadership with presentations on the pamphlets. The sharings run deep, and I emerge from each gathering feeling blessed and enriched.

I also collaborate with others to develop a vision and program for NE Quakers. I have attended worship at monthly meetings and led discussions at our Yearly Meeting listening sessions. I invite Friends to share stories, gifts, and needs to deepen our support of one another in our journeys.

I especially love how ARCH is developing a growing commitment to mutual spiritual accompaniment. Quakers (and we are not alone) seem to have a norm of setting up a helper/recipient power dynamic. Many of us feel much more comfortable helping others, which can make it feel selfish to ask for help. That dynamic is challenged; in ARCH we are all giving and receiving.

This Sessions I facilitate three workshops: Caregiving Stories, Challenging Conversations, and Sharing the Road Ahead. I invite Friends to join us for any or all of them as we savor spiritual companionship.

ARCH will soon have a new offering. The 2016 booklet *Quaker Values and End-of-life Decision Making* is about to get better; an updated version is being produced and we

hope will be available this fall. I'm looking forward to offering what I expect to be a 3-part workshop series online. With the booklet as a guide, we will explore Quaker testimonies and values in "Mapping Our Journey Home."
—PATTI MULDOON

Children and Family Ministries Coordinator

I feel deeply blessed by my first year as NEYM's Children and Family Ministries Coordinator.

The Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM, elementary-aged youth) community is healthy and thriving. Most of this young group just completed 2nd or 3rd grade. Our three retreats (2 in-person, 1 virtual) were just one night each, which seemed right for these children who hadn't yet spent much time away from home due to both their age and the pandemic. We explored themes of friendship and the cozy practice of hunkering down (Hygge) with anywhere from 10-30 children present at each event. JYMers have also been exposed to the wider world of Quakerism through what I hope will be a long-lasting connection with a Friends School in Rwanda. Two parents of JYMers joined the retreat staff this year, totaling three parent-staffers. The newness and enthusiasm of these JYMers and parent volunteers gives me hope for the future of NEYM youth ministries.

The Junior High Yearly Meeting (JHYM, middle school-aged youth) community explored themes of friendship, peace, music, self-care, and service in five separate events, with anywhere from 5-13 youth present. They also used Quaker process to take up decisions about phone use, masking, and inclusivity. This year's transitions have been hard on the JHYM community. 7th and 8th graders returned with strong emotions attached to vivid memories of what was: friends who have stopped coming, the leadership of my beloved predecessor, and pre-COVID freedoms. I believe that the intensity of these memories also widened the gap that naturally exists each year between newcomers/6th graders and the returning JHers. In part to address these tensions, we made some mid-year changes to the retreat calendar, resulting in a couple of vibrant but poorly attended events. I learned that such changes are disruptive for many families and intend to avoid them in the future. Even so, I believe we have a strong group of committed 6th and 7th graders who will continue to grow closer while drawing bigger circles of welcome.

Anne Anderson, Buddy and Gretchen Baker-Smith, Cynthia Rankin, Dave Baxter, Kenzie Burpee, and Leah Kelley shouldered the continuity of the programs by staffing almost every event. The communities were also blessed on several occasions by the presence of Amy Greene, Carol Baker, Jerry Carson, Katy MacRae, Kevin Lee, Kristin Wilson, Leah Kelley, Lilly Campbell, Mary DeSilva, Mary Beth Toomey, Nate Perkins, Newell Isbell Shinn, Rainer Humphries, Rebecca Edwards, Sara Hub-

ner, Steve Ball, Wendyl Ross, and one junior staffer, virtually.

I am also grateful for the mentorship of Christel Jorgensen, Emily Edwards, Gretchen Baker-Smith, Kevin Lee, Kim Allen, and Lisa Graustein, each of whom drew on their past coordination/staffing experiences to offer me advice and encouragement when I needed it.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the parents and guardians. I prepared myself for some reticence, especially from those of you who didn't know me prior to this year. But I felt nothing but support, appreciation, and trust from you and it helped me feel at home in this Leading. I look forward to many more years with you and your wonderful children.

While learning the ins-and-outs of retreat coordination was central to my first year in this position, I look forward to serving NEYM families in other ways as well. To that end, there will be only three retreats for each age group in the coming year, so that I can also devote time to supporting the youth ministry of local meetings. The Living Faith Gathering in April will also be an opportunity for families to gather for a Saturday, and for teens to participate in a retreat.

I write this report as I prepare for another layer of this work: Sessions. Rather than leading one program, while supervising others, I will be available for pastoral care and program support/visits. Rainer Humphries and Kenzie Burpee will coordinate Child Care and JYM again this year, respectively, and JHYM will be coordinated by Lilly Campbell. I am in awe of the many unique gifts that each of these Sessions Coordinators brings to this work.

—KARA PRICE

Events Coordinator

Have you had the experience of going back to a house or school you used to be in regularly? It is funny how the memory of a place and the reality of that place are tightly linked yet different. My work as Events Coordinator for the Yearly Meeting has been like that, like returning to a familiar place in many ways yet different; small details forgotten and relearned.

This past April we had our first Living Faith since 2019. Approximately 100 Friends joined together for a day of workshops, worship, and community in Portland, Maine. It reminded me what I love about that event and how it feeds my work throughout the rest of the year. It was a reminder of all that has changed during the COVID pandemic and how we have adapted to this new reality. For the first time, we merged Living Faith with a Young Friends retreat and it was great to have the Young Friends there and holding the space leading up to the gathering. I hope it was rewarding for them as well. The next Living Faith gathering is scheduled for April 6, 2024, in southeastern Massachusetts; more details will be available in the fall.

Sessions planning has been going well and it has been wonderful to have Phil Veatch in his second year as Sessions Planning clerk. This has been a year of a lot of changes and it has shone a light on how the work we have done to work with each other more than alongside each other has made us more resilient and flexible. We are continuing to collaborate with so many talented Friends whose work helps make Sessions happen.

It is very hard to believe that this will be my sixth Sessions with the Yearly Meeting. In many ways, I still feel like a new kid on the block. I look forward to seeing many familiar faces in Castleton and on Zoom in August.

—ELIZABETH HACALA

Friends Camp Director

I am writing this report exactly 1 month before the first counselors arrive at camp. Before Sessions this year, more than 400 campers and 50 staff will have arrived to camp. Each day I start work with a prayer that our summer season is safe, healthy, and restorative for all those in attendance and that the joy we generate together can ripple beyond camp to our larger communities. For all in our camp community, I pray for the courage to create connections across difference, support each other at camp through physical jobs as well as through friendship and mentorship, and to learn more about ourselves through listening to our inner teacher.

Preparing for this season has included some extra tasks for me, as my husband and I are expecting our first child in August. Throughout this process of preparation, I have felt extremely grateful for the support of the Friends Camp Committee, NEYM Staff, and the leaders who will step into new roles in my planned absence towards the end of our summer season. I am reminded that creating a wider web of leadership helps us create a resilient institution and that new voices of leadership bring richness and creativity.

Overall, our camp preparations are as busy as ever! We will welcome staff members from across the United States, Ireland, Norway, Jamaica, and Turkey. This summer we will also be accredited by the American Camp Association with an in-person visit—their most recent visit was in 2017! As part of a continuous process of living in community together, our staff and campers have been working on ways to increase our intentional inclusivity. This has meant hosting trainings on gender and sexuality at camp, a staff-led affinity table for Black campers and staff who wanted to lunch together, and intentionality around hosting an international community at camp. Projects on our property this year have included repairs and renovations to bathroom floors, removing a few large trees, new roofs on camper cabins, preparations for a major Health Hut renovation, and of course the work of managing almost 80 acres and more than 30 buildings.

This year Yearly Meeting began work on a governance review for Friends Camp, as is prescribed in our governance document approved by Permanent Board in 2016. The first of its kind, this review affirmed the importance of camp as an outward facing ministry to New England Yearly Meeting and the importance of Spirit and Friends as the “fire at the center” of Friends Camp. The report also affirmed the institutional strength of camp and the requirements of operating a youth camp in today’s world, recognizing an ongoing need for investment in the camp property and in equitably compensating staff. I am particularly grateful to the work of Nia Thomas and the working group who so eloquently put into words the vitality of Friends Camp and its relationship to wider Friends. As always, I am so grateful for the support of Friends throughout New England who make camp possible. Wishing all a wonderful summer!

—ANNA HOPKINS BULLER

Office Manager

I’ve started and abandoned my 2023 annual report at least three times. What do I have to say? Is anything new?

Outwardly, no: Nothing is new. My work hasn’t changed. (Something I have accomplished this year, though, is collecting complete Permanent Board minutes for the past several years and sending them to Archives. [Friends, we have not been faithful in finalizing minutes.])

I keep coming back to the idea that G*d cares less about what I do and more about how I do it. Tedious tasks need to get the same care and attention I give to the interesting tasks, just as I endeavor to treat the Friends I work with—staff and volunteers—with that same care and attention. (I can’t claim that I always succeed.)

*Blessed be the longing that brought you here
And quickens your soul with wonder.*

*May you have the courage to listen to the voice of desire
That disturbs you when you have settled for something safe.*

*May you have the wisdom to enter generously into your own
unease
To discover the new directions your longing wants you to
take.*

*May the forms of your belonging—in love, creativity and
friendship—*

*Be equal to the grandeur and the call of your soul.
(John O’ Donoghue)*

The call of the soul is to be more—more loving, more adventuresome, more daring, more creative, more grateful, more so-much-more.

May I not only hear the voice of desire but have the courage and will to listen and discover what it asks of me. May I be not only willing, but brave enough to sit with unease and wait in discomfort for some clarity.

May I recognize the love and friendship and new ways that will help me meet the call of my soul.

—SARA HUBNER

Program Director

In November, the shape of my role in NEYM shifted somewhat, as I moved from serving as Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator into the new position of Program Director to better support and integrate our ongoing program work, the heart of which is spiritual formation through Quaker practice. Whether the focus is on strengthening local meetings, developing servant leadership, encouraging Spirit-led action, or nurturing youth, all our programs are about how we each can come to live lives that reflect the Light and Love of God more fully.

Much of my energy is spent not just on the content and quality of specific programmatic opportunities but also on “strengthening the web”; paying attention to the connections between things: between groups, Quaker organizations, and individuals striving towards overlapping goals; between events, the journeys of individual participants or facilitators, and the local meetings we serve; between different parts of the Yearly Meeting.

In all my work, I strive to hold the following “big picture” questions, which are an anchor to me in this service, and draw from our Yearly Meeting’s discernment about its overall purpose and priorities:

- How is our approach to program in alignment with the Yearly Meeting’s overall work of fostering a thriving, multi-generational Quaker movement in New England, and our particular focus on strengthening local meetings?
- How can we design programs to feed not only the individuals that participate, but to feed their worship community as well?
- How are we leaving space to listen for and respond to the movements of Spirit in our programmatic endeavors?
- How are we stewarding our limited resources of time, attention, and money in a way that honors and responds to the varying needs of Friends and Friends meetings?

Looking back on the last year, there is so much to be grateful for. Indeed, in pausing to dwell in my appreciation, I find I can’t resist blowing past the suggested word limit for this report! Here is a significantly abridged list of happenings from the last year that I give thanks for and hope Friends are aware of:

- Continued, consistent participation from Friends serving in leadership roles in so many of our meetings in our monthly check-in calls for meeting leaders, an opportunity not only to share resources but more importantly to enliven the network of mutual support between meetings. (Email nia@neym.org if you are serving your meeting and

aren't on the email list for these calls, but would like to be).

- Workshops throughout the year that focus on particular areas of service to one's meeting such as clerking, nominating, and financial stewardship, not only as a space for sharing best practices but to foster meaningful dialogue about the challenges and possibilities alive in our meetings now and to facilitate "peer circles" among those in similar roles across our Yearly Meeting.
- A fully enrolled and multi-generational cohort completing the most recent offering of the 9-month Nurturing Faithfulness program. This high-commitment, "deep end" offering was made possible by core teachers Marcelle Martin and Hilary Burgin; a wonderful group of teachers, elders, and associates (former students who serve as mentors and teaching assistants); and partnership with Woolman Hill and Beacon Hill Friends House, as well as to financial and staff support by NEYM. As one participant explains the power of such a program, "I know my spiritual development over the course of these nine months will take me places that I cannot now imagine."
- A particularly rich midwinter retreat (held at Woolman Hill) for young adults on gifts, leadings, and vocational discernment, coordinated (with my direct support) by Eva Whittaker, and attracting not only young adults who have grown up Quaker but also a delightfully surprising number of participants exploring Quakerism for the first time as young adults. As one participant shared, "I came away from my first YAF retreat feeling more connected with and inspired by Quakerism. I realized I need to slow down and prioritize my spiritual development and healing."
- Continued growth among the youth ministries staff and volunteers in tending to points of integration (with local meetings, with families, and between age groups), to our growing edges, and to offering weekend retreats for youth amid staffing transitions.
- The joy of the first Living Faith gathering in four years, held at Friends School of Portland this April, an opportunity for us all to grow multi-generational relationship through shared worship, fellowship, and spiritual nurture,
- The first year of our partnership with New York Yearly Meeting in expanding the Aging Resources Consultation and Help (ARCH) ministry to New England Friends, under the leadership of our ARCH Coordinator Patti Muldoon and thanks to funding from the Friends Foundation for the Aging.
- This June, our first Meeting for Listening, an opportunity for Friends to reflect on the life in local meetings and prayerfully consider how the Yearly

Meeting's programmatic priorities and activities might faithfully support the spiritual life of meetings in the coming year. (See the Program Cycle graphic on the next page for a visual overview of plans for the 2023–2024 program year).

- Receiving encouragement as I began my (very part-time) graduate studies in Program Evaluation through online courses at Michigan State University.

Everything listed above has gotten where it is due to shared, slow, sustained attention over long periods of time. Much work in the Yearly Meeting is like raising a child: You almost never see the growth day to day, but when you look back at what was one, two, or three years ago, it is incredible what our daily diligence can help to bring about.

Yet, with so much to celebrate, it would be a lie of omission to write a report only celebrating what's been accomplished and where there are signs of growth and even thriving, without also plainly acknowledging where we are facing significant challenges and often find ourselves disappointed, overwhelmed, and stuck. Our wider world is in a liminal season, and so is the Religious Society of Friends; navigating rapidly changing terrain and a demographically and culturally historic generational transition, it is remarkably unclear what the next fifty years will look like for our world and our faith communities. Tending to collective efforts while living in these "in between" times can be confusing ("What's going on?"), scary ("Will we be OK?"), frustrating ("Are we there yet?"), and exhausting ("When will it be easy again?"). More than anything, I see Friends asking many "Who are we now?" questions. Who are we now that many of our seekers and newcomers have never been a member of a faith community before? Who are we now that Sessions costs are rising and fewer of us can volunteer? Who are we now that some of our meetings and many of our youth retreats are smaller? Who are we now that meeting for business no longer requires physical gathering? Who are we now that we've lost beloved and weighty Friends?

Surrounded by these uncomfortable questions and the immediate anxious reaction they can elicit, I can find myself tempted to leap into something (anything!) that looks as though it may yield quick results, to blame others when things don't come together as easily as I wish they would, and to act as though capacity limitations (such as my own need for rest) aren't real. Serving in an atmosphere saturated with grief and uncertainty requires moving at a slow but intentional pace. Grounding myself in prayer before each meeting can't be viewed as an "added bonus" to strive for when it's convenient, but rather as an essential discipline; taking space after each meeting for forgiveness and release of expectations threatening to turn into resentments is, likewise, as core to my service as anything I manage to get done.

Beyond reminding myself to move with steady care even when my to-do list and inbox are overflowing, I also have been prioritizing cultivating capacity—clearing space—for the efforts most central to the Yearly Meeting’s purpose; making way for new Life by being discerning in how to steward my time and attention. I must regularly pause to ground myself in these intentions and the wisdom of Friends’ discernment.

As I reach the end of this much longer-than-advised report, I’d like to leave you with a few affirmations my service has left me with this year:

- When staring at the yearning gap, first: be grateful.
- There is no “yes” to God’s invitation too small to celebrate.
- Programming is not the purpose of the Quaker faith or the Yearly Meeting; programming is one way we attend to the possibility of our faith and the purpose of the Yearly Meeting.
- If you feel exhausted, ask if you might be lonely. Connect with others tending the same challenges. (Hint: If you are serving your local meeting, you can email me at nia@neym.org to receive invitations to calls with other meeting leaders; you could also consider attending Meeting Care Day this November)
- If we can’t do it and be present to the movement of the Spirit, we are moving too fast or taking on too much.
- New times mean we will need to try new things. We must remember that not everything we try will be successful. We need to learn to fail well with each other.
- Don’t ever let the heartache and the challenge steal your ability to be with Presence, to encounter the un-ending reality of that joy.

With humility and hope,
—NIADWYNWEN THOMAS

Teen Ministries Coordinator

Small and deep has been the theme of my work with Young Friends and Quaker teens in New England this past year—fostering as much spiritual nurture and growth as I could with a relatively small number of events and attenders. We had three in-person Young Friends retreats for high schoolers, and one more which was a new experiment building a retreat for teens (in middle and high school) around the Living Faith Gathering. This was particularly exciting because it combined peer support with plugging teens into the life of the wider community in meaningful ways—a vital growing edge for our youth programs. Over the course of the year, we explored what it means to be spiritual seekers, what the Quaker spiritual path feels like, and how being playful can help us be more present with each other and Spirit. It’s hard for Quaker teens, and for us all, to push back against the worldly mandate to “succeed” in order

to just be beloved children of God together. And yet we do it anyway!

As I leave this position, I notice how the Young Friends Program is a very different place than when I began volunteer staffing eight years ago. It used to operate like one of our big monthly meetings, with the diversity and infrastructure to meet many of the needs of its participants so that they were less likely to venture outside of their bubble for spiritual support. Now however, Young Friends is like a tiny local meeting. It’s still just as deep and nurturing as before, and it can provide the safety, peer connection, and open door to Quakerism that teens need. And they need more than that to truly walk the Quaker path into adulthood. They need real purpose in their local meetings, they need Quaker adults to show them curiosity about their spiritual lives, and authentic relationships with Quakers that live near them. Most of all they need to be ministered to by Friends outside of the youth programs, to invite them into a radical kind of Quakerism that resonates with their lived experiences and gives them hope for a burning world.

I’m grateful for the trust this community has granted me in my service to Quaker teens, especially the teens themselves and their families. Every time I thought I might be changing things too much, you showed me gratitude, understanding, and confidence in my vision for the future of this program. I’m grateful for my staffers, especially the dedicated “usual suspects” who have shown up again and again for these teens and for me. You’ve made me feel so seen in both my joys and struggles with this work and shown me the care I didn’t know I needed. I’m grateful to the three Friends serving on my support committee, and by extension Portland Friends Meeting, who have walked with me through this work with deep care, compassion, and tremendous patience. You taught me so much about what faithfulness and the call to ministry look and feel like. And I’m grateful to each one of you who have shown me how my work with teens has power that ripples into the rest of New England Yearly Meeting and into our future—even if it was just a quick anecdote told in line for dinner, or a short response in an email, or an exchange with a parent at the end of a retreat. Your reflections and affirmations fuel this work.

Next year the Young Friends Program will look similar in format, with some new faces, offering three weekend retreats plus an encore of the Living Faith Teen Retreat. I have complete trust in the incoming interim coordinator, Drew Chasse, to listen deeply to Young Friends and to Spirit to offer programming that is rich and nourishing. A small but mighty crew of dedicated volunteer staffers will offer continuity and accompaniment through this transitional time. We do not yet know who will fill the position of Young Friends Coordinator permanently, and the search is ongoing.

In God’s hands.

Love,
—MAGGIE NELSON FIORI

Committee Reports

Permanent Board

The Permanent Board has met five times since last year's Sessions and will be meeting on Saturday at this Sessions; all are welcome to attend. There is a complete record of our discernment and decisions on the neym.org website at <https://neym.org/who/governance/decisions-discernment>, which includes minutes and advance documents for each meeting.

We have had full agendas, as we undertake the work given to us by Sessions, heard regularly from our various working and resource groups, and received regular reports on our programs, spiritual nurture, finances, and the care of our community. We approved Carl Williams of Plainfield, VT, meeting as clerk of Ministry and Counsel, and Susan Davies of Vassalboro, ME, as the incoming clerk of the Permanent Board. The Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness working group is also under our care and is an active part of our meetings, as we are all invited to participate in the practice of noticing and interrupting patterns that hold us back and affirming those which lift us up. Yet, to seek to stop oppression is not enough, Isaiah reminds us in Chapter 58; we must actively engage in the business of liberation and justice for all creation.

We are bringing to you this year the requested laying down of the Earthcare Witness Committee and a transition to a new form for this essential work, as proposed last year and approved by Permanent Board in our Minute 22-62:

- that the new working title of the ongoing team of Friends called to this work be "Earth Quaker Justice Team"
- 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.

Other business before the Board includes our financial situation and proposed budget under the care and attention of the Finance Committee; a comprehensive restatement of fund balances by our Treasurer and Accounts Manager, and a three-phase plan for the review of our governance agreement with Friends Camp. This review invites us into a visioning session and celebration of the work of and our relationship with the Camp.

We are responding to the request from the Finance Committee to determine a process for discerning how financial contributions to other Quaker organizations are made. Finance determines how much in total is available to contribute but not how the organizations are chosen or how much to award to each. We have also approved the disbursements of the new Bodine-Rustin Fund, with thanks to the members of the Legacy Gift Committee

for their stewardship of this endeavor and to those who suggested recipients.

We have been given the responsibility to care for the disposition of two meetinghouses no longer in use (N. Fairfield in Vassalboro Quarter and S. Pittsfield in Dover Quarter) and, as Salem Quarter is on sabbath and as approved at Sessions in 2022, to consider the recommendation from Fresh Pond Meeting that Three Rivers Worship Group be approved as a new monthly meeting.

We have also requested, and in many cases, received, updates from some of those traveling in the ministry beyond our yearly meeting under the endorsement of their home meeting, their quarter and the Permanent Board on behalf of the yearly meeting.

All of this work, and more, is undertaken with preparation, attention and deep listening, with the care and support of trusted staff, conscientious volunteers, and open meetings where all are invited to participate in the discernment. None of this work is separate from what is the uncertainty and incipient chaos present in the outer world, nor from the tensions and conflicts present in our own communities of faith. We remain seekers of unity, of wholeness, through being present to each other and to Divine will.

It has been an honor and a joy for me to to serve our community in this way, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity.

Updates from Working Groups

The Israel-Palestine Resource Group has hosted conversations with Friends who know and love the region, Jennifer Bing and Max Carter, as another way for Friends in our region to learn more about life "on the ground." Here's a link to the conversation with Max: <https://neym.org/israel-palestine-resources-engagement>.

We remain concerned that a third human rights organization has reported that Israel is an "apartheid state" (<https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution> and <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2022/02/israels-system-of-apartheid/>) as well as by the ongoing detention of Palestinian youth, including a student at the Ramallah Friends School.

We are cognizant of how much financial support to Israel is included in the federal budget, which is addressed by both the American Friends Service Committee and Friends Committee on National Legislation. We look forward to a time of discernment and discussion as we consider the "No Way to Treat a Child" minutes coming back to us from 2021.

The Antiracism Consultation working group has been meeting regularly and has still not found a consultant to

work with on behalf of the Yearly Meeting. We hope to have an update at Sessions about our ongoing discernment.

Please contact me directly if you have any questions before Sessions at pbclerk@neym.org and please continue to hold the Board and our staff in the Light.

May we continue to be blessed with open hearts, inquiring minds and the gift of grace. May we take none of it for granted.

—LESLIE MANNING, CLERK

Indigenous Boarding Schools (IBS) Research Group

Since February, we have co-opted four additional Friends to the working group: Gordon Bugbee, Emily Neumann, Evan McManamy, and Andy Grannell have joined Andrew Grant, Betsy Cazden, and Janet Hough. While sufficient for now, we look forward to welcoming engagement with Friends with Indigenous perspectives, when and as appropriate.

Focus of Our Work: Since February Andrew spent three weeks at Haverford College, reading records held there at the Quaker and Special Collections Archives. These included records of the Associated Executive Committee of Friends for Indian Affairs (AECFIA), in which NEYM-Gurneyite participated, and personal papers of Enoch Hoag, a New England Friend who moved to Iowa and became an early superintendent of the Central Superintendency (now Kansas and Oklahoma) in what was then known as Indian Territory. There were some letters, general agency accounts, and reports from New England Friends, but we have not yet located class lists or detailed records of the schools under the collective care of Orthodox Friends or the particular care of New England Yearly Meeting. Janet spent three days with Andrew looking through records at Haverford. As clerk of the working group, she helps keep the group grounded and focused, while being open to what arises. Gordon's earlier reading of the digitized reports from Quakers who served on the Federal Indian Commission, and other published materials, has brought useful insight in considering the Yearly Meeting minute books for the President Grant era. Emily has joined in reading the early printed minute books, and helping organize an inventory of what we have found. Evan has focused on transcribing handwritten minutes. Andy Grannell had previously digitized NEYM minute books from 1945 onwards. From these, he has extracted Indian Affairs committee reports. Betsy continues to focus consideration of possible Wilburite involvement with Indigenous individuals and communities.

Going forward: In sharing our research questions, processes and findings with the Yearly Meeting, and in further refining our focus for reporting and interpreting what we have found, we see a need to include Indigenous participation, as well as to continue to build relationships with the wider web of Quaker yearly meet-

ings and institutions. We welcome input from the Right Relationships Working Group as well as from interested individuals in the wider yearly meeting.

Visibility: We will be working to make sure that our research questions, process, and findings are visible both within and without the yearly meeting, and in ways that respectfully include Indigenous perspectives.

Updated plan of work

Gathering Phase (March–July 2023)

- Inventory primary texts from NEYM sources, starting with NEYM minutes and committee reports
- Tabulate relevant financial records; consider intangible assets as well
- Be alert for names and tribal identities of children enrolled in schools under the care of NEYM, as well as children from the NEYM region who were taken to Quaker boarding schools and children sent from NEYM managed schools to other boarding schools, such as the Carlisle Indian Industrial School.
- Identify key New England Quaker individuals who were teachers or who were involved in other aspects of the boarding school initiative

Reporting Phase, Round 1 (July and September 2023)

- Report to NEYM Sessions 2023, followed by ongoing regular reporting to Permanent Board.
- Work with others (Paula Palmer and other yearly meetings) to report of relevant findings to the U.S. Department of the Interior and to the National Native American Boarding Schools Healing Coalition (NABS), possibly as a lead-up to Orange Shirt Day, 30 September 2023, a day in honor of the Indigenous children who were sent to residential schools and forced to assimilate into the dominant culture, and to remember the children who perished. (<https://www.orangeshirtday.org/about-us.html>)

Interpretation Phase

- Consider publication of the findings, especially how relevant and sensitive information is conveyed to tribal partners, following a trauma-informed practice.
- Develop stories/narratives to move NEYM toward acknowledgment and repair.

Expanded Research

- Involve monthly and quarterly meetings in filling out information—personal biographies, artifacts, family stories—from the boarding school era.
- Use lists of NEYM Friends involved in this work to seek out correspondence, journals, artifacts, etc. to further illuminate the experience of Friends, and additional detailed information about the schools and students.

Right Relationship Resource Group

The Right Relationship Resource Group (RRRG) serves 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 are under the care of Permanent Board.

We were formed following the distribution of the “Apology to Native Americans” (in July 2022) after the working group charged with shepherding that work was laid down. Many members of that group have continued on the RRRG as new members joined us.

As we have endeavored to understand our new charge, we continue to have questions about what body is charged with responding to openings from the Indigenous community as a result of the Apology. Many of us were involved in the work of the Apology and we continue to carry a deep concern for how Friends prepare spiritually for this journey. How can we be a bridge between NEYM Quakers and our Indigenous neighbors now that the Apology has been delivered?

Many of us have been attending weekly meetings of Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools, convened and facilitated by Andrew Grant, which bring together Friends from around the U.S. and Canada to share their research and learnings as we uncover more about our history and complicity in cultural genocide and erasure.

For Indigenous Peoples Month in November, we collaborated with Friends Peace Teams and the Beacon Hill Friends House to offer a hybrid, interactive workshop that was attended by more than 145 participants. The workshop, “Quakers and Indigenous Boarding Schools: Facing Our History and Ourselves” (<https://lu.ma/qibs22>), was created and led by Paula Palmer with Gail Melix (Herring Pond Wampanoag, East Sandwich) and Andrew Grant (Mt. Toby). It was supported by a grant from the Legacy Gift Funds and pay-as-led registration fees. The funding structure also provided for a contribution to the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project, <https://www.wlrp.org/> in Mashpee, MA. The recording of this workshop is available on the Beacon Hill Friends House website and has been used, especially by Paula Palmer, to bring this material to Friends in various settings—colleges, yearly meetings, local workshops.

We supported Southeast Quarterly Meeting in welcoming the chiefs of the Allied Tribes to their March 19 meeting in Providence. The program included a presentation about the Pocasset/Pokanoket Land Trust’s food access program, Indigenous Roots Forever, based in southeastern Rhode Island and Massachusetts. (For more information:

<https://www.pocassetlandtrust.org/quaker-community-shows-historic-support-for-new-england-tribes/>)

We helped facilitate a dialogue between Worcester meeting and the Pocasset/Pokanoket Land Trust for pos-

sible use of office and/or meeting space at the Worcester Meetinghouse.

In June, some of us joined with Quakers from Quaker City/Unity, NH, Meeting at the Ko’asek PowWow and were warmly welcomed by the chief and other tribal members.

We encourage Friends to attend a powwow this summer and offer these suggestions for how to show up: bit.ly/42QZZSw; and powwows in the Northeast: <https://wanderingbull.com/events/>.

Members of the RRRG are available to visit with your monthly meeting and we are eager to learn how meetings are engaging with our Indigenous neighbors. Please contact us at rightrelationship@neym.org.

We look forward to connecting with Friends at Sessions. As of this writing we are planning two workshops and a meeting for listening: “What are Friends and Meetings doing? What do Friends need?” Check the *YM News* for time and location.

SUZANNA SCHELL, CLERK; GORDON BUGBEE, ANDREW GRANT, DON CAMPBELL, SARA SMITH, KIM WEST, EMILY NEUMANN, LISA GRAUSTEIN.

Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness

The Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group has been living into a charge from Annual Sessions 2018: “to develop a practice to ... observe, name, and reflect back to us long-standing, unseen patterns and practices that result in our complicity in oppression,” and which soon after expanded to include “to take up an active, persistent and loving practice of noticing and interrupting patterns of oppression and cultivating and affirming new patterns of faithfulness” across the yearly meeting. Staying engaged with this work when we bump into each other’s tender feelings is a challenge for New England Friends. The working group tests our leadings in love and is aware of tensions expressed by the corporate body around the practice of noticing. We ask Spirit’s guidance in seeking way forward with this transformative work.

There are some who respond to the noticing practice from a place of feeling really thirsty, and who experience this practice as bringing them water.

It has felt to others as if this practice is bringing them something poisonous. It can feel threatening to our

What have been the unmet needs that are starting to be met by the noticing practice?

What is being lost or disrupted in the noticing process?

What can we learn from the answers to these questions?

beloved community to be asked to acknowledge unintended and unrecognized consequences of actions that reflect our complicity with systems of oppression.

All of us need to hold each other with compassion. This work is long, messy, difficult, and nowhere near complete. Let's consider together the following queries:

The Working Group looks forward to hearing how Friends are being led in this practice. We are eager to engage with your ideas, leadings and concerns during Sessions and throughout the year.

Thank you,

—MEMBERS OF THE NOTICING PATTERNS WORKING GROUP POLLY ATTWOOD (CLERK), MELODY BRAZO, MELISSA FOSTER, LISA GRAUSTEIN, JANET HOUGH, BECKY JONES, PAMELA TERRIEN. ALSO, SUSAN DAVIES (ELDER FROM PERMANENT BOARD) AND MEY HASBROOK (ELDER FOR PB WITH THE NOTICING PRACTICE)

Archives & Historical Records

This year the committee has continued its work with two primary foci. We have begun the work of creating a guideline records management and records retention policy for use by monthly meetings. We plan to provide guidelines on what meetings need to keep as well as what should be archived. We also met with interested Friends from Maine as a follow-up to last year's workshop and began planning for a workshop in Maine. In connection with this work, Andy Grannell has joined us and contributed to both our understanding of some of the needs of meetings in Maine as well as supporting the research efforts into Yearly Meeting participation and support of Indigenous boarding schools. We look forward to his appointment to the committee.

Elise Riley, the Yearly Meeting outreach archivist, supported meetings by providing reference or consultation via email on topics such as donation, preparing and organizing records, and historic records. She also worked specifically with Vassalboro, Dover, Mt. Toby, and Northeast Kingdom Monthly Meetings and NEYM's office to donate 1932 files to SCUA. She also initiated contact with the Maine Historical Society as part of the follow-up to the workshop she co-hosted on Preserve Your History: Maintaining Your Quaker Meeting's Historical Records & Archives held in 2022. Elise has been a real asset to the work of the committee as she has helped to define the role of outreach archivist. The committee has valued her professional advice and is grateful for her many contributions, including suggestions for fine-tuning the job description. We will miss her as she moves on at the end of April 2023.

We also want to acknowledge the work of UMass Amherst Special Collections and University Archives, which has found funding to digitize bound yearly, quarterly, and monthly meeting records. In addition, some funds remaining from our grant to them to complete the organization of records transferred from Rhode Island Historical Society will be used to digitize loose materials. SCUA gladly responded to a request to prioritize the

digitization work to support the research on boarding schools

—CAROL FORSYTHE, CLERK

Coordinating and Advisory

The Coordinating and Advisory Committee (C&A) shepherds the work of the Yearly Meeting in alignment with the core purpose and priorities articulated by the Yearly Meeting, and advises and coordinates the various committees, quarterly meeting leadership, staff, and other initiatives within the Yearly Meeting. The members of this committee hold a particular responsibility to build a culture of inclusive and sustainable leadership development. C&A is responsible for supervising and evaluating the work of the Yearly Meeting Secretary.

C&A is accountable to Permanent Board and to Sessions and coordinates the work of Yearly Meeting committees, striving to prevent duplication of effort and facilitate efficiency and effectiveness in the work of the Yearly Meeting. With a goal of ensuring alignment with Yearly Meeting priorities, C&A regularly reviews each committee's Purpose, Procedure, and Composition and works in consultation with the Committee in this task.

We are a group of Friends serving the Yearly Meeting who work collaboratively to support each individual member's role and responsibilities within the Yearly Meeting, to foster their spiritual gifts and strengths for that work, to foster creativity of approaches, and to enhance decision-making, all towards the goal of improving overall efficiency and effectiveness in the stewardship of our Yearly Meeting community. As a group we also provide the space for gathered reflection, consultation, and discernment around matters of concern within each individual committee member's sphere of responsibilities.

This year, we have held monthly meetings on Zoom with seasonal in-person weekend retreats in fall, winter, and spring. Through this regular interaction and cooperation, we have built trust and strong working relationships, ensured close communication, and built a Spirit-grounded and positive work environment. We are committed to supporting and encouraging the ongoing work of spiritual transformation happening in many different ways across our Yearly Meeting.

Some of the areas we have considered this year include:

- Ongoing support for the Nominating Committee, both strengthening the team, grounding, and in reducing burdens to its function.
- Implementing and shepherding recommendations for Spiritual Life, Ministry & Eldership.
- Encouraging establishment of a process to determine funding for other Quaker groups out of our Yearly Meeting's annual budget.
- Supporting the programming that nurtures local meetings and meeting leaders in clerking, record-

ing clerking, nominating & naming gifts, stewardship, pastoral care, and more.

- Continuing encouragement of the Faith and Practice Revision Committee as it enters new phases of its work.
- Creation and beginnings of the work of the Meeting Accompaniment Group, which supports monthly and quarterly meetings.
- Supporting the new Ministry and Counsel clerk and planning for initiatives in Pastoral Care.
- Supporting the Friends Camp Revisioning process and the Legacy Gift Fund Committee's review.
- Shepherding the revision of the Purposes, Procedures, and Composition of the Youth Ministries Committee.

In our work together and in our individual roles serving the Yearly meeting, we are witness to how many Friends in New England are living into the Spirit. We are grateful for the support, feedback, guidance and prayer we have received throughout the year. We recognize that it is Divine Spirit that guides and provides the foundation upon which together we are all building our beloved community.

In all of the above, we serve with joy and love and commitment to the nurture of our Yearly Meeting.

—REBECCA LEUCHAK, PRESIDING CLERK
ON BEHALF OF COORDINATING AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE: SCOT DRYSDALE (FINANCE COMMITTEE CLERK), SARAH GANT (MEETING ACCOMPANIMENT GROUP CLERK), LESLIE MANNING (PERMANENT BOARD CLERK), SUSAN DAVIES (RISING PERMANENT BOARD CLERK), NOAH MERRILL (YEARLY MEETING SECRETARY), BOB MURRAY (YEARLY MEETING TREASURER), ELIZABETH REUTHE (SUPERVISOR OF THE YEARLY MEETING SECRETARY), JACKIE STILLWELL (NOMINATING COMMITTEE CLERK), NIA THOMAS (YEARLY MEETING PROGRAM DIRECTOR), CARL WILLIAMS (MINISTRY AND COUNSEL CLERK)

Faith & Practice Revision

The Faith & Practice Revision Committee devoted its first two meetings this year to a review of all the documents that the committee has sent out to the monthly meetings; we also shared our spiritual autobiographies to help ground ourselves in a better understanding of each other and the work of the Yearly Meeting we are called to do. We reviewed documents with preliminary approval, draft documents that the committee is actively working on, and draft documents that were put aside. Some documents were put aside because we were unclear on how they would fit in the structure of the book and thus how they might be best edited. Some documents were set aside because the comments from monthly meetings indicated they needed serious rethinking.

Some documents were written to help the Yearly Meeting know how the committee was approaching the work, and were not meant to be part of the book.

As we reviewed these documents, we considered writing style and how it has changed over the iterations of the committee. We considered content and how to organize the remaining sections of the book. We noted in the committee's earlier work the writing was more succinct. Was it because the material covered (Worship, Corporate Discernment, Testimonies, A Peculiar People) was of a more spiritual nature than later topics (Membership, Marriage, Pastoral Care, Ministry & Counsel)? In the later topics we were repeatedly asked for more detail—meetings were asking for clarity on their responsibilities surrounding these topics and for guidance on how to approach these issues. With those question in mind, we set back to work.

In 2003, F&P sent the Yearly Meeting "A Peculiar People," a document we wrote for ourselves to clarify what it means to be a Friend. This year we went back to that document and revised it to serve as an introduction to the book. In the fall we will send it out to the monthly meeting for input. We have also reviewed the input from monthly meetings on the chapter on Ministry & Counsel and revised it to bring to Sessions for preliminary approval. A small group within the committee has continued working on a text tentatively named "Responding to the Promptings of the Spirit," which looks at how individual Friends are called to witness to their faith.

Our committee remains small. Although we gained two members over the past two years, this year one member resigned from the committee and we lost another member to cancer. Our numbers are still fewer than the intended sixteen Friends, and though we do not reflect the demographic diversity of the yearly meeting, we are grateful for our theological diversity, which does more closely represent the varieties of religious experience among the Quakers of New England. Our work together is not always easy but always contributes to our spiritual understanding and growth. We hope our chapters embody that seasoned discernment.

—PHEBE MCCOSKER, CLERK; DOUG ARMSTRONG, MARION ATHERN, MAGGIE EDMONDSON, ERIC EDWARDS, ELEANOR GODWAY, MARGARET HAWTHORN, CAROLYN HILLES, SUE REILLY

Finance

The primary job of the Finance Committee is to oversee the Yearly Meeting's finances and to propose budgets for future years. Projecting future income and expenses was complicated by COVID, but for the first couple of years our expenses and income were approximately equal. Unfortunately, last year's actual results had a significant deficit; combined with a decline in the value of our investments, this meant our reserves fell well below the 25% of annual expenses specified in our policy. The Treasurer's report (**page 10**) explains the many reasons for this shortfall.

We followed our usual procedure of appointing a budget subcommittee which met several times in early 2023 to come up with a draft budget for fiscal year 2024, which was then approved by the Finance Committee and passed on to Permanent Board for their comments. The budget that we developed is an austerity budget, and cuts expenses in several areas. However, the budget cut that we liked the least reduced the amount of donations to other organizations to zero for one year. Permanent Board was even less happy about this decision than we had been and suggested that we find alternatives. The Budget Subcommittee and Finance Committee seriously considered a number of possibilities, but eventually decided to make no change to the proposed budget. The reasons for our choices are explained in a separate Budget Commentary document (page 10).

Specialized endowed funds of the Yearly Meeting are invested in the NEYM Pooled Funds. Over the years income from the Pooled Funds was inconsistently credited to these funds. Former Treasurer Shearman Taber, current Treasurer Bob Murray, and Accounts Manager Frederick Martin have been working for years on an NEYM Funds Recalculation Project to determine the amounts that should have been credited and to correct the balances in these funds. This project was completed this year, and the Finance Committee reviewed and approved the recalculation, passing it on to the Permanent Board for final approval. The Treasurer's Report will discuss more of the details of this project.

For several years the Finance Committee, the Treasurer, and the Accounts Manager have been planning for a review/audit of the NEYM finances. The last few budgets have set aside money to pay for this review. With the Funds Recalculation Project complete we decided that it was time to put out a Request for Proposals to several CPAs or accounting firms, inviting them to apply for this job. We hope to work with an accounting firm based in New England with experience working with churches. A committee consisting of Tom Corindia (clerk), Kathleen Wooten (recording clerk), and Noah Merrill will review these proposals, with help from Frederick Martin (accounts manager). They will recommend a CPA or firm to the Finance Committee. Finance Committee will select a CPA or firm and recommend them to the Permanent Board for final approval.

—SCOT DRYSDALE, CLERK

Friends Camp

Dear Friends,

This report follows a meaningful and productive year for the Friends Camp Committee. At the time of writing, we are celebrating the start of a fully enrolled summer season. We are particularly grateful for this milestone, after the challenges of offering camp in the midst of the pandemic. This year our committee has experienced joys and successes in fundraising, maintaining our buildings

and grounds, and in strengthening our relationships to each other and our commitment to the work of stewarding Camp. We are particularly excited about the visioning process and governance review that we have engaged in alongside NEYM. As we emerge from two difficult years and navigate changes in committee leadership, it has been particularly affirming to recognize the love for and commitment to Camp that exists within our committee, NEYM, and the wider Quaker community.

This year, our committee was composed of 15 members with diverse connections to Camp. Committee members include camper parents, former campers and counselors, and folks who are engaged in Quaker community. The committee includes members living throughout the New England region, including several in Maine and local to Friends Camp. Our committee met quarterly, including one in-person meeting on Camp grounds. Each of our committee members is involved in at least one sub-committee, including Development, Finance, Health and Safety, Personnel, Buildings and Grounds, and Nominating. Our sub-committees are active and engage in monthly meetings throughout the fall, winter, and spring.

This year we have also experienced bittersweet changes in leadership. In September 2022, our long-standing and much beloved clerk, John Reuthe, stepped down from the role. I am personally grateful for all of John's care and support as I have transitioned into the role of clerk this year. As of our September 2023 meeting, three members will step away from the committee and two new members will join us. This September, our treasurer, Robb Spivey, will transition out of his role and Kate Monahan will begin a new term as treasurer. Our committee is profoundly grateful to both the outgoing and incoming treasurer for their work attending to Friends Camp's economic well-being. We are also preparing to support members of Friends Camp staff as they assume temporary leadership roles while our Director, Anna Hopkins, is away on parental leave. Our committee is deeply appreciative of the planning, leadership, flexibility, and commitment of the Friends Camp staff!

Finally, it is worth noting that there is rarely a meeting where committee members do not express gratitude for Anna and amazement at all she is able to accomplish! She is a thoughtful, loving, grounded, and enthusiastic advocate for Camp. Our committee and the camp community benefit immensely from her work. Thank you for reading, and I wish all a good summer and a joyful time at Sessions!

—NATALIE BORNSTEIN, CLERK

Legacy Gift

The Legacy Gift Fund continues to support the movement of the Spirit among us.

Through offering two funding cycles each year, in spring and fall, we are nurturing and enabling Friends faithfulness to God's calls to witness and ministry.

In the past year **Witness & Ministry** funds have supported leadings such as developing right relationship with the land and the Indigenous people, research and a workshop on our historic relationship with Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools, demystifying economic structures so that Quaker activists and others can use that knowledge in the fight against systemic oppression of people and the earth, and recording interviews with Friends carrying important ministries related to Quaker responses to climate change and care of the Earth, resulting in short videos.

Requests and renewed life for Futures Fund: We were asked by Salem Quarter if we would administer their funds while they are on sabbatical. Having lost the Futures Fund in 2020 when it was expended (as planned), Salem Quarter's funds are reinfusing the Futures Fund on a temporary basis—resulting in immediate requests. Already these funds are helping educate the Cambridge Friends School community and parents about Quaker values, and helping a Maine meeting rebuild their handicapped accessible ramp and rotting porches.

Funding for **time-sensitive requests** continues.

In the last year we have helped Hal Weaver travel to London and Geneva to present about the Black Quaker Project and retrospective justice to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and QUNO, helped a YAF coordinator attend Beyond Diversity 101 at Pendle Hill, helped a NEYM friend living abroad to bring a disabled Friend and assist at Sessions, and enabled a junior member of Fresh Pond Meeting (the only youth from New England) to travel to the FUM Triennial this summer in Nakuru, Kenya.

The new Bodine-Rustin Fund: We were asked by NEYM to apply our expertise in grant oversight to taking on the administration of this newly created fund. As this was the initial year, it took time to get started—figuring out the whole process, creating suggestion forms, and doing outreach to all NEYM meetings to get the suggestions of groups to support in this first year. A subcommittee, which included an NEYM FUM Representative, then reviewed the seven suggested organizations, researching each group, teasing out the needs and where limited funds might be most effective, and recommending funding amounts—first to Legacy Gift, then forwarded to Permanent Board for final approval and distribution. The funds (\$5,047.40 this year) have gone to a variety of groups. Of the seven groups proposed for funding, two are involved in Africa: FUST gets Ugandans threatened with prison or death because of who they are to safer places, while GALCK is a national organization in Kenya working on systemic levels, including education about rights, advocacy, and litigation. Three groups based in New England are providing asylum.

Two groups support local teens and Pride events in CT and rural northern VT where there is a high suicide rate for gay youth and this support is life-saving—perhaps differently than for those seeking asylum, but life-saving none the less. Being present with the oppression, trauma, and needs of these LGBTQIA+ groups was painful, and also inspiring—and joyful in being able to support their work without their having had to ask.

Dates for Fall cycle & Workshop: We encourage individuals carrying ministry or leadings, and Meetings with carbon reducing or other facility improvement needs to apply. Our next Deadline is October 21, 2023. Stay tuned for our workshop Tuesday evening Sept 26, 2023, on financially supporting ministry.

All of these funds spring from holy abundance. This year, the Futures Fund, which we were feeling the loss of since it had been expended, was blessed with renewed life. We have learned through all these years about watering the seeds of holy abundance and creating agency, employing minds and hearts to both invite and notice where the Light is moving and support it in shining ever more brightly.

2024 Legacy Gift Review Committee

In 2014 New England Yearly Meeting created the Legacy Gift Fund from the money realized by the sale of the New England Friends Home and started giving grants to support the witness and ministry of Friends in New England. At the time, some of the money was designated to be fully spent, and that has happened. The other portion of the money was restricted for ten years, with grants made only from earnings. In 2024, the Yearly Meeting will discern where the life is for the future use of these funds. The 2024 Review Committee has been set up to collect and compile data and reflections on the experience of these first ten years and make recommendations for the future to Sessions next year.

The 2024 Review Committee is composed of Mary Link (Legacy co-clerk and convenor of the 2024 committee), Bob Murray (NEYM Treasurer), Suzanna Schell (prior clerk of Legacy Gift), and Fritz Weiss (prior NEYM clerk). We have been meeting every couple months for the past year, planning and beginning this review process. We have announced the review in the monthly email newsletter, pulled together a list and a map showing all individual grantees and meetings touched by Legacy Funds to date, and are in process of updating the slide show depicting the witness, ministry and building improvements that have been supported. To date, 40 of our 62 monthly meetings and 25 other related Friends' groups have been involved in a Legacy Gift grant, over half of them in more than one grant application.

As we want this review to include reflections from as many people as possible, we are about to send letters with questionnaires to all grantees, Monthly Meetings

and other NEYM contacts. We look forward to getting your responses!

Here are some of the queries we are seeking responses to:

- What have we learned about supporting ministry among Friends over the past ten years ?
- What has changed since 2014? How are we being called today?
- What advice do you offer for the Legacy Gift Funds for the next decade? How could these funds continue to help us answer God's call now?

We'd love to get your responses. Please contact us at Legacy2024review@neym.org.

—SUE ROCKWOOD AND MARY LINK, CO-CLERKS

Meeting Accompaniment Group

Sessions 2022 approved the creation of the NEYM Meeting Accompaniment Group. Permanent Board approved the clerk in September 2022 and additional members in February 2023. These Friends, together with the clerk of ministry and counsel, and ex officio members including the Yearly Meeting Secretary and Presiding Clerk, come from each of the NEYM states but for Connecticut. We gathered together for the first time in March 2023.

Named qualifications for this service include: spiritual and emotional maturity, being a non-anxious presence, confidentiality, prayerful holding, gifts in oversight, pastoral care, boundary-setting, conflict resolution, communication, administration, and “love for and commitment to the nurture of local meetings as the foundation of Friends life together.”

Together, we strive to uphold these aspects of service. Many of us also carry particular concerns or expertise, for example, for children's safety and programming, the life cycles of meetings, and stewardship of property. We learn well together and regularly consult with Friends for additional wisdom and support.

When invited by meeting leaders—typically by clerks of monthly meetings or quarters, as well as ministry and counsel clerks—we visit to listen, offering a prayerful “outside ear” to reflect what we hear, nurturing and supporting existing capacities within the meeting. We also offer resources as requested. Engagements have ranged from a single phone call to weekly meetings over a period of months, presence at worship and meetings for business, facilitation of threshing sessions, invitations to potluck discussions and meeting retreats.

In our first ten months, fifteen meetings, one quarter seeking support for care of two meetings, and one committee have sought this accompaniment. Additionally, we regularly listen for concerns named in State of Society reports, in monthly meeting newsletters, news from traveling Friends, participation in the monthly Meeting Leaders calls and other NEYM-sponsored events including Living Faith, the Meeting for Listening and participation in quarterly gatherings.

The work of the group is not to “fix,” but to listen and to connect meetings to resources that might be useful as they find—and are supported in—their own discernment practices grounded in the particular context of their community. Prayerful accompaniment is not “fixing,” but “making”—making perhaps some brokenness visible while also supporting the community's role in making something new together, integrating the reality of our human brokenness into a common, wiser wholeness. This is spiritual work with administrative components, wrapped in pastoral love. When this works well, we may come to know and love each other even across differences, valuing our rich diversities.

Accompaniment reports regularly to monthly gatherings of Coordinating and Advisory, to raise up where needs exist and where programming or other resources might be useful.

Some themes are emerging as common concerns for accompaniment: behavioral issues and how to establish appropriate and loving boundaries; consideration of when buildings drain rather than enrich community life; and unclear administrative structures and processes, especially around meeting life cycles.

In service,
—SARAH GANT, CLERK

Ministry & Counsel

Dear Friends,

I was invited into this service last November, and after a long period of discernment and with the support of a clearness committee, I became clear. My name was approved by Permanent Board last February. And, though there is a title of “clerk” that feels inaccurate—as there currently is no committee. Perhaps emissary or delegate or shepherd might be more precise.

I've stepped into the role by listening. I listened at the Aging Resources Coordinating and Help (ARCH) program training, with the Meeting Accompaniment Group, at Noticing Patterns meetings and presentations, and at the monthly leadership calls. I've listened at Permanent Board and at Coordination and Advisory Committee. I've been grateful for a number of individual Friends who have contacted me about issues that weighed heavily with them. I've also “listened” to our State of Society reports and witnessed where there is spiritual life, as well the challenges we face and grief we carry.

And here's what, at least in part, I've heard: I've heard that exploring new ways of supporting life and ministry has reinforced a willingness to continue on this path, though some of us remain uncomfortable with our experimental discernment. I've heard that we are both open to the process of forming a re-focused, re-vitalized committee in God's time and that we wish God's time moved a little faster. I've heard there is much joy

amongst us, but also much pain and wanting; some of us are able to carry both—others of us are learning.

In the past four months two areas of care have moved forward. The planning of the Meeting for Listening—held at Concord Monthly Meeting and virtually the end of June—created an opportunity for friends to come together in worship, celebration, and discovery to reflect on the life in our local meetings and how the yearly meeting might be a support. Working on this with Nia Thomas, Program Director, and Sarah Gant, clerk of the Accompaniment Group, was a blessing. They provided gentle leadership in the planning and the opportunity to spend time with them was instrumental to me sliding into this service. Secondly, pastoral care and ways to support Friends and monthly meetings has become a focus in planning. Part of this is the resurrection of a Yearly Meeting list to share prayer requests, joys and sorrows.

So our experiment continues. I have no answers, but I know that if we sit with the Teacher in expectant waiting together, a path will open. Please, Friends, do not hesitate to let me know your thoughts on where the life of the Spirit abides among us.

In the faith that nurtures and challenges,
—CARL WILLIAMS, CLERK

Moses Brown School Report

Under Interim Head of School Ron Dalglish's leadership, the Moses Brown School community has been finding its way back to normal after the pandemic. We look forward to welcoming our new Head of School, Katie Titus, beginning July 1. Katie's experience aligns beautifully with our needs and commitments, and there is much excitement about her arrival.

Senior leaders continued engagement with Quaker business practices, focusing on transparency in decision authority, input, and outcomes. Engagement with process and transparency is an important part of our Quaker identity, and as adults become more experienced we can better support students' use of business practice. A group of rising seniors is eager to support this project in the Upper School.

A survey of faculty and staff this spring shows a consistent commitment to our ideals, as well as a widespread desire to learn more about Quaker practices and tenets. Integrity, equality, and community have been guiding lights through the challenges of COVID. Quakerism tends still to be more 'caught' than 'taught' (as in many Quaker schools) and students arriving later at MB may have gaps in their understanding. These insights will inform the development of programs for new students, employees, and families, as well as for ongoing support.

A new All-School Quaker Life Committee supports the Director of Friends Education in three key areas: institutional service; practice development; and student

support. This committee will bridge separations across divisions and enable colleagues and students to compare experiences and learn from challenges, coordinate initiatives, build cross-divisional skills, and support student voice and concerns.

The Bayard Rustin Center for Peace and Belonging, opened this year. It includes the offices of Friends Education, Wellness, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The naming of the Center honors Rustin's concern for the marginalized, which drove him to speak out powerfully against injustice. The Center provides spaces for various campus groups and offers a place for collaboration and "angelic troublemaking." (As an example, see this land acknowledgement mural: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/152hKftkvvZaAjClo9-ZQu9xCIKbSwVICHYnIMjGaok/edit>, designed and painted by Anishinaabe student Lily Larson, Class of 2023, as part of her senior project.) Next September, the Rustin Center will host Paula Palmer (Boulder Meeting) and Gail Melix (East Sandwich). Thanks to a generous grant from the Obadiah Brown Benevolent Fund, students will learn about the work of Friends to address and heal from past injustices inflicted on Indigenous people.

In February, five Upper School students attended the Quaker Youth Leadership Conference at Sandy Spring Friends School in MD. They returned empowered, eager to help facilitate Meeting for Worship and bring greater attention to student conversations on testimonies. In October and April, three MB educators attended Friends Council on Education's Spirited Practice and Renewed Courage program, which draws on Parker Palmer's mentoring model for teachers. In a series of four workshops over two years, Friends school educators from across the US immerse themselves in Spirit-led discovery, reflection, and sharing. The relationships that have evolved are profoundly enriching, for both the participants and the schools they serve.

If Friends have questions or would like to hear more details, please contact me at jmcfadden@mosesbrown.org.

—JENNIFER MCFADDEN, DIRECTOR OF FRIENDS EDUCATION

Nominating

In order to help Friends answer God's call, the Nominating Committee identifies, encourages, and nominates Friends with the gifts and skills needed to serve in a wide variety of volunteer roles on behalf of the Yearly Meeting. In this work, the Committee seeks to remove barriers to the full expression of the spiritual gifts and skills given through each Friend, to support the building up and thriving of local Friends meetings.

This work includes, in its fullness, understanding the vision of the Yearly Meeting and what is needed to live into it; leadership development and capacity-building;

nurturing a culture of healthy evaluation and feedback; and expressing gratitude and recognition for faithful service in its many forms.

This second year of Nominating Committee integration has been an opportunity to continue learning new ways of doing our work together. While our committee membership has diminished to 7, our work continues to be Spirit-led while prioritizing the health of our Yearly Meeting. In doing this work together, we have found both great joys and some huge challenges, recognizing that God is in charge while each of us does our best to live into what we are called to do with the time and energy available to us.

Realistically, in a changing culture with fewer people available to volunteer, there are pieces of work we haven't been able to attend to because there are not enough people sharing the work. We are especially grateful to LouAnne McDonald, Willa Taber, and Honor Woodrow for their diligent and faithful service on Nominating Committee; they will be rotating off this year to serve in new ways.

One of our biggest joys this year was launching the Meeting Accompaniment Group. We also offered two workshops on Best Practices in Nominating, and created a 10-minute video describing the wholistic components of nominating work that was shared at the monthly meeting leadership check-in call in April. Resources for nominating can be found on the NEYM website: <https://neym.org/strengthen-your-local-meeting/care-one-another/nominators>.

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

What are some of the challenges? Over time and with changes in the Yearly Meeting, the work of the Youth Ministries committee has evolved. Therefore, the committee has been on pause since August 2022, while the Purposes, Procedures and Composition have been under review. A revised draft was shared with members of Youth Ministries and Coordinating & Advisory, and forwarded to Permanent Board. (The revised Youth Ministries Committee PP&C appears on **page 12**.)

We have encountered a similar situation with the Racial, Social, and Economic Justice Committee. This committee has been on pause as the Yearly Meeting works together to better understand our collective vision for this work. The Permanent Board Antiracism Consultation working group is earnestly seeking a consultant to help us more clearly understand and define this work as a Yearly Meeting. Friends have offered to serve on RSEJ committee; however, no action will be taken until the new definition emerges, with an updated PP&C, so that Nominating is clear what gifts and service are needed.

The over-abundance of Nominating Committee work has been balanced with a healthy practice of gratitude for what we have accomplished, clear focus on next steps, and letting go of some exciting opportunities until the future. We are enormously grateful to staff for the support with record keeping, planning events, and introducing new Friends to us to cultivate gifts.

As a committee we love our work and are looking for ways to promote a general awareness among monthly meetings of what opportunities for service are available with the yearly meeting. This doesn't have to mean accepting a huge job; taking on a small role can be very helpful. Working groups and specific projects also need your gifts.

Nominating Committee work requires a broad variety of gifts and skills. Might you be called to serve on the NEYM Nominating Committee? For a complete description see the Purpose, Procedures & Composition on the NEYM website.

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

With Light and Love,
—JACQUELINE STILLWELL (NOMINATING@NEYM.ORG)

Puente de Amigos

The Puente de Amigos Committee is responsible for maintaining the Bridge of Love between NEYM and Cuba Yearly Meeting (CYM). With the easing of the pandemic, we have been able to send two delegations to Cuba under our care in the past year. There are solid plans for another to go in September. Each delegation carries financial support for CYM raised by the Puente contributory fund. We also carry goods and medical supplies. The leadership of CYM discerns how best to disperse the funds and goods. Each delegation goes through a clearness process with their monthly meeting and with the Puente Committee. They also meet over several months to create a functioning spiritual group among themselves.

Through the reports of visitors, we learn of significant food and fuel shortages, exacerbated by high inflation. The community is further strained by the emigration of young people. Visitors report on the strength of the spiritual communities despite these circumstances. When we ask Cuban Friends whether our visits are a burden, they insist that the benefits of intervisitation far outweigh the costs.

Late last year a member of our committee from Portland Monthly Meeting traveled to Cuba with the FUM Living Letters program in which she learned of a need for medical supplies. As the group from Portland and Durham Meetings prepared for their trip, they gathered the supplies needed. The delegation consisted of Kim Bolshaw from Durham and Sue Calhoun, Hannah Colbert, and Fritz Weiss from Portland. They attended

the annual sessions of Cuba Yearly Meeting and visited many Monthly Meetings, including their sister Meeting, Velasco.

In June Benigno Sanchez-Eppler of Northampton Meeting visited to offer support to the pastors of Cuba Yearly Meeting. Due to extensive emigration, there are not enough pastors to go around, and there is a lack of lay leadership to assist pastors or provide leadership. Benigno sent back moving daily epistles about his ministry and his experience of living and worshipping among our Cuban Friends. We know from Jorge Luis Peña, clerk of CYM, that Benigno's visit was exceedingly enriching.

In September two members of Providence Meeting will travel to Havana to offer training in Alternatives to Violence for Friends from all around Cuba. They are planning the work jointly with Kirenia Criado Perez, pastor of Havana Meeting, and Jorge Luis Peña, and a Friend from Mexico. A generous gift from Hanover Meeting will cover travel and accommodations for Friends from eastern Cuba. This is the first time that Puente has supported such a delegation.

Plans for trips in 2024 are taking shape.

Lastly, we received a request from CYM for funds to begin repairs to the pastor's home in Puerto Padre. This is an historic house, built in the early 20th century by missionaries from the US. Benigno Sanchez-Eppler delivered the funds, and we have pictures of the supplies already purchased.

We know from our communications in person and on WhatsApp, that our connections are very important to Cuba Friends. They yearn for contact through the sister meeting relationships. They want to be included and remembered.

—CAROLYN STONE & RICHARD LINDO, CO-CLERKS

Sessions

Sessions planning always begins with a look backwards at the previous year. In 2022 we held our first hybrid meeting at Castleton. From the COVID safety point of view, it was a perfect year with no cases at Sessions and none reported afterwards. From a hybrid point of view,

while the Tech Team was amazing, we could see areas where better communication with the online community would have made a better experience. This year we have an online experience coordinator who is embedded in the planning process and will be very active at Castleton during Sessions. Deeper consideration of the contra dance has led us to turn that night into a broader themed "block party" that we believe will be more inclusive of all interests at Sessions (and a lot of fun).

The reorganization of the large, monolithic Planning Committee into five focused teams is now in its second year. In my experience, the five team approach has been a success with clear lines of responsibility for almost all planning activities. I could go on about the many ways that I have seen these teams work long hours and struggle faithfully to create plans for Sessions. Just one small example: the Theme and Speakers Team has historically been focused on getting speakers for a single year's program. But this year the Team took it upon itself to begin considering the advantages of multi-year planning for speakers. This would help provide more continuity and would allow us to consider popular speakers whose calendars have very long lead-times. This wasn't in the Team's mandate but they saw a way to make Sessions better, and they pursued it. I see this dedication over and over again in the professional staff and in others in positions of responsibility for planning.

Before starting as clerk of Sessions planning, I had the impression that the planning was the key to making Sessions a success. The more work I do in planning, the more my view is changing. While planning is absolutely necessary, and insufficient planning will ruin the experience, the real heart of a successful annual gathering is in the attenders who reach out and give their gifts to us all; from the bookstore to the healing center to the golf carts; from people who make the tech work possible to the dozens of elders deepening worship and meetings for business; and especially the youth staff volunteers who nurture the life blood of our future gatherings; you are the beating heart of New England Yearly Meeting.

It has been a good year and I look forward to the fruits of our labor in August.

—PHILLIP VEATCH, CLERK

Reports of Representatives to Other Quaker Organizations

American Friends Service Committee

Connecting for Lasting Change, the theme of American Friends Service Committee's hybrid Corporation meeting, emphasized "relationships among Friends, with staff and community partners, and throughout a world in powerful need of lasting change."

Recordings of Ambassador Andrew Young's inspiring keynote speech, workshops, and a panel discussion with heads of Quaker agencies can be found on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/e2hpPbJGLWQ>).

The retiring Interim Board Clerk opened AFSC's 2023 Corporation meeting by praising "the power of Quaker process" and summarizing the work of several committees: Community, Equity, & Justice; Governance; Stewardship & Finance; and the Board Program committee.

The General Secretary followed with her report in which she signaled "a new era of Quaker engagement" and said that "we need to listen deeply." She also noted that during this year the Board had approved recommendations for restructuring both the staff and complementary governance structures—designed to support implementation of the current Strategic Plan, passed in 2020 and available here.

The Friends Relations Committee arranged threshing sessions to hear Corporation members—both in person and online—exchange views on seven queries of interest to Quakers everywhere. One was how to reground conversations of faith between Friends and AFSC; others included the liaison network, evaluation, and diversity. Become involved by going to AFSC's updated Friends Engage web page.

—SUBMITTED BY SCOTT RHODEWALT

Friends Committee on National Legislation

This is an abridged version of a report by Mary Lou Hatcher, clerk of the FCNL General Committee. The full report is available on the FCNL and NEYM websites.

In the past year, FCNL has played critical roles in these areas:

- Bringing congressional attention to U.S. complicity in the Saudi-led war in Yemen.
- Addressing the legacy of Indian boarding schools.
- Advancing environmental justice and addressing climate change.
- Compensating people exposed to nuclear testing.
- Advocating for diplomacy and peacebuilding to bring about a just solution to the war in Ukraine.
- Setting FCNL's legislative priorities for the 118th Congress (2023-24). More than 250 meetings, churches, and individuals took part in this process.

See fcnl.org/priorities for the priorities statement approved at Annual Meeting.

This year, FCNL's Policy Committee is requesting input around how FCNL's policy statement should address issues of reproductive health care, including abortion.

FCNL has recommitted itself to antiracism, anti-bias, justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of our work.

FCNL is working to reduce partisanship and address the root causes of division in our country. We are building new partnerships with networks such as Braver Angels, Faiths United to Save Democracy, and the TRUST Network.

—BETSY CAZDEN, SCOT DRYSDALE, AND HOLLY WEIDNER, REPRESENTATIVES

Friends Peace Teams

"We cry for justice. We cry for healing. We cry for peace."

Listen to FPT voices around the world:

"We acknowledge the genocidal crimes against Indigenous peoples, ...complicity, and the transgenerational trauma. We call for an end to the vestiges of white supremacy in our hearts... and our societies. We commit to working for justice... among all peoples." FPT Epistle 2022

"We experience equal partnership- we work in schools, workplaces and religious institutions. We make a difference between people who usually don't talk, or don't even like each other- people in prisons and gangs. Join us in creating cultures of peace." Rosie (Aotearoa)

Here on Turtle Island, many at FPT are considering acts towards reparative justice. NEYM is accounting for our involvement in running Indian Boarding Schools. What is the impact, even today of taking Indigenous children out of the home?

"We work on a people-to-people and a program-to-program approach." says Ruwaidah (Indonesia). FPT's facilitators work in countries such as Ukraine, Rwanda, Honduras, Nepal, Palestine, and Korea. Our workshops include Healing from Trauma, and Creating Cultures of Peace (peace libraries).

FPT works with survivors and perpetrators, sometimes in the same workshop. "FPT has compassion for people, and with healing we are assured that transformation will prevail." Judith (Kenya)

I attended a FPT workshop where Chechnya teachers taught 12 year olds how to be respectful to peers who are gender non-conforming. I laughed. It was incredulous, watching cis-gendered boys break stereotypes. FPT invites us to release ourselves from the dominant pattern. In a strange way, Jesus of Nazareth popped to mind. Jesus healed those mistreated in Palestine. Healing and Liberation are twins. Laughter helps.

What does Spirit ask of us to heal injustice? Join us!
—MINGA CLAGGETT-BORNE

Friends General Conference

For a fuller report on the year at Friends General Conference (FGC), see the NEYM website. I have decided to use my short Advance Documents report space on Gathering highlights:

By the time this report is shared, the first in-person Gathering in three years will have been held at Western Oregon University in Monmouth, OR (July 2–8). The organization is balancing the needs of many constituents in its Gathering planning, and experimenting with new forms, including Young Adult and Youth (YAY) Gatherings in alternate years and hybrid multi-generational events.

FGC is excited to announce that the 2024 Gathering will be held in person and virtually at Haverford College June 30-July 6, with additional dormitory space available at nearby Bryn Mawr College. The Gathering

has not been held in the Northeast since 2014 and it is likely to be a long time till it is in this region again. The greatest concentration of FGC Quakers is in the Northeast and it is hoped that the attendance numbers will return to pre-pandemic scale. I hope that we will have a strong showing of NEYM Friends, including first-time attenders who have not had the opportunity to be part of a Gathering within driving distance. Plan to come for a week of worship, workshops, singing and fellowship among Friends!

Looking further out, the Gathering in 2025 will be an in-person YAY event with a virtual program for other attenders. The 2026 Gathering will be in person.

FGC is starting to form a committee to help plan next summer's Gathering. There are many ways to be involved. Consider signing up as a volunteer on the FGC website, www.fgcquaker.org.

—CAROLYN HILLES-PILANT, REPRESENTATIVE

Memorial Minutes

Hugh Stewart Barbour
August 7, 2021 – January 8, 2021

Hugh Barbour and his wife, Sirkka, were active in Friends Meeting at Cambridge and our Yearly Meeting for many years. A Recorded Minister in Salem Quarter, Hugh served on several Yearly Meeting committees, including the Permanent Board. We are sharing this minute from New York Yearly Meeting.

Hugh Stewart Barbour, a resident of Kendal on Hudson in Sleepy Hollow, New York, died on January 8, 2021. He was 99 years old. A lifelong scholar, academic, peace activist, and punster, he was still formulating plans well past his mid-90s to write a paper on the meaning of Jesus to Quakers.

Born in 1921 in Beijing, China, the first of three sons of an American missionary mother and Scottish geologist father, Barbour had a peripatetic childhood. By his own account, by the time he was sixteen, he had crossed the Pacific five times and the Atlantic ten, and had been “the outsider in ten schools.” Perhaps this feeling of exclusion helped to shape some of his later, lifelong concerns: overcoming divisions among Christians generally, as well as among Friends; fostering ecumenism; and supporting those who suffered hardship for their religious convictions. He particularly focused on Quakers and other Christians in regions experiencing religious oppression.

Hugh attended boarding schools in England before entering Harvard College, from which he graduated *magna cum laude* in 1942. There he majored in the history of science, but also valued his participation in the Student Christian Movement, where he connected with others across denominations and nationalities. Many in the Student Christian Movement between the World Wars became pacifists and practiced a social gospel committed to justice. These concerns for peace and for justice led Hugh eventually to join the Religious Society of Friends—though not before serving as the pastor of a Congregational church in Coventry, Connecticut, as part of his training in divinity school. Concerned that, as a young man, he couldn’t deliver the Truth that his church members wanted to hear, he chose to pursue teaching instead.

Hugh was accepted at a number of distinguished medical and divinity schools, and chose Union Theological Seminary, earning a B.Div. He studied with Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr, and received his Ph.D. in 1952 from Yale University, where his mentor was Roland Bainton. His Yale dissertation became a book, *The Quakers in Puritan England*, which has been an indispensable resource for Quaker historians ever since. Over the course of his career, Hugh authored or co-authored six additional books, including *Early Quaker Writings*, *Quaker Cross-Currents*, *Slavery and Theology*, and *The Quakers*, as well as more than 70 articles, reviews, chapters, and pamphlets. At his retirement, many esteemed colleagues honored Hugh with a weighty *Festschrift* [tribute].

Hugh joined the faculty of Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, as professor of religion in 1953. There he met Sirkka Talikka, a Finnish exchange student, and the two married in 1959 in Helsinki. She had been a refugee from Karelia, and spent her childhood years in Lapland and Sweden during World War II. She and Hugh connected deeply through their shared experiences of dislocation and uprootedness as children, and a yearning for home and belonging, which they found together at Clear Creek Friends Meeting and the Earlham College community. Through their many years in Indiana and beyond, they kept close ties with family in Scotland and Finland.

Hugh taught widely at Earlham, first focusing on Quakerism, church history, and biblical studies, but then widening the curriculum to include Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and other traditions of East Asia, which he combined into a very popular course in world religions. Early in his career, when the Earlham School of Religion came into being, Hugh was among its founding faculty. Not long after, when Earlham established its program in peace studies, Hugh became a steady contributor to its offerings. Through all his decades of teaching, he continued to earn his well-established reputation as an “absent-minded professor,” and stories—both reliable and apocryphal—abound.

From his youth, Hugh was a citizen of the world, and he sought to enrich through international experience the lives of his students. He and Sirkka led foreign study groups to Germany, Austria, and the Soviet Union, and also taught summer school at Viittakivi, an international Quaker institute in Finland. They introduced Earlham students not only to the cultural riches of Europe but also to the genuine difficulties faced by dissidents who lived under repressive governments. He particularly honored East German Friends for their valiant internal stance, and sought to convey such experience in his teaching.

Hugh was committed as much to contemporary Quakerism as to its history. He was active in numerous Quaker organizations, including the Friends World Committee for Consultation, which Hugh represented in Kenya and Japan; the Friends Committee for National Legislation; and the World Council of Churches. Always aiming to promote understanding among different sorts of Quakers, he was active nationally in Friends General Conference and Friends United Meeting.

A seeker of truth all his life, Hugh came from a family that combined science and religion, with high expectations that he lead a life of service to others. Hugh pondered deeply the relationship of the authority of individual experience with the conviction that truth resides in community, always on guard against the human tendency toward self-deception. Hugh's reading of the young George Fox's relationship with his family focused on love and rebellion—a fitting description of tendencies in Hugh himself. Toward the end of his life, he spoke personally about the meaning of Jesus for early Quakers, emphasizing his ability to bring grace and solace to those burdened by efforts to redress the world's ills. The twinkle in Hugh's eye, for which he is remembered by so many, suggests that he may have experienced this grace all along.

Hugh had a lifelong love of the outdoors, and often took his family on camping and canoeing trips to the wilds of Canada and New England. Squam Lake in New Hampshire was a multi-generational extended-family retreat, where Hugh could recharge with two of his favorite pastimes, boating and birding.

Hugh was a cherished member of Clear Creek Meeting in Richmond, Indiana, from 1953 to 1991. There, he was active in many ministries of the Meeting. From 1991 to 2005 he was part of Friends Meeting at Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he had been active as a student in his college years, and where he and Sirkka served together as Resident Friends for four years. He was a member of Chappaqua Meeting from 2005 to 2021, where he is remembered for his gifts in teaching and for the weightiness that he brought to the life of that community.

CHAPPAQUA FRIENDS MEETING
NEW YORK YEARLY MEETING

Richard Hunt Downing Bullock Jr.
1940 – 2022

Richard H. D. Bullock Jr. died peacefully Saturday morning, September 17, 2022, at 8:15, in Mount Desert Island Hospital, Bar Harbor, Maine, his wife Carol and his brother Watson at his side. He suffered from advanced Parkinson's disease and vascular dementia and died of terminal delirium. During his last days, three generations of family and friends spent precious time at his bedside. So much love surrounded him. In the end, angels carried him home.

He was born on November 1, 1940, in Jersey City, NJ, the son of Richard H. D. Bullock Sr. and Antoinette B. Shallcross. His younger brother, Watson Shallcross Bullock, was born February 4, 1945. The family lived at Skytop and Swiftwater, Pennsylvania, where Rich attended Pocono Township Schools. Rich's grandfather was John Griscom Bullock, a well-known photographer from the Photo-Secessionist movement that encouraged the recognition of photography as an art form. Taking inspiration from his grandfather, Rich had a particularly keen eye when he was behind a camera and built a personal darkroom as a teenager to practice his art. He was valedictorian of his high school class and was a U.S. Representative Page for Congressman Francis Walter, Democrat from Pennsylvania's 15th district.

Rich graduated from the University of Delaware with a bachelor's degree with distinction in mechanical engineering in 1962 and a master's degree in 1965. He began his lifelong career in the paper industry with Scott and later Kimberly Clark. He had a hand in every step of the paper-making process, traveling around the world to consult with international partners and build a network of more efficient paper mills.

He worked in Thailand for two years, and during his career he visited mills on six continents, where his gracious demeanor earned him the respect of his peers around the globe.

One of his employers at Scott Paper gave him a copy of Faith and Practice and reading it influenced him to become a member of Greenwich Friends Meeting in Greenwich, New Jersey, until he transferred to Acadia Friends Meeting in 2006.

In 2004, he met Carol Eileen Woolman at her cousin's wedding in Green Bay, Wisconsin. They married in a Quaker ceremony on July 1, 2006, under the care of Acadia Friends Meeting in Bar Harbor, with Carol's seven grandchildren as attendants. They spent their honeymoon in China and Tibet. Carol's family loved Rich from the start and he, them. He was a gentle, caring, generous, and kind man.

Rich and Carol enjoyed their homes in Bar Harbor and Greenwich, New Jersey, near Carol's hometown of Elmer, and her extended family and friends came to know Rich and value his company. Carol and Rich treasured any time they spent with his brother Watson and sister-in-law, Jane Kressler Bullock, of Silver Spring, Maryland. Rich and Carol loved the natural world, particularly moon rises, bird-watching, and photography. He was also an active member of Acadia Friends Meeting, where he served in many positions of leadership, including clerk of the meeting and clerk of Ministry and Nurturance, for many years. Making coffee for any event was his job and he was always the last one to leave the meeting after a gathering, making sure it was shipshape. He lived his life to be of service to others.

Rich is survived by his wife of 16 years, Carol; his brother Watson and sister-in-law Jane; stepdaughter Lara Horner and former husband Wayne Gray, and their children, Alicia, Olivia and Alex Gray; stepdaughter Amy vanMeteren and partner Joel Graber, and Amy's children, Helena Munson and Tzara Kane; stepson Christian Horner and fiancée Alexondra Lee, Christian's daughters, Jane and Ava Horner, and their mother Alex Kapp. He was predeceased by his stepson Mark Horner in 1998 and his wife, Sandra Leaf Bullock, in 2003.

A memorial service was planned under the care of Acadia Friends Meeting for Sunday, September 25th, at 11 a.m. at the Neighborhood House in Northeast Harbor, Maine. His ashes were interred at Laurelwood Cemetery, Stroudsburg, PA, on October 28, 2022.

A second memorial service was held at Greenwich Friends Meeting on October 29, 2022.

APPROVED BY ACADIA MONTHLY MEETING, APRIL 16, 2023

ENDORSED BY VASSALBORO QUARTERLY MEETING, APRIL 22, 2023

Clarence Burley
March 8, 1927 – March 16, 2022

Clarence Burley, age 95, passed on March 16, 2022, at his daughter's home in Spencer, Massachusetts. He was predeceased by his wife of 30 years, Patricia, and earlier by two brothers, Keith and Walter. He leaves behind two daughters, Mary Jane and Margaret Mary. He is also survived by two grandchildren and any number of cousins and friends.

He was born March 8, 1927, in Miami, Florida, the son of Clarence A. M. Burley and Helen M. Burley, who divided their time between Florida and Massachusetts. A 1944 graduate of North Brookfield High School, he attended the then Massachusetts State College at Amherst until entering the Army in 1945. He served in the occupation of Japan as a librarian and instructor in the Army Education Program, returning to college to graduate from the new University of Massachusetts in 1949.

Clarence's professional employment included the Mechanics National Bank of Worcester, retiring in 1989 as Vice President, Corporate Trust Officer, and Secretary. He then worked part-time as an Interpreter at Old Sturbridge Village. Meanwhile, he served for 25 years as lector at St. Peter's Church in Worcester.

The Spirit next led him to join the Worcester Friends Meeting, where he became a devout and conscientious member. He served as clerk, and was a vital member of several committees, including Ministry and Counsel. He was also an active participant in Southeast Quarterly Meeting (formally Rhode Island Smithfield) and New England Yearly Meeting, serving on many committees.

Clarence had a quiet voice, but when he rose to speak everyone listened attentively. We knew he would be sharing profound insights based on well-grounded conviction from a life lived fully and authentically. His words were always wise and sincere, his demeanor earnest and open.

Some of Clarence's strong appeal derived from deep and wide spiritual preparation. He spent hours daily in reading, prayer, and attending worship services of diverse denominations. Clarence had a lively curiosity, which drew him to become involved with a broad range of interests. He cherished scripture and poetry, and could quote either from memory. His broad and deep knowledge enriched our Meeting through his frequent offerings in worship or afterwards and his weekly contributions to our internal communications.

He had particular affinity for the poetry of John Greenleaf Whittier, American Quaker and abolitionist. Whittier's verses draw from nature, deep spirituality, and a commitment to social justice—all themes near and dear to Clarence's heart. For example:

*No longer forward nor behind.
I look in hope or fear;
But grateful, take the good I find,
The best of now and here.*

Clarence also lived courageously into the challenges of the testimonies. He could often be found on the streets or courtrooms to speak up for a variety of worthy peace and justice causes. He volunteered for Court Appointed Special Advocates, the Jewish Healthcare Hospice Program, and the Literacy Volunteers of Greater Worcester.

Following his concern for the environment, he testified before the legislative committee to consider banning phosphates in detergents. An avid kayaker, Clarence was a supporting member of the Greater Worcester Land Trust, the Opacum Land Trust, and the Friends of the Five Mile River. Among his other memberships were the Quaboag and the North Brookfield Historical Associations, the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, the Nathaniel Hawthorne Society, the Stop Continental Drift Society, the Shoeless Joe Jackson Society, the Friends of Lizzie Borden, the Thoreau Society, and the Thoreau Sauntering Society.

We will cherish memories of Clarence at Worcester Meeting's Market Day, where he often presided over the sale of sausages and hot dogs, while we all relished the camaraderie.

Perhaps most of all, we will miss his kindness. Clarence genuinely listened to all, regardless of age or circumstance. He could brighten any room with his warm smile and twinkling eyes. He offered to all he crossed paths with a gentle way of being one with the inner light. Clarence would slip poems into pockets to show his love, and sometimes poetry books that he thought would be appreciated. He was steady, loving, and witty in the way that only the wisest can be. He greeted us with an open smile, kissable soft cheeks, and clear eyes each and every time. His heart was warm and tender like no other. What a man, what a gift, what a love! Cheers Mr. Burley, cheers.

WORCESTER FRIENDS MEETING
SOUTHEAST QUARTERLY MEETING

Ian Dexter Chase
November 26, 1950 – February 11, 2022

Ian Dexter Chase was a member of Westerly Friends Meeting from 2017 to 2022, but in that relatively short time he contributed a great deal to the life of our meeting. He was a member of the Communications Committee and the Peace and Social Justice Committee. He helped to found and sustain the Meeting for Healing. As the host of the Westerly Friends Meeting's Facebook page, he regularly contributed inspirational messages. He served on several clearness committees, was a frequent participant in the Friendly Discussions series, and regularly attended worship services.

When Ian shared vocal ministry in meeting for worship, what he said was hopeful and encouraging. In personal conversations or group discussions, you got the feeling that Ian was really listening to you, and when he responded to what had been said, you knew he had understood what you were saying. He had

a warm smile and a cheerful laugh that invited friendship. After spending some time with Ian, you went away feeling better for having been with him.

Ian was born on November 26, 1950, and passed away on February 11, 2022. After graduating from North Kingston, Rhode Island, High School, he served in the Coast Guard during the Vietnam War. After he left the military, he enrolled in the Newport Hospital School of Nursing and became a registered nurse. He worked in the emergency departments and intensive care units of a number of hospitals, including Westerly Hospital. It was there that he met a fellow nurse named Judith Hindle. They married and created a blended family of 6 shared children. Over the years, Ian and Judith's family grew to include 13 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren, as well as many nephews and nieces.

Ian loved his family and enjoyed spending time with them while camping and traveling, especially in the Southwest. He also enjoyed pursuing varied interests such as painting, woodworking, gardening, and yard projects. He found joy being near, on, or in the ocean. He swam in the frigid waters of the Arctic Circle and the balmy waters of the Florida Keys. Drawing upon his experience in the Coast Guard, he served as a crew member on the University of Rhode Island's research vessel *Endeavor*. He lived a life filled with service to others, devotion to his family and friends, adventure, and—much to his family's delight—lighthearted bantering and occasional mischievous antics.

Ian also faced physical challenges which can only be described as severe. He had to retire early from his nursing career when he was faced with a medical condition that necessitated amputating his leg. He dealt for years with cancer, the disease which eventually took his life, far too soon. He gradually lost most of his sight to retinal disease. Ian once told a Friend that he blamed the time he spent in Vietnam for many of his health problems, saying he all but “bathed every day in Agent Orange” while he was there.

Although he openly acknowledged some dark days following the amputation of his leg and while dealing with chronic illnesses, he did not surrender to bitterness or despondency. Despite contending with his own serious health issues, Ian encouraged others in the Meeting for Healing group to “Expect Healing!” Wounded healers are people whose painful experiences enable them to help others. While he never referred to himself by this term, it came to mind for a group of Friends who were sharing their memories of Ian as an appropriate way to describe him. He continued to enjoy life by taking trips with Judith and their large dog in a pop-up camper. Once they travelled to Florida, where Ian sat on the edge of a dock. As he said later, “I enjoyed dangling my feet in the cool water.” In another trip to Florida, Ian was able to go swimming. As Judith said of that experience, “It was such a blessing to see him swimming free of the limitations he faced on land.” He continued to paint even after he had lost most of his vision. Such simple pleasures, but ones that meant so much to Ian and said so much about him.

In his letter applying for membership at Westerly Friends Meeting, Ian wrote the following:

I have had many ups and downs in my life. I can testify to the power of prayer and the spirit that I am here. I was always a believer in a God or Divine spirit that sustains us all. After my illness, I have felt those things more deeply, and closer to those promptings to follow a path that brought me closer to that of the spirit.

From a deep faith born in part out of suffering, Ian Dexter Chase faced the world with a genuine smile and authentic cheerfulness. He taught Westerly Friends much about living fully no matter what life presents to us, just by being himself and enjoying what he was able to do. A deeply spiritual person who quietly inspired many of us by his presence, Ian showed us what it means “to follow a path that” brings us “closer to that of the spirit.”

APPROVED BY WESTERLY MONTHLY MEETING, DECEMBER 11, 2022

APPROVED BY SOUTHEAST QUARTERLY MEETING, MARCH 26, 2023

Emily Schuder Chasse
June 10, 1953 – February 3, 2023

Our beautiful Friend Emily Schuder Chasse passed peacefully from this life on February 3, 2023, after a long illness.

A loving celebration of her life was held at Hartford Monthly Meeting on February 18, 2023, with many family, Friends, friends, and colleagues present.

Emily first attended Quaker meeting in Ames, Iowa, with her family when she was 13 years old. She and her lifelong partner, Bill Chasse, were married under the care of Hartford Monthly Meeting on August 30, 1980, and began regularly attending Hartford Meeting at that time. They raised their daughter, Sarah, in Meeting and were all an integral part of our community.

The values instilled in Emily from an early age carried her throughout her life. She truly “walked cheerfully over the earth, seeking that of God” in everyone she met. Her cheerfulness, inclusive nature, and warm heart touched many during her life, both in our Quaker community and well beyond. She was often the first to greet a newcomer to eeting, and with that radiant smile she made visitors welcome.

While humble and gentle, Emily was a determined force and fiercely independent. She acted on her Quaker values through her tireless commitment to social justice work. She spent years of volunteering at Mercy Housing Shelter, often accompanied by her daughter. She advocated for peace and women’s rights through marches and protests, and participated in the Alternatives to Violence Project through hours of service in the prisons. She was an active participant in West Hartford’s peace activist group. A weekly peace vigil is held in the center of town every Saturday, and most Saturdays would find Emily there standing up for what she so strongly believed. She was devoted to social justice work and righting wrongs.

Her determination and independence were also demonstrated in how she persevered through years of having Multiple Sclerosis. Having been diagnosed as a young adult, Emily was determined not to let her illness interfere with the full life she was to lead. Through many struggles, trials of medications and treatments, Emily persevered with a radiant positivity that was an example to all who knew her. She was thrilled to be able to give birth to her daughter, and in later life, to become a loving grandmother to Eli and Emma. She never let her illness interfere with the good works she accomplished throughout her life. She truly let her Light shine through it all.

Emily was a valued member of Hartford Monthly Meeting in Hartford, Connecticut. She spent the major part of her career as a reference librarian at Central Connecticut State University, where she helped numerous faculty, staff, and students with research techniques and information, while always bringing her Quaker values with her as she touched so many in that community. She brought the knowledge from her professional life as a librarian to the Meeting through her more than 30 years as HMM’s librarian. During this time Emily helped develop an extraordinary collection of Quaker books spanning topics of Quaker history, Quaker values, Quaker spirituality, and social justice topics. Emily started her career as a children’s librarian and she brought those skills to our Meeting as well. She expanded our collection of children’s books. She was an extraordinary storyteller and brought that gift to our First Day School as well as to adult programming. We will always cherish her Christmas Eve telling of *The Gift of the Magi*. Through her storytelling and knowledge of literature, she instilled the love of reading in so many.

Emily was an avid reader, book-group member, and Scrabble player. Before she retired, she wrote and published a book, *Telling Tales*, to help educators and others learn the art of storytelling.

Emily leaves so many Friends, friends, and devoted family members. Her life was truly an example to us all. The Hartford community greatly misses her presence. Let us all continue our good works as a tribute to a Quaker life well lived.

HARTFORD MONTHLY MEETING, MARCH 19, 2023

CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING, MAY 7, 2023

Jan Walker Church
August 9, 1936 – August 25, 2021

Jan Walker Church was born August 9, 1936, and raised happily in Durham, New Hampshire.

She enrolled at the University of New Hampshire and completed her master's in education at Harvard in 1959. Jan began her long and enriching teaching career in a Hanover, New Hampshire, elementary school. She and her sister Gail traveled to France for a 70-day camping trip across Europe, driving in a small Renault sedan that she bought upon landing in Paris.

In 1962 Jan married Dick Church, who was her devoted husband of 52 years until his passing May 30, 2014. They had five beloved children. In 1964 Jim was born and they soon landed in Sitka, Alaska, where they spent three years in the mountainous maritime region. Their second child, Suzanne, was born in Alaska in 1966. In 1968 the family set a longtime anchor in Plymouth, New Hampshire, where Jan gave birth to their third child, John, in that same year. The greatest sorrow of their lives was the loss of John, who died February 7, 1983, at age 14 from embryonic rhabdomyosarcoma (RMS) of the hip, metastatic to his lungs.

In 1969 the family began their love affair with Mount Desert Island; they spent many cherished summers on Echo Lake, where Dick's parents had a cottage called Camp Hope. Stephanie was born in 1971 and their youngest, Jeff, was born in 1978. They enjoyed multiple cross-country trips in their VW bus to Colorado, Banff, Canadian Rockies, and the Pacific Northwest. Jan helped foster a love for cross-country skiing, taking her family to Waterville Valley and across New England to events.

After a hiatus, Jan went back to work in 1975, teaching English at Plymouth High School. Her grown students still recall the laughter and enthusiasm in her classrooms and the influence she had on their lives. She and Dick created a lifelong network of friends in Plymouth, New Hampshire. Why did they move to Maine? Camp Hope was a huge draw, but they hoped the change would help usher them past the pain of losing their third child. It may never have done that, but they loved living year-round on the island and passed that everlasting love on to their children and grandchildren.

Jan taught English at Mount Desert Elementary School from 1987 to 1998. She continued traveling to see new places and old friends, making trips to the desert Southwest, Austria, London, Guatemala, and Bolivia. In 1999 Jan and Dick joined Acadia Friends Meeting, where they were drawn to spiritual guidance with the absence of doctrine, and Quaker values of peace, community, equality, and stewardship.

In retirement, Jan became actively involved in concerns that she felt passionate about, including the environment, climate change, and social justice. She gave generously to local and global causes, particularly the welfare of the Wabanaki people, and frequently traveled to Indian Island for meetings. She was always kind, but she said what she believed.

Jan had a decades-long love of visual art and revisited two mediums in later years she had studied in college—pottery making and watercolors—occasionally enjoying painting alongside grandchildren.

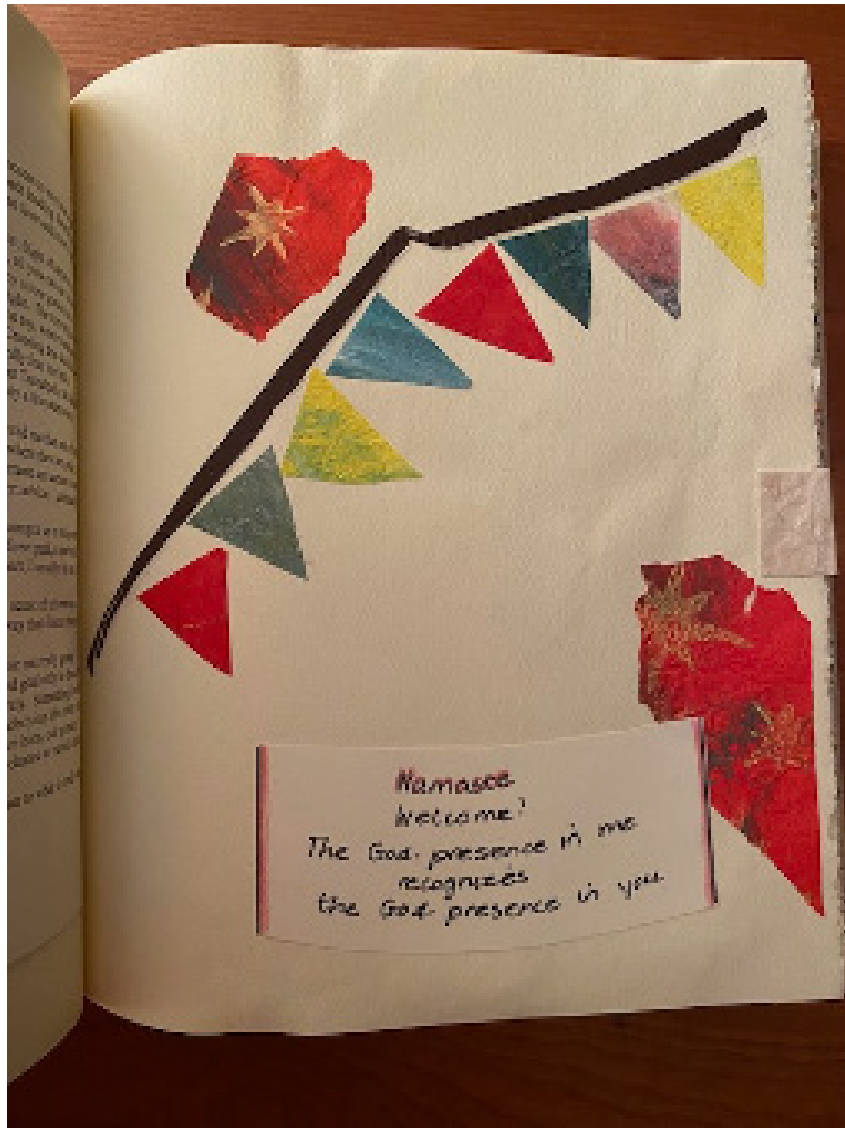
Jan held and tended many lifelong friendships. In the 2010s she went to class reunions with friends from grade school through college. At home, friends and family spent time with her in her yard, woods, and gardens, absorbing her subtle curriculum of the landscape. She lived simply and with integrity. She spent her final weeks at home surrounded by her children, warmly welcoming calls from friends and neighbors, or sitting peacefully, holding hands and smiling.

Jan was thoughtful and intentional about her decision to let go of this life. Her eyesight and mind were starting to fail. She was determined to stop eating and drinking and confided her intention to family and close friends. With her children and one grandchild, Jan came to meeting one last time to share her clear leading about her death. Her decision was a testimony of her faith, and allowed the meeting and Jan an opportunity to lovingly say goodbye.

She said she talked with her son John each night, looking at his picture, before going upstairs to bed. She anticipated a blessed reunion. Clarity and love shone in her radiant face at the end.

A memorial meeting under the care of Acadia Friends was held Sunday, September 5, 2021, at Neighborhood House, Northeast Harbor, Maine. Jan was predeceased by her husband, Richard Church, May 30, 2014; by their son John, February 7, 1983; and by her daughter-in-law, Jim's wife Aimee Beal Church, June 15, 2017. She is survived by her four children and five grandchildren.

This minute was prepared by Acadia Friends Meeting member Carol Woolman from her experience of Jan, with liberal use of Jan's obituary by her family and notes from Carole Beal.



The above illustration is a copy of one of Jan's journal entries. Her art, the written message, the colorful prayer flags, speak to her inclusive faith and her creative and lively sense of design.

APPROVED BY ACADIA MONTHLY MEETING, APRIL 16, 2023

ENDORSED BY VASSALBORO QUARTERLY MEETING, APRIL 22, 2023

Steven John Correia
January 25, 1957 – January 14, 2022

When Steven Correia found something in life that he loved—whether a friend, food, or tradition—he frequently took it on for life. He loved his extended family and lived his entire life near them in southeastern Massachusetts. He loved his work as a fisheries biologist for the state's Division of Marine Fisheries. More than anything, Steve loved his wife June, his daughters Larissa and Aliza, his son-in-law John, and his two grandsons, Henry and Charlie, who filled him with absolute pride and delight.

Steve and June met the day before his high school graduation and married soon after college in 1979. She was not only his life companion, she was his gentle, guiding light. They started attending New Bedford

Meeting in 1985. Steve became clerk and was committed to keeping the small meeting open. June, however, wanted more children in First Day School for their young daughters and started attending Westport Meeting in 1988. Wanting to worship with his family, he soon joined them. They officially transferred their memberships in 1993. The Correia family quickly became vital, loved Friends in our meeting community.

Steve served on a number of committees at Westport Meeting, especially Ministry and Counsel. He taught First Day School in a corner of the old book shed, memorably making Old Testament stories fascinating to elementary-school-aged children. He was active in the life of Sandwich Quarter and for decades attended Annual Sessions. Steve's extensive knowledge of early Friends and Friends' process of discernment informed worship and meetings for business. We are grateful for his faithful presence and his grounded spoken messages and concerns.

Steve delighted in young people. He volunteered on staff in Junior Yearly Meeting, both at Sessions and on weekend retreats. He had a particular knack for meaningfully connecting to the more active children who found it hard to sit in Program. He patiently taught dozens of JYM'ers how to make knotted sailor bracelets, and loved when they returned a month or year later to show him that they were still wearing theirs (however worn out). He was the original creator of JYM Ball—a more nuanced version of dodgeball—that is still an integral, beloved game in NEYM's youth programs.

For us, his creativity and humor were on full display in his writing, particularly his plays. Initially started as a way to include young people in the Christmas Eve program, they became the highlights of our annual Advent Potlucks. He included current events and culture to create new versions of the Christmas Story that were both clever and profound. His parody hymns, and numerous details like the census-taker's shredder, the returning characters Lenny and George, the ever-whining sheep, and the Quaker Oats box with a dangling star, wove insight and laughter into our meeting fellowship.

He was a voracious reader and passionate learner on many subjects, particularly biology, ecology, history, and all things Quaker. He loved listening to traditional, folk, and Shaker music, and enjoyed singing with others. He learned to play a number of string instruments well, though he rarely performed for anyone beyond his family and close friends—except with local ukelele groups in later life. He regularly encouraged our meeting and JYM to sing more.

Steve was a committed and highly respected scientist who spent most of his career dedicated to preserving marine life. He believed the scientific method was applicable to much of life. He devised a way to protect his prized fig tree from the harsh New England winters and religiously followed it. He believed better choices in the minor leagues could produce a winning Red Sox season, and that there was one way to pull a proper shot of espresso. He believed in the fruits of Friends' waiting worship if centered and covered.

June's debilitating, 20-year illness and too-early death from Multiple Systems Atrophy was a profound struggle and loss. His inability to protect her from pain and prevent her decline was heartbreaking and frustrated him deeply, not only as a spouse but also as a biologist. This same fierce love and yearning to protect from harm extended to his daughters and, especially, to his grandsons.

Steve faced his own diagnosis with a mixture of sadness and scientific curiosity. He dove into the latest research and determinedly agreed to trials and alternative treatments that slowed the growth of his brain cancer. His courage to accept treatments and eventually, years later, his graceful courage to end them when no longer effective, were both grounded in science and in his love for his family.

We miss his humor, grounded presence, his extensive knowledge on a wide variety of subjects—and his willingness to debate the finer points of them. We miss his friendship. His too-early passing renewed our grief for June's death as well. Steve and his family's many years with us are woven, like a sailor's bracelet, into the life and spirit of our hearts, the meeting, and the wider circle of Friends. We treasure our memories and hold deep gratitude that he and June chose us as their spiritual home.

WESTPORT MONTHLY MEETING OF FRIENDS, MAY 21, 2023

SANDWICH MONTHLY MEETING, MAY 23, 2023

Frances Hyde Crowe
March 15, 1919 – August 27, 2019

Frances Lorena Hyde Crowe died at her home in Northampton, MA, on August 27, 2019, at the age of 100. She was born March 15, 1919, in Carthage, Missouri, the second daughter of Chauncey William Hyde, who owned a plumbing and heating business and a flower shop, and Anna (Heidlage) Hyde, a homemaker.

She grew up in a time of global and national turmoil, which caused her to question social structures and the beliefs that underlay them. Her parents were devout Catholics and solid members of their community, but the social, class, and racial divides that existed during her childhood affected her family as well. These structures, her parents' values, and her innate opposition to war and killing, formed the foundation for Frances's long life of activism.

While attending Syracuse University, Frances joined a discernment group at the St. Thomas More House led by a Catholic priest, who opened himself to the group's questioning. She "felt the questions of the discernment group touch [her] conscience" and she left the Catholic church soon after. While attending those sessions she met Tom Crowe, a medical student at Syracuse. Though they felt a connection, World War II separated them for three years as Tom, who was then a physician, joined the Army, and Frances moved to New York to find jobs in workforce management, then called industrial psychology. During this time she began to question the war and, by the end of the war, all wars.

When Tom returned, they rekindled their relationship and married on May 16, 1945. Frances points to the bombing of Hiroshima, a few months after their marriage, as a major turning point in her life. Already opposed to war, the violence of the attacks on Hiroshima and then Nagasaki crystallized a resolve to "stop this madness." Tom shared this resolve, and together they embraced nonviolence and embarked on their new life intent on making a difference.

From 1946 to 1952, the family grew with the births of their three children, Caltha, Jarlath, and Tom. The family moved to Northampton in 1951 so their son Jarlath could attend the Clarke School for the Deaf, where oral education was provided. Frances and Tom shared a life of love, family, and activism for over 50 years until Tom's death in 1997.

Soon after arriving in Northampton, Frances and Tom began attending what was then Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly Meeting, with worship rotating among several towns and homes, including theirs. Tom formally joined the meeting in 1955. Frances had not been sure she was worthy of membership because her focus was so strongly on the peace and justice side of Quakerism. It was from traveling to a draft-counseling conference at Earlham College, where she encountered and witnessed the same spiritual life among Friends from evangelical and programmed meetings as she had in silent worship, that she had the revelation that she was in fact totally a Quaker and it was time to apply for membership. She became a member of the newly formed Mount Toby Meeting in 1967. In her later years, not wanting to use fossil fuels to drive so far, she transferred her membership to Northampton Meeting in 2017.

Frances was not only an active member of these meetings, but also a role model and mentor, as her living witness inspired countless F/friends to action, grounded in faith, on a variety of issues. When Frances spoke about her spiritual journey, she noted the importance of community when engaging in nonviolent activism, that with Spirit's guidance things sometimes happen that you don't expect. The support of her meeting and others helped her through challenging times. She said the more she took action, the more she found her soul. Everything she did was grounded by daily spiritual practices of sitting in silent worship and reading.

Frances was an avid reader, constantly keeping up to date on current events, ever seeking steps she could take to counter injustice and build peaceful solutions. To keep from descending into bitterness and cynicism, Frances would ask for a clearness committee to help her discern if she was following a true leading or a personal agenda. A vegetarian who preserved time for self care, and walking instead of driving to stay physically fit, Frances lived simply, every aspect of her life in keeping with her values. Reading and reflecting on the queries in Faith and Practice helped her to center down and strengthened her quality of worship.

If you had occasion to visit Frances, you would be welcomed by a bright red sign painted with white lettering on her front door asking: "Does Our Lifestyle Depend on War?" Frances' life embodied this ques-

tion as she constantly examined her own life under the bright beam of Spirit, ever seeking ways to weed out the seeds of war from her possessions, thoughts, or actions. She challenged us to look deeper for our own growing edges, figure out our next step—never with judgment, but inviting us to join in the sort of self reflection and discernment she held for herself.

Frances actively connected with that of God in everyone. Over the course of her long life, Frances's activism, grounded in Quaker faith, spanned peace, racial justice, environmental and economic justice, health care, the environment, and the climate crisis. She worked with many organizations along the way, focusing her life's work on peace education, stopping war, and eliminating nuclear power and nuclear weapons. In the 1970s she helped found Traprock Peace Center at Woolman Hill, and started offering nonviolence trainings. When she was arrested as part of the Clamshell Alliance while protesting the Seabrook nuclear power plant in New Hampshire, and was held for 2 weeks in an armory with hundreds of other activists from across the country, she experienced the enduring power of collective learning and community building. Later in life, Frances became a war-tax refuser, redirecting her tax dollars to victims of war and to peace groups.

Founding the Western Massachusetts AFSC Office: As part of her call to Quaker service, Frances was asked to serve on the Peace Committee of the New England Regional American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). The regional office in Cambridge would send speakers out to Frances, who set up speaking engagements for them at the local colleges. Over time this evolved into Frances starting the western Mass AFSC office in the basement of their home in Northampton in 1968. For over 30 years, Frances mentored interns and volunteers as they focused on ending wars—from Vietnam to Iraq—sanctions that harmed civilians and children, weapons production, nuclear power and weapons, homelessness, the death penalty, racism and more, while promoting peace and justice for all. Frances' educational events, film series, vigils and a range of creative actions, both legal and involving nonviolent civil disobedience, engaged and inspired a vibrant peace and justice community across western Massachusetts and beyond. Frances remained active with these efforts for decades after she retired from the AFSC in 1995. Frances was both the conscience of her Friends meeting, and a model of Quaker spirit and values for the wider community.

Frances was called to act both locally and globally. She was instrumental in establishing sanctuary for two Guatemalan men at Mt Toby Meeting in the 1980s. She traveled to Nicaragua with Witness for Peace, and was part of a Friends' delegation to China and Vietnam in the 1970s. She met with President Carter to persuade him against deploying nuclear Pershing missiles in Europe. Her work for divestment from South Africa resulted in UMass, being the first university in the US to vote to divest. Wherever she learned of injustice and war, she researched, educated and took action.

In the mid 1960s, when her two sons began talking about the draft, Frances decided to learn more by attending a draft-counseling training at the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO) in Philadelphia. She came home determined to set up draft-counseling sessions at her home, but at first no one showed up. So she tried a creative tactic, mimeographing fliers to hand out to hitchhikers. She'd drive around picking up young men as they traveled between local colleges in Northampton and Amherst. Driving slow and talking fast, Frances asked what they planned to do about the draft, and invited them to a meeting at her home the following day. This time, the room was packed.

Ultimately, Frances counseled over 1,000 young men, helping them obtain Conscientious Objector status, and find meaningful alternative service placements. Several of these men came to her memorial service to testify to the enduring difference she had made decades earlier at a critical time in their lives.

After hearing Amy Goodman on her program *Democracy Now!*, Frances implored her local public radio station to broadcast the program. When they declined, in 2002 Frances illegally set up a transmitter and antenna in her backyard and broadcast the program herself, until 2005 when WMUA finally agreed to broadcast it. Amy Goodman and Frances became friends and Amy came to UMass for a well attended public interview with Frances in celebration of Frances' 95th birthday.

Frances received wide recognition and many awards, but they never went to her head. When she was presented an honorary degree at UMass, Frances wore a colorful hand painted T-shirt saying "Resist with Compassion" instead of formal dinner attire. When she spoke, knowing the trustees would be there, she urged the University to divest from fossil fuels. She never missed an opportunity.

When other means did not succeed in leveraging change, and her family responsibilities allowed, Frances escalated her activism to riskier levels. Frances was first arrested for nonviolent civil disobedience in 1972 at Westover Air Force Base, protesting the Vietnam war. Over the following 46 years, she was arrested countless times, with sentences ranging from community service up to as long as a month in jail. In 1984 she spent 30 days in federal prison for breaking into the Electric Boat shipyard in Rhode Island and spray painting “Thou Shalt Not Kill” on Trident nuclear submarine missile tubes. Jesse Jackson heard about it and picked her up when she was released. Over time she was jailed in every New England state, and beyond. Engaging in years of actions as part of the Shut it Down affinity group, Frances helped close the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant ahead of schedule. When possible, she worked to de-escalate the tensions inherent in legal processes, treating the police, court personnel and her jailers to her radiant smile as she looked to connect with that of God in them. Her faith, family, Friends Meeting and the mutual support of affinity group members sustained her in her activism. Her last arrest at age 98 for blocking construction of a gas pipeline through state forest land made international news. In solidarity with the poor, Frances never paid bail or fines. When asked how many times she had been arrested, Frances always replied: “Not enough!”

The same “you can do it” encouragement she gave to her deaf son Jarlath, she extended to activists, making success feel possible even against huge odds—and people stretched further because of her. Frances urged us to find our own callings and take action for change, encouraging everyone to: “Resist as much as you possibly can. Always be in trouble. It feels good!”

Frances modeled a Quaker life of integrity, living Love as a quest for justice. Her spiritual life, home life, community engagement, and activism were an inseparable whole. Many activists find balancing family and activism to be a challenge, but Frances modeled that balance. Frances’ love of her family radiated when she proudly shared updates about her three children and five grandchildren. Family always came first. She would prioritize a grandchild’s kindergarten graduation over attending a major protest action she had organized. Frances listened attentively, with her warm smile and twinkle in her eye, such that everyone she knew felt welcome, cared about and known. Her brilliant mind and memory were stunning—even at 100, she somehow kept track of myriad details not only about all of our lives, but also the names and activities of our children and families.

For her 100th birthday, Frances wanted an action instead of a party, so on March 15, 2019, over 300 people turned out for a parade down Main Street in Northampton to celebrate her long life. With Frances in the lead, a sea of friends and family carried protest signs honoring the lifetime of concerns Frances had fought for.

Spirit lived so strongly in her, her flame was a light ever on fire. Although Frances looked up at most of us, it was we who felt her stature. A consistent, determined, energetic, sprightly dynamo, Frances was a legend who lived her faith, inspiring countless others as she let her life speak. Modeling her belief in that of God in every person, she reached out fearlessly with equal love to those in power and those struggling. She enthusiastically helped everyone she met find their next steps forward with conscience. Many of us often still ask ourselves: *What would Frances do?*

NORTHAMPTON FRIENDS MEETING, OCTOBER 9, 2022

CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING, FEBRUARY 5, 2023

Paul Diamond
October 17, 1933 – September 9, 2022

Paul Diamond was a man for all seasons—a man who was very gifted, highly respected, and skilled in many areas. He was very tall and moved surely in his world. He knew how to listen, was kind, and shared with many his time and wisdom. He was a romantic who loved music. Paul was a birthright Quaker, born in Beckenham, Kent, England. His father’s family went back to William Penn. His parents were Howard Diamond and Elizabeth Deane. Howard was an accountant and Elizabeth was a school teacher until she married and had a family. Paul was the youngest of three sons. His brother John was an architect; his

brother Robert is an Emeritus Fellow at Christ's Church, Cambridge; and Paul chose to become an accountant, like his father.

Paul attended Quaker schools and graduated from Frensham Heights, a Quaker boarding school, in the early 1950s. At that time he decided to study accounting and had an apprenticeship in accounting for 2 or 3 years. In 1957, when he was 24 years old, he went to Lenz, Austria, to volunteer with the Friends Ambulance Unit. It was there he met Viki Ann Seitz. Viki was an American in her late teens, raised north of New York City, who had found her calling in music, both instrumental and vocal. She also had become interested in Quakers. Paul and Viki fell in love and knew they wanted a life together. But Paul had to return to England and Viki to the United States. After over a year of correspondence, Paul flew to California and they were married under the care of the Palo Alto Meeting on June 20, 1959.

After a few years in California they decided to move to England with their two very young children, Karen and Katie. They had no definite job plans. On the way they stopped in New York and Paul had an exploratory interview with the United Nations. They were in London for less than a year when they decided to return to the U.S.—London didn't suit them as a family. On the day before they left England, Paul received a wonderful letter from the United Nations offering him a position in the Secretariat, the administrative and organizational department of the UN, headed by the Secretary General. He started in 1964 in the Accounts Division and held the highest position of Accounts Director when he retired in 1998. He also worked closely with the IT department. In his 34 years at the UN Secretariat he served under five Secretaries General (U Thant to Kofi Annan). He accompanied them and other officers of the UN to many countries all over the world to promote the work of the UN and to assist and aid the negotiation of conflicts.

While he served at the UN, Paul and Viki and their family made their home on Long Island, New York, in the town of Westbury. Two more children, Jessi and Joshua, were born there. When Paul retired in 1998, he and Viki moved to Rockport, Maine. Paul became a valued and loved member of Midcoast Meeting and was welcomed as treasurer for a number of years. With his amazing financial skills and knowledge, the Meeting knew its finances were in good hands. He also served on Ministry & Counsel and was active in Meeting outreach and other activities. His thoughtfulness and Quaker discernment helped the Meeting find ways to move forward. During Paul's tenure as Treasurer, Midcoast Meeting, as a member of the Maine Council of Churches, decided to make a loan to the Penobscot Tribe at Pleasant Point. The Tribe wanted to build housing for its retired members. Midcoast Meeting was the first member of the Council of Churches to offer a loan, and the Meeting was asked by the Tribe to present the check in person at Pleasant Point. Paul and the clerk of the Meeting did so, and the Tribe responded with a big celebration. Other churches then followed with financial support and the Tribe was able to move forward with its plans.

After living in Rockport for 13 years, Paul and Viki decided to return to California to be closer to their 4 children. They lived there for 4 years, but their love for Maine drew them back east. They also realized that they wanted a new life in Maine, and made a successful move to The Highlands in Brunswick. Health issues also concerned them, and Viki died in 2020. During this time in Maine, Paul was not directly involved with Midcoast Meeting; their life was in Brunswick, some miles away. However, they did renew many friendships with Friends, who were happy to welcome them back. When Paul died, the family had a celebration of his life at The Highlands.

Paul will always be remembered as a devoted Quaker and a loving member whose belief in Quaker tenets and his caring concern for others contributed so much to the Meeting.

MIDCOAST MONTHLY MEETING, APPROVED MARCH 19, 2023

VASSALBORO QUARTERLY MEETING, APPROVED APRIL 22, 2023

Anne McKinne “Kiki” Heitkamp Eglinton
March 24, 1928 – August 13, 2021

Kiki’s life speaks to her deep commitment to and passion for service to others.

Known to all as Kiki, Anne McKinne Heitkamp Eglinton described herself as a woman with “a foot in both the North and the South.” This sensibility was rooted in the rich tales told about her ancestors from both regions and from her own lived experiences. She was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, later moved to Short Hills, New Jersey, and then to New York City. She spent her summers at her family’s South Carolina tree farm, Melrose, a property that as an adult she actively managed for over 20 years. Her great esteem for her family’s history and her own experiences of living in both the North and the South deepened her understanding and compassion for the complexity of people’s values.

Early influences on Kiki’s path to Quakerism can be found in her accounts of her high-school education at the progressive Cherry Lawn School in Connecticut. Cherry Lawn was a place where she was able to participate in self-governance and in committee work through which students and staff shaped their shared community.

While the earliest seeds for her Quaker faith might have been sown at Cherry Lawn, it was her years at Oberlin College where Quaker faith and practice became a vital part of Kiki’s life. There she was introduced to Quakerism by a faculty member and began to attend Oberlin Friends Meeting. As she learned more about Quakerism, she was particularly drawn to Friends’ long tradition of social action and witnessing for peace.

It was at Oberlin as well that Kiki expanded her lifelong interest in making positive change for her community. She served on the student council for all four years, and was instrumental in creating the first student co-op dormitory on campus. Kiki’s legacy remains today: the expanded co-op dorms are a hallmark of student life at Oberlin. Kiki remained a loyal Oberlin alumna, serving on the Alumni Council, as class president, and as regional coordinator for Westchester County and southern Connecticut alumni activities. Throughout her life, she also encouraged many young people in her circles to apply to the college.

Following her junior year, Kiki participated in an American Friends Service Committee international work camp program in Europe, an opportunity for a new adventure combining service and foreign travel. This turned out to be a life-changing experience, as she discovered that Quakerism was both her social action and her spiritual home. It was also where she met her future husband, Art Wolf, who also was drawn to Quaker faith and practice. Kiki and Art were married in 1951 on the day that Kiki graduated from Oberlin.

After their wedding, Kiki and Art moved to Cleveland to pursue graduate degrees at Case Western Reserve University. Art was completing his medical degree, while Kiki worked toward her masters in social work administration. In Cleveland they attended Cleveland Friends Meeting and also started their family; their son, Jamie, was born in 1953.

In 1956 Kiki, Art, and Jamie moved to the Hartford area so Art could start his residency at Hartford Hospital. It was then that they joined the Hartford Meeting community. Hartford Monthly Meeting remained Kiki’s spiritual home and social community for the rest of her life, with the exception of the time she lived in Pelham, NY, with her then-husband, Douglas Eglinton, and attended Scarsdale Friends Meeting. During her years in Pelham, she frequently returned to Hartford Meeting for worship and friendship.

Through Hartford Meeting, Kiki lived out her dedication to the Quaker commitment of service to community, within the Meeting and beyond. Among other contributions to the Meeting, she served on the Pastoral Care Committee and revised and expanded the Meeting’s handbook. Kiki embodied Friends’ values of pastoral care. She was attuned to people’s needs, and is remembered for responding to Friends’ personal issues—big and small—with kindness, compassion, and practicality. Within the Hartford Meeting community, Kiki formed many friendships which represented an important extension of her Quaker experience and a continuing source of pleasure and strength. These included the knitting group and the Quaker women’s book club, which continued to meet for many years, during which its members supported each other through all the major phases and changes that their lives brought.

As a young mother with a growing family following the births of Anne and Tim, Kiki was eager to continue her involvement in community service and participated in a range of volunteer activities. She joined the League of Women Voters in Newington and eventually became the town's League president. As a result of this work, she was appointed to the board of directors of several social agencies, including the Women's League Day Care Center and the Family Service Society, for which she served two years as president, and she was appointed as a West Hartford representative to the Capitol Region Planning Agency.

In 1966, prior to moving to West Hartford, Kiki and husband Art sought to live their Quaker values and support the civil rights struggles of the time by selling their Newington home to a Black family as a step toward integrating the neighborhood. Unfortunately, the neighbors were not supportive and the family eventually moved out. In her later life, Kiki reflected that people need more than good intentions to effect such large social changes.

In 1972, at the age of 44, following her divorce from Art Wolf, Kiki began her professional career in social services. At the time she was serving as the president of the board of directors of the Family Service Society in Hartford. With the retirement of the Society's executive director, she was asked to serve as the interim director and eventually was hired as the agency's executive director, a position she held until 1980 when she moved with her second husband, Douglas Eglinton, to Pelham, New York. Kiki embraced the challenges of leading an agency with a range of services and personnel, as well as the eventual merger in 1980 of the Family Service Society with Child and Family Services.

With her relocation to Pelham, Kiki started a new chapter in her social-service career. She served for five years as the executive director of the 7,000-member New York City Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, advocating for members' professional and legislative concerns. Kiki was eager, however, to get back to her real passion, working with a direct-practice agency. In 1985 she was appointed as the executive director of Family Service of Westchester, an agency that provided many similar services to Hartford's Family Service Society. During this time, she was active at the local, state, and national levels of the family service movement, serving as a board member of Family Service America; president of the N.Y. State Association of Family Service Agencies; and as a peer reviewer for the Council on Accreditation for Services to Families and Children. Following her retirement in 1993, Kiki reflected that she was glad for her 23 years of a very challenging and very rewarding professional life.

In 2006, Kiki moved to the Seabury Retirement Community, where she enjoyed participating in a variety of Seabury committees and the Adult Learning Program classes, especially the memoir-writing class. In 2015, following a stroke, she moved to Seabury's skilled nursing facility. Despite her health challenges and limited mobility, Kiki was an inspiration to those who knew her, maintaining a positive spirit and keen sense of humor, and actively following current events. She continued her connections with Hartford Meeting as part of a Meeting Creative Listening group and a Quaker book group. She enjoyed having many Hartford Meeting visitors and having the current Meeting newsletter read to her. While she could no longer "walk cheerfully" in these years, she could "cheerfully" talk to anyone.

Kiki's lifelong dedication to social service and activism responds to the Friends' Query on Social Responsibility:

Do you respect the worth of every human being as a child of God? Do you uphold the right of all persons to justice and human dignity? Do you endeavor to create political, social, and economic institutions which will sustain and enrich the life of all? Do you fulfill all civic obligations which are not contrary to divine leadings? Do you give spiritual and material support to those who suffer for conscience's sake?

APPROVED BY HARTFORD MONTHLY MEETING, OCTOBER 16, 2022

APPROVED BY CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING, FEBRUARY 5, 2023.

Penelope Jackim
June 5, 1930 – March 5, 2022

Friend Penelope “Penny” Wolcott Jackim, 91, passed away peacefully at home in Wakefield, Rhode Island, on March 5, 2022. Penny was born in Bronxville, New York, to Wallace Wolcott and Elizabeth Tyler Wolcott, of Scarsdale. She resided in several states in the northeastern U.S. (Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Massachusetts), and she finally alighted in Rhode Island in 1964. A single parent for many years, Penny is survived by her two children, Clifford Jackim and Robin Jackim Spachman; Robin’s husband, Roger Spachman of Rhode Island; and her older brother, Roger Wolcott of Maryland.

Penny attended Swarthmore College for a short period of time and earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Pratt Institute in 1956. She later studied calligraphy at the University of Massachusetts in Dartmouth. Her talent and skills in art were varied and included drawing and painting in watercolor and other media, as well as graphic design.

Penny, like Picasso, went through different art periods. Early on, she focused on modern art pieces that reflected her own energy and creativity. Later, she produced many watercolor paintings in a more traditional style and expanded her art with calligraphy and printmaking. She was recognized by her peers and became an active member of the Rhode Island Watercolor Society, the Wickford Art Association, and Massachusetts Scribes. She found time to teach painting and calligraphy, and frequently exhibited her artwork in juried shows in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. While her artwork and teaching kept Penny busy, in the 1980s Penny started the company Ahimsa Graphics. She used the Sanskrit word Ahimsa, meaning “to do no harm,” to produce and sell designs that promoted nonviolence in all aspects of life. Her art was printed on T-shirts, note cards, and tote bags available in stores nationwide and at many events and crafts fairs.

Participants in the 2022 New England Yearly Meeting told about how they cherished her art as seen on T-shirts, cards, and posters at the annual conference. Some of the comments were as follows:

Penny was always generous with her art! She would quickly agree to design a card or a wedding certificate for friends and neighbors.

NEYM Friends recall enjoying her teaching during summer workshops at Bowdoin College. She was making incredibly fluid artwork and I always loved to see her at work. Her life and art were a blessing to all of us!

I’ve missed Penny’s presence at Sessions and the ability to purchase her artwork, cards, and T-shirts, which were a highlight of my NEYM time.

Penny was not limited to speaking her mind through art. She was also active in many social-justice causes. She supported organizations that care for the environment, and spoke out to promote equality and equity in women’s issues, civil rights, antiracism, and respect for Native Americans. She attended many conferences and events in an effort to be part of the progress towards peace and nonviolence. She was a proud member of the “Raging Grannies,” an international group that uses creative and humorous demonstrations, including music, to provide political education. She involved her friends and colleagues at the Sandywood artist colony in Tiverton in many of her social causes into her late 80s, when she moved into her daughter Robin’s home.

As a Quaker, Penny was a deeply spiritual being who was open to Eastern thought as well as activism. A member of Providence Monthly Meeting, Penny was a leader in the Peace and Social Action Committee. She also edited the meeting newsletter and was seen helping out at a variety of tasks at many meeting events. As an organized and energetic person, she knew what had to be done and moved to get it accomplished. She was not a big person, but her voice was heard and her ideas were powerful.

Longtime members of the Friends Meeting in Providence were eager to share their thoughts about Penny:

She was a loyal friend. (She and I were friends for 45–50 years.) She was supportive, not only to me, but to [my family]. She was modest and quiet spoken, with a gentle sense of humor. I already miss her.

Penny was beloved—quirky, creative, and devoted to issues of injustice and protection of the earth and all beings. Her ministry was always profound—often reminding us of this one earth that we share and are responsible for and of those living without the benefit of education or privilege, and challenging us to be our best selves.

I remember her being part of holiday craft fairs at the meetinghouse. I still have a few of her cards. Thanks for this chance to reflect on an inspiring woman. To me, Penny was someone who lived her life as close to her moral compass as she could. She was an entrepreneur of her art, which always carried a message of peace. She reminded us to look beyond our Euro-centric culture at a time when that was unthought of. She worked hard at living Friends testimonies by speaking out against war and working for peace in the ways she moved through each day. Her messages in meeting often shared her readings and interactions with peace activists.

Penny's artwork was a testament to her creative spirit and her deepest values. Those of us who were blessed to know her recall her ability to use humor to bring us back into unity and leave the clouds behind. It is this quirky humor and her ability to put all her efforts into contributing to a better, non-violent world that we celebrate at this time of her passing. While we miss her presence and her voice, Penny's Light is within our hearts and minds.

PROVIDENCE MONTHLY MEETING
SOUTHEAST QUARTERLY MEETING

Allen David McNab
January 26, 1941 – December 21, 2022

Late in 2022 we lost a valued member of Providence Monthly Meeting, Dave McNab. Dave had been a member of Meeting for decades and served on Communications and Ministry and Counsel committees. Despite the long distance from his home in Kingston, Rhode Island, he attended Meeting for Worship faithfully, and he was always a model of a cheerful and friendly presence while advocating for peace and social justice. When needed, he would provide rides for Friends living in the southern part of Rhode Island.

Dave graduated from Belmont, Massachusetts, High School and Bates College (Lewiston, Maine), and he received a master's degree in chemistry from the University of Alaska (Fairbanks). He taught at Moses Brown School for 35 years, initially science and then technology/computers. He was passionate about his support of LGBTQ youth, and for many years he worked for PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) and YouthPride.

The words of family, F/friends, colleagues, and students provide the best sense of Dave as a person:

At the heavy brown door of Ross House entrance stands a beefy man. He has chubbiness and charisma. Long, gray hair tied at the back of his head gives him a hippie look. His glasses let me see big rolling eyes that seem synchronized with each sentence that comes out of his mouth lost in the forest of hairs that one would call mustache and beard.

Dave McNab was one of the first Friends I met at Providence Monthly Meeting. His cheerful greeting at the front door made me feel welcome right away. He was always ready to regale us with a story from his years at Moses Brown and it was clear that his career there had been a joyful experience. He made our time at the meetinghouse a joyful experience as well. The Light Within him was always visible. His wise and peaceful voice was an anchor whenever decisions were difficult. We will miss him, but his spirit will stay with us!

Our daughter marched to a “different drummer” a little too often in middle school, putting her in the position of being teased or at least not appreciated. With Dave McNab as her teacher, however, all of a sudden she had reason to be excited about getting ready for school in the morning, as he was over-seeing her project of making a traditional dulcimer. They may have started from a kit, but it was real and it played in key, and it made her year. I’m sure she was not the only student whose happiness and success could be attributed to Dave, with his easy warmth, sense of sympathy, and humor.

Dave’s care and affection for every student came through each day on campus, and certainly on the countless team trips in which he participated. Dave truly enjoyed his time at Moses Brown and will be remembered for regaling everyone with his stories.

One of my favorite neighbors from South Kingstown! Dave, you were one in a million. From numerous conversations we’ve had you always found a way to leave the discussion with me learning at least one fact. Wisdom and kindness like yours is becoming harder to find.

He was a true advocate for his students and a proud grandfather when his grandson, Doug, entered 5th grade at Moses Brown.

Dave was a wonderful and welcoming guy ... Brilliant, kind, and interesting to speak with always. The world could use many more Daves and kids would be blessed to have someone like Dave as their teacher.

Whenever I made a foray to Middle School, Dave greeted me with unfailing good cheer and silly humor, and was always ready to help. I smile whenever I think of him.

Dave was an embodiment of cheerful kindness in Providence Meeting and a grounded presence in discernment.

Dave’s Quakerism was not limited to the redundancy of a slogan or a poster on a classroom wall. In his lab or classroom, during faculty meetings, in his daily interactions with others, he lived it, experimented with it, and shared it.

We loved that Dave always had engineering jokes for us

Dave was the kindest soul and most welcoming partner to work with. I recall his wisdom frequently and pass it along to younger colleagues often. When I am struggling with some challenging kids, I remember one of Dave’s beliefs that you can always find the goodness in someone. You have to look harder in some people than others, but it IS there.

Dave was a wonderful colleague, always humble and positive in his demeanor and approach. I remember being in hundreds of faculty meetings with Dave, and Dave, with his Quaker roots, always made sure we stuck to our guns regarding Quakerism. He always looked for the good in kids and was positive in all his endeavors. He made everyone pause and think, Are we on the right track and does our decision mesh with our Quaker philosophy? I also remember Dave telling me that, at Christmas time when he was out and about, young children would ask him if he was Santa Claus. He certainly looked the part and I’m certain any child, after talking with Dave, would really think that he/she had actually met Santa! Finally, I remember after Dave retired, he would come back to our Middle School Quaker meetings in the meetinghouse. He would sit quietly at our meeting, and one by one, after the meeting, kids would come up to Dave and say hi while greeting him with hugs. He was a special man who was an anchor at Moses Brown for so many years. Dave had the ability to keep everything in perspective, and in his quiet way, let you know that everything, in the end, would be okay. I will miss him.

I served with Dave on a committee for many years, and always noticed his unusually welcoming persona. At his memorial service, I learned just how unusually welcoming he was.

Dave was always a joy to have when he joined us for Meeting in Saylesville. His appreciation of and respect for the building was exceeded only by his expressed love of worshiping in the quiet of the meetinghouse.

He was a great teacher and a very good man.

Dave is survived by his wife Elizabeth, his son Allan and his wife Sidney, his daughter Deborah and her husband Warren, and four grandchildren. We at Providence Monthly Meeting will certainly miss him.

PROVIDENCE MONTHLY MEETING
SOUTHEAST QUARTERLY MEETING

Margaret "Teddy" Milne
October 17, 1930 – November 16, 2021

Teddy Milne was an early member of Northampton Friends Meeting. We now mourn the passing of her lively and adventurous spirit. She was the yeast leavening our meeting.

As a young woman just out of college, Teddy spent three years hitchhiking in Europe. She wrote about this experience with great glee in her book *Thumbs Up*, which she published herself. She worked her way on ships from Istanbul to Marseilles and Rotterdam to New Brunswick, Canada. During her long life, she travelled the United States, ultimately reaching every state. She also traveled to China, Japan, Poland, the Czech Republic, and to Hungary.

She was deeply concerned with issues of peace, and peace work was at the center of her life. Among her many publications was *Peace Porridge*, a collection of resources and suggested actions. She led two tours to the USSR promoting cultural understanding.

She had a deep and delightful connection with children. She wrote many books for children, including *Kids Who Have Made a Difference*, telling, for example, of Samantha Smith, who wrote a letter at age 11 to the leader of the USSR; and Trevor at age 11, who took his own blankets to give away to the homeless. *Peace Child* combines storytellers and characters from the U.S. and the USSR. She edited *Laser*, a newsletter for children about peace topics.

In 1980, Teddy became co-director of Powell House, a Quaker conference center in Old Chatham, NY. She helped start Quaker meetings on two continents: one in Elgin, Scotland; and the other in Northampton, MA. She organized and led two tours to Quaker sites in Britain and Northern Ireland. She worked for the Foreign Language Aptitude Project at Harvard, the Peace Development Fund, and the Salvation Army, and taught French for a Peace Corps training group at UMass. She coordinated a Pete Seeger concert at Smith College for SANE/Freeze and the Pioneer Valley Folklore Society. She did volunteer work for several organizations, including Cooley Dickinson Hospital, Red Cross, and Community Chest. She wrote seven novels, including *London for the Seasons* and *Turquoise Mountain*; a book of original songs; and a collection of her articles for the *Gazette* named *Calvin Coolidge Doesn't Live Here Any More*.

In later years, she married Alexander Milne, the owner of a local radio station. When Alexander retired, they moved to Cullen, in Scotland, for seven years before returning to Northampton.

When she wanted to celebrate arriving at the age of two-thirds of a century, she rented a hot-air balloon and invited anyone who wanted in the Meeting to accompany her. One Friend did.

This quotation from *Thumbs Up* describes how she approached the world: "I figure I belong to this planet so there's no place on it where I shouldn't feel at home. So far I haven't found one." It's what let her travel with curiosity, a sense of adventure, and a sense that she would always find a place in it; it's what kept her open to new ideas.

She was beloved for her wicked sense of humor. Near the end of her life, she declared that the title of her next book would be *I'll Be Right Back*.

She leaves three sons: Tim Wallis, Peter Douglass, and James Milne, and several grandchildren.

NORTHAMPTON FRIENDS MEETING, FEBRUARY 12, 2023
CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING, MAY 7, 2023

Kenneth B. Perkins
December 18, 1931 – March 27, 2023

Kenneth B. Perkins, 91 (formerly of East Winthrop, where he was a member of Pondtown Friends), died peacefully in Sussman House Hospice in Rockport, Maine, on March 27, 2023, surrounded by his family.

Ken was born in Bath, New Brunswick, Canada, on December 18, 1931, the only child of William Kenneth Perkins and Nellie Clapp. After graduating from Maine Central Institute, Ken joined the U.S. Navy in 1950 and served three tours as a corpsman on *The Haven*, the world's largest hospital ship. During the fiercest fighting in the Korean War, Ken would not kill or harm others, but tended to the wounded above and beyond the call of duty, even foregoing a medal for his bravery in saving lives. He continued in healthcare as a pharmacist, eventually serving in the Togus VA Hospital in Augusta, Maine. Ken rarely discussed his U.S. Navy experience until his final year, when he shared scrapbooks with a U.S. Navy nurse whose career overlapped with his.

Ken and his wife, Marie, became Quakers, and in 1981 co-founded Pondtown Friends, an unprogrammed monthly meeting in Winthrop, Maine. To his family and the meeting community he brought a calm optimism, a passion for building peace at the local level, and his connection with the natural world (organizing weekend retreats and hikes).

In 1985 Ken co-founded Veterans For Peace, Inc. (VFPI) and was soon joined by Winthrop Friends Tom Sturtevant and Burt Richardson. Maine's Chapter #1 was followed by over 130 VFPI chapters worldwide. In 1988 he and Pondtown Quakers found a way to send used medical equipment and supplies to Nicaragua to alleviate suffering during the Contra War. He travelled there himself to deliver medical supplies and to show support for ending the war. Along with Tom Sturtevant, he participated in counter-recruitment activities in area schools. VFP bookcovers that they distributed to students have continued to be shared with thousands who pass by the Quaker table at the Common Ground Country Fair, hosted annually by the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association.

After they retired, Ken and Marie were volunteer mediators in the Consumer Fraud Division of the Maine Attorney General's office. Their expertise in conflict resolution enabled them to work with the most contentious cases and return over \$250,000 to Maine consumers.

A fiercely competitive man, Ken never wanted to "beat" anyone else, but strove all his life to push his own limits to find his best self. In the Senior Olympics held throughout New England, he earned medals into his late 70s. He was committed to avoiding over-politicizing partisan beliefs, but instead served as an example of how to push one another to be our best, humanitarian selves. Ken will always be remembered for his witty sense of humor, intellectual curiosity, and compassionate mind.

Ken was an avid reader, often exchanging books with friends. In his final days he had requested to be read to. With barely a clue about what to select, the reader picked a book of poetry from her extensive library, let it fall open to any page ("The End of March" by Elizabeth Bishop). She saw that Ken had annotated how much ("I really like this!" twice) he appreciated the poem—a rare gift to them from the Universe for her to be able to read it to him.

Ken was predeceased by his beloved partner and wife of 61 years, Marie (Mallard) Perkins, and son-in-law Ronald "Goldy" Goldstein. Ken is survived by his three children, Scott Perkins of Searsmont; Cheryl Mallard of Searsmont; Robert Perkins and his wife, Irene, of Springfield; and an "honorary daughter," Rebecca Hewitt of East Winthrop. Ken is also survived by two grandchildren, Lea Goldstein and her partner, Ben, of Cumberland Foreside, Maine; Noah Goldstein and his wife, Erin, of Scituate, Massachusetts; and two great-grandchildren, Ari and Ophelia.

A memorial service under the care of Farmington Monthly Meeting (which began as a worship group under the care of Pondtown Friends) was held April 7, 2023, in Winthrop, Maine. Family, Friends, and friends held Ken and their relationships with him in the Light. Many shared messages about his kind and gentle spirit (whether confronting injustice or removing a splinter from a child's foot), his love of nature (rain or shine), his commitment to serving others, the depth of Ken and Marie's relationship, and his

readiness to rejoin her in the afterlife. In his final days he sensed that she was impatiently tapping him on the shoulder.

FARMINGTON MONTHLY MEETING, APRIL 16, 2023

VASSALBORO QUARTERLY MEETING, APRIL 22, 2023

Epistles

General Epistle

To Friends Everywhere:

Greetings from the 363rd annual sessions of New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, held at Castleton, Vermont, and online August 5th through 9th, 2023. We acknowledge with humility and gratitude that we met on Ndakinna (n-DAH-kee-NAH), homeland of the Abenaki peoples. By grace, may our discernment lead to greater peace and justice. Four hundred and two Friends gathered in person and one hundred and fifteen online via Zoom, with seventy-four youth and young adults. Among those attending on Zoom were five Friends from our beloved sister yearly meeting in Cuba.

We have gathered in a season of continued change. Our yearning to “return to normal” has been replaced by a recognition that we may not really want to, nor should we, go back. Ever-pressing new challenges call us forward in our lives, while we still continue the process of grieving what has been lost. We are tender. And yet, all around us we see God appearing, and faithful Friends following the promptings of Spirit to help lead us forward.

Our speakers this year have brought us in intimate connection with the Spirit. Emma Condori Mamani of Santidad Friends Yearly Meeting of Bolivia delivered our Bible Half Hours, presenting Bible passages which she related to periods of her own life and how these gave her the courage to act for justice, often at great personal cost. Anna Fritz of North Pacific Yearly Meeting presented a musical plenary, sharing her ministry with speech, song, and cello—not a concert, but an invitation to spiritual deepening. On Sunday we were joined by Joseph and Jesse Bruchac of the Nulhegan Band of the Abenaki Nation, who shared stories and songs out of their tradition illustrating the importance of connection to the other living beings who share this world with us, and using the Abenaki language to invite us into new perspectives on the world.

Each of these presenters spoke plain and true. There was no intellectualizing, just direct story and song, given in deep humility. Again and again in our time together we were dropped down into our hearts, into our bodies, into a slower movement of time. Each of them got us to step back, breathe, and listen. They helped ground us and prepare us, and their presence and ministry readied us for the work we had before us. The truth is not complicated. We need to stop, breathe, listen with our hearts, and follow.

In worship we heard Friend after Friend testify to the simple power of God’s unending love and acceptance, holding on to us even when we could not go on anymore. Fresh waters of baptism flowed from our eyes. We were returned continually to Spirit.

At Meeting for Business on Sunday evening we heard a prophetic word from a Friend, a naming of harm caused by the lack of a process for dealing with conflict at the yearly meeting level. We recognized the harm and pain, and a need for a clear and transparent path for transformation, healing, and reconciliation among us now and in the future at all levels. Truth was spoken. As a body, we stopped. We listened. We set aside our existing agenda, and turned it over to God for guidance. In that Light, a plan was formed to begin the process, acknowledging that there may be uncertainty in the details, but that as a community we were in unity to do this hard work. We recognize Unity is not a state, not a success to be achieved, but a way of doing things or a practice. We recognize that pain makes us brittle. We recognize that we must be held to account where harm and pain have been done. We pray for grace from God and from each other that we may forgive and be forgiven.

We heard ministry rise up from young adult Friends who challenged us to greater generosity and inspired us to be hopeful about the financial future of our Yearly Meeting. They reminded us that they are the product of the Yearly Meeting, and that future generations depend on our support. We were glad to see more families and children returning to Sessions this year. We heard of the joy and love among our youth: silent circle times, caring for one another, raucous energy and noise, more stories with the Bruchacs, snacks, crafts, and play.

Friends listened to the call of Spirit to strive toward a loving, inclusive, and accessible community in many ways such as wearing masks, sharing audio recordings of advance documents, holding affinity spaces, offering pay-as-led registration, providing simultaneous interpretation, and continuing our practice of noticing patterns of oppression and faithfulness. Friends young and old shared intergenerational worship. Friends on the tech team showed loving attention to the inclusion of online attenders down to the smallest detail: explaining why people in the room were laughing, painstakingly focusing the camera on the writing on a drum. In Zoom gatherings for fellowship, some Friends online felt Spirit binding our community together through the joy, play, and serendipitous connection that are characteristic of the campus experience. We heard a Friend share their own ministry of building the beloved community in working to make our meetings more inclusive and accessible through technology. We name all of these efforts because we see in them faithful striving. We are still learning how to integrate online attenders more fully. Our work to undo patterns of harm and exclusion is far from done. Spirit calls us to continue to notice who feels safe and welcome and who does not, who is not here and why, and to challenge ourselves to keep building a world that is ever closer to God's beloved community.

We saw Friends faithfully working for change with deliberate persistence and patience. A representative to the recent Friends United Meeting triennial in Kenya testified, and we listened with awe and wonder at the opening of hearts witnessed there. For the past year a working group has been diligently researching 19th-century New England Friends' involvement in the Indigenous Boarding School movement, an egregious example of white supremacy in action. Friends listened deeply and humbly to the working group's progress and offered support and encouragement. We are forced to acknowledge the multitude of logs in our own eyes. This is just one of the ways that we have participated in the genocide of the indigenous people of this continent, and in it there are lessons for us now about how our own discernment is shaped and warped by our culture. It is only one of our many sins for which we have not atoned, and our deep searching, and decolonizing, will take time and vigilance.

There are many paths we are called to that we have not yet managed to walk far along. In a summer of floods and fires, we know that climate catastrophe is at hand and that we are complicit. The sin of slavery, segregation, and white supremacy lingers on. Yet God's promise to Isaiah assures us: "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday ... [and] You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail" (Isaiah 58:9-11 NIV). At the close of our time together we arise with much work to do, and trust that following God's word in our hearts will lead us into the abundant life which can accomplish all things. May we be ready to say, "Here I am, Lord."

Yours In Faith and Love,

New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk

Childcare Epistle

Dear Children all over the World, Hello.

Fifteen children met this week at Yearly Meeting and played, laughed, cried, snacked, napped, and grew together. We sang about being sat on by an elephant, we read books about gardening and the sky and how it is okay to be different. We played outside between rainstorms and splashed in the excellent puddles left behind. During rainstorms, we built and destroyed towers and made lots of art. We love Yearly Meeting and will be back!

New England Yearly Meeting Childcare Program

Junior Yearly Meeting Kindergarten through Grade 3

Dear Friends,

We are a group of 19 Quakers from Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade, gathering for the New England Yearly Meeting at Castleton University in Castleton, VT, USA. This week, August 5th–9th, 2023, we gathered with the intention of learning about the things that make each of us unique, building community, and nurturing our very own garden of love.

We spent time in this smaller group in addition to the larger group, which included our older members of JYM—the 4th-, 5th-, and 6th-graders. For many of us, it was our first time coming together as a part of this community. We spent time playing games together, reading stories, making arts and crafts projects, and getting to know our new and old friends better.

We started each day off as a big group, with singing, Bible 10 minutes, and reading epistles from kids our age all around the world. We sang some of our favorite songs like “All God’s Critters,” “Bim Bam,” “The MTA Song,” and more! It was so special that we got to sing these songs with Friends from JHYM and Young Friends.

Some of the fun activities that we had been looking forward to in the afternoon, like water day, were squashed by the rainy and slightly chilly weather, but we did not let that stop us! We joined in on the fun of the Capture the Flag game, made ice cream from scratch, played “Fishy fishy cross my ocean” among many other games, played with Legos, and got creative with art supplies. We made friendship bracelets, knitted creations, drawings, and more.

The bigger projects that we did were our coffee filter butterflies and our garden of love, which we created together as a group! We imagined what would be in our garden of love and used paints and other art supplies to put that vision on a big shared piece of paper. Together we created a great big JYM garden of love, filled with different flowers of all sizes, colors and shapes. No two flowers looked alike, each one different and beautiful just like us.

Outside of program, we had a lot of fun playing with our new friends, swimming in the pool, riding bikes, and some of us even performed at the coffee house! After such a long and fun week we are sad to say goodbye to our friends, new and old, but excited for what this year may bring.

Love,

JYM K-3 Children & Staff

Junior Yearly Meeting Grades 4 through 6

To all Friends everywhere

New England Yearly Meeting Friends gathered from August 5th to 9th at (Castleton College) in Castleton, Vermont. Nineteen friends in grades one through three and twelve friends in grades four through six met as members of our Junior Yearly Meeting—sometimes altogether and sometimes in groups—in the gym, in classrooms, and outside. We were really happy that COVID cases were down, so that we could meet in person again. It was wonderful to be with old friends and to make new ones. We played a lot of community-building games, and it was important to us that anyone who wanted to play with us was welcome. We had a hard time settling down to write our epistle, as we were having so much fun playing with each other.

Some of our games were classics, like JYM Ball, Legos, Parachute, and Capture the Flag. We made up many other games and learned how to name them appropriately according to Quaker testimonies. The game initially called Gambling with Beans was renamed as a guessing game. Our Military Base game was renamed a helicopter game. Instead of saying we were tying people up, which we did gently and with permission, we said we were playing The Houdini Project, emphasizing the escape challenge. We learned the importance of our words.

Several people read or told us stories. Friends from our local indigenous Abenaki tribe came to tell us about words and stories and music of their culture. We zoomed with Quakers from Rwanda and said how wonderful it would be if we could meet them someday in person.

When we weren't in our programs, many of us rode our bikes and scooters around the campus. There was lots of food to choose from, including many treats.

Many of us were not happy when we learned that we only had one more short time to be together. We hope to meet each other again throughout the year at our retreats and to build lifelong friendships. The time went fast.

Junior High Yearly Meeting

Hello Friends Everywhere,

This is the epistle of the Junior High Yearly Meeting from New England Yearly Meeting Sessions 2023.

Quakers from all over the New England area in the United States of America gathered together in late summer at Castleton University in Vermont. The middle-school-age children (ages 11 through 14) who came were in the JHYM program (Junior High Yearly Meeting). These JH'ers spent all week together. The arrival time of the NEYM sessions was late Friday; most of us got here then, some of us arrived later that day or on Saturday. Our first day mostly consisted of an introduction of what we will be doing the whole time during sessions and more larger yearly meeting activities. We ended the day with a pool party in the college pool! On Sunday we attended an all-ages worship that was welcoming. There were stories read and messages from different meetings. We also got to listen to the plenary speaker. Two Abenaki Native Americans, Joe and Jesse Bruchac, drove 2 hours to give us an educational and fun time. It consisted of stories and songs, and taught us about the language they speak. Sunday night we had a deep conversation about where we wanted the program to go in the future. Then that night we had a pizza party in the college lounge room. Monday morning we did an activity with the high-school-aged Quakers (Young Friends) where we made little self-care books to support the theme of "We are like a

well watered garden.” These books consisted of things such as affirmations for one another, or people we can contact if we need too. Additionally, the Bruchacs came and gave us another lesson.

Monday afternoon we had planned to go to the beach but it ended up raining. Instead we stayed at the college campus and had an ice cream bar with an abnormal amount of toppings. Later in the afternoon we went swimming in the pool. That evening was the contra dance, which many attended and reported having a marvelous time. Tuesday morning we created handprint t-shirts with the handprints of everyone in the program. Additionally, the leaving eighth graders put their handprints on a blanket with the tradition of 20 years of past JH’ers. Then in the afternoon we spent some time doing various workshops and sung with the elementary-aged children. That early evening there was a coffee house, a sort of variety show where many of our own JH’ers performed. Then Tuesday evening we had a dance party.

Together on Tuesday afternoon we had a discussion summarizing our experience throughout the Yearly Meeting. Some of the memorable things we came up with are as follows.

Highlights:

- Swimming
- Pizza party
- Downtime
- Minecraft discussions
- Volunteering at the bookstore
- Meal time, to connect with friends

Hopes:

- People are excited to go to Young Friends
- Staying connected to the wider Yearly Meeting community
- Let people feel welcome
- Preserve our community

Things that were hard:

- Not getting enough sleep
- Not a long enough time to spend with friends
- Staying up till 1:00 in the morning trying to write an epistle.

Young Friends

Dear Friends,

We, the 13 Young Friends of New England Yearly Meeting, met at the Castleton Campus of Vermont State University from the 4th to the 9th of August in order to carry out the occupation of community-building and love.

In parting, we urge everyone not to underestimate the power of love, nor our own capacity for it. The transforming power of love is the root and core of our Quaker faith.

These words, taken from an epistle from Monteverde Monthly Meeting of Friends in Costa Rica and spoken in a Meeting for Worship for the Purpose of Business Young Friends attended this week, encapsulated the spirit in which our few but mighty Young Friends met this week.

Love is what gathered us in missing our past Program Coordinator, Maggie Fiori, who left us this summer with a new leading of Spirit. We have nothing but the deepest of gratitude for Maggie and send her our most sincere well wishes for her many dedicated years of service to Young Friends.

Love is also what gathered us in embracing our Interim Program Coordinator Drew Chasse and the new and returning adult volunteers who helped us this week.

Love gathered us first on Saturday morning for intergenerational Bible Half Hour, where our Friend Emma Condori Mamani from Bolivia shared with us how reading and learning the Bible has led her to being the person she is today. Following this, Young Friends gathered in our program space in order to reflect on the theme for this year's annual sessions. "Be like the watered garden: open to grace, loose the bonds of injustice." Young Friends played a rhythm game as we separated each part of the theme and looked for words that connected us to each part. From these words we built works of art. This included a paper chain where each link had a song which Young Friends felt fit with the theme crafted around a garden of paintbrush flowers. Another artwork showed a depiction of a phoenix breaking the chains of injustice and burning down structures of society to then help them be reborn, and lastly a sculpture of food, complete with an open bag of Cheez-Its representing being open to grace.

In love for community, we met with the whole New England Yearly Meeting for our opening celebration Saturday afternoon. There we also met with our Friends attending over video chat as we embraced our whole NEYM community.

In love for the spirit of inspiration, Saturday night we gathered to listen to Anna Fritz, whose songs moved us to consider the weight of sadness and guilt that can often befall us in these troubling times for our world. Anna's music brought us face to face with issues of Climate Change, the scars of colonial oppression, and the senseless acts of violence and murder committed by the police of this country towards people of color. Her music challenged many of us, but Young Friends faced that challenge with the knowledge that accepting and processing grief and guilt as a community can only grow the strength and love that inspires us to be closer as Friends.

Sunday morning, we joined the larger Yearly Meeting once more for intergenerational worship, where we pondered the need for "waiting" through the reading of a children's book, and finding the patience within all spaces to find a path forward.

In love for learning about culture and language we once more joined our larger Yearly Meeting to experience the songs, language, and culture of the Abenaki people from Joseph and Jesse Bruchac as they shared with us a piece of the society that originally and currently inhabit the land we now hold worship on, and though many faced the physical struggle of the heat of a packed auditorium, our spirits were enriched by the stories, instruments, songs, and traditions of the Abenaki people.

Later that afternoon we were joined by former Young Friends Coordinator and current Yearly Meeting Program Director Nia Thomas, as she hoped to enlighten us more on the Quaker process of discernment and the difference between coming to a consensus and finding a sense of the meeting. Young Friends welcomed the experience to learn more about the Quaker processes. Later that night we attended business meeting and saw first hand the beauty and trial which is our Quaker process of discernment. We then returned to our space in order to discuss the future of Young Friends as we gave input on possible retreat and session ideas for the coming year.

As Sunday closed we saw our community begin to truly feel interconnected as we reflected on the last few days of impactful experiences in our small-group time.

On Monday we had the joy of spending much time with our Friends in Junior High Yearly Meeting as we made small secret booklets in which we wrote ways to care for our own bodies, affirmations from other Friends, and ways, and people, to ask for help. As youth programs we also were given the gracious opportunity to further ask questions of and learn from our Abenaki visitors.

In love for the traditions which we hold dear, Junior High Yearly Meeting and Young Friends planned to spend time swimming at a local lake, but unfortunately were unable to make it due to inclement weather, so we instead enjoyed the company of our peers at an ice-cream social and splashing around in the indoor pool at Castleton, while others of us played frisbee and made Shrinky Dinks.

On Tuesday morning Young Friends gathered in our space once more. After much singing of songs held dear by our community, we entered worship and out of worship we more deeply explored the concept of grace and its role in our spiritual lives, including a reflection on times we wish we had grace.

Following lunch on Tuesday, Friends went off to enjoy a variety of workshop options with the larger Yearly Meeting. These included engaging with a committee dedicated to researching our Yearly Meeting's past involvement in Indigenous re-education camps and learning how to lobby through a workshop run by representatives from Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL).

In a bittersweet love for those leaving our community, we returned to our program space for our Senior Circle, where we held our three eldest Young Friends in gratitude and light as they concluded their final year in our program. Following this we joined with our fellow youth programs in hearing a Memorial Minute for a dearly beloved former staff member.

Throughout this week Young Friends have learned much: about the value of waiting, about different cultures, about community building, about the Quaker traditions we live through, and especially about love. That learning has revealed in us a rising in the united heart of our Young Friends Program. Within group conversations about the number of Young Friends retreats that will be happening this coming year, and the pain some Friends felt as our time in community would be so short with only three retreats, a clear leading revealed itself. While we have been given a taste of Quaker business, we often feel unable to have direct impact on the direction and path of our own Young Friends Program, so on Tuesday night, Nia Thomas joined us once more, along with Noah Merrill, NEYM Secretary, to join us in community and listen to the concerns and leadings of Young Friends' collective spirit. We felt truly held by their patience and respect as they answered our questions and explained their perspectives. In that spirit they offered paths and channels for us to be a part of the process of choosing our new program coordinator. They explained their struggles in finding a coordinator, as the deep complexity of such a position still had to fit within the bounds of a part-time job. We empathize with that struggle and we will continue to hold the New England Yearly Meeting Staff in the Light and provide support and guidance, as we are led, to this most tender and careful of tasks.

However, as we expressed in our meeting with staff, our leading was not primarily to influence the selection of a coordinator, but rather to the process of coordination itself and our place in said effort. As many of you may know, Young Friends in the past was very different, and throughout our week, the leading our community felt was noted to be very similar to the essence of how Young Friends historically operated. Our community longs to return to a greater involvement in its own destiny, led by the youth in our program. While we are aware of the context surrounding the discounting of these past modes of operation, we hold it to the Yearly Meeting as a whole body to reassess and allow us to readjust the operation of our program to meet the current needs of the body of Young Friends.

We hope to move away from a structure in which the coordinator is expected to take on the entire running of Young Friends on top of the many other tasks related to teen ministries, prescribed by the Yearly Meeting Staff to the coordinator. Instead, we propose for the coordinator and other adult volunteers to act as guides and enablers for Young Friends, rather than having the weight of care of our entire program placed upon them. Young Friends are invested in this vision for our program and have spent much time in worship and discussion contemplating its potential. We have found a communal confidence in our ability to execute this if given the blessing of the larger Yearly Meeting.

Even after speaking with Yearly Meeting staff, Young Friends still feel it necessary to express a great frustration at the lack of clarity we have felt for some time now regarding the inner workings of our own program. As a Quaker body we have found ourselves frustrated by the difficulty we have in translating our sense of the meeting into action, especially since said difficulty has been generated by a lack of direct communication with the larger body of adult Friends. We would ask you, adult Friends of New England Yearly Meeting, to be active in helping us bridge this gap, so that Young Friends can continue to build a strong youth Quaker community at the foundation of the Yearly Meeting.

Lastly, Young Friends would like to express our most profound gratitude towards our adult volunteers this year. Thank you Emily, Emma, Wendy, Hillary, Gretchen, Merritt, Anne, Celadry, and most especially, Drew. Your care of community this week has truly been a blessing. Your willingness to support and not dismiss our troubled body, your humor, your powerful messages, your nurturing of gifts, will leave a footprint forever on our hearts. Thank you most of all for your love.

We the Young Friends of New England Yearly Meeting are those who will one day sing the songs and hold the traditions of you, the people who have come before. Please grant us the love of holding our community closer to the whole body of spirit.

In love,

The Young Friends of New England Yearly Meeting

Epistle Committee

Anion-Conifer Gilbert, Friends Meeting at Cambridge
Sage Paterson, Concord Friends Meeting
Brennon Schifman, Providence Monthly Meeting
Emily Edwards (West Falmouth), adult volunteer

Young Adult Friends Epistle

Greetings to Friends Everywhere,

We, the Young Adult Friends (YAFs) of New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM), gathered this week of August 5th–9th on the campus of Castleton University in Vermont, for New England Yearly Meeting Sessions. Some of us arrived in the pouring rain, some arrived when the storm had passed. One of us even biked through the pouring rain to come and be in community.

Over the course of this week, we played games together and shared many conversations. We shared with one another our hopes, fears, joys, and concerns of our young adult Friends community. Many of us attended NEYM meeting for business; some who have served on committees throughout the year presented reports to the wider Yearly Meeting; others who attended the Friends United Meeting Triennial gathering in Kenya this summer shared about their experience. Many of us felt upset upon learning about the

unbalanced state of the NEYM budget and finances, and some have felt sparks upon hearing about the state of our community and hope to know where the Spirit is calling us to use our gifts. This week, most of us have either been serving as staff for the youth programs or supporting our youth in other capacities. In writing this epistle we hesitate to say anything definitively because we as a YAF community are so dispersed from each other that there is not a clear sense of cohesion or consensus between us—but that feels exemplary of these issues that we are holding with so much grief. Throughout our time together, one truth has risen strongly to the surface of this body, and that truth is a condition of this community that we are called to share.

We have grown up in this community. We went to meetings and retreats and Friends Camp and Yearly Meeting each summer. We built friendships, we dated, we broke up and got back together again. We graduated, we moved cities, we moved countries, we fell in love and got jobs and built communities of our own, both within the Yearly Meeting and separate from it. We have searched and continue to search for connections and callings, and strive to serve and support the spiritual communities that we grew up in and continue to participate in. We are the young adult Friends of New England Yearly Meeting, and our communities get smaller each year, because most of us have either found a place supporting the youth programs or left.

So many of us through the years have been called to support and nurture the youth programs and communities that we had the privilege and joy of growing up in. We volunteer in Child Care during Annual Sessions, throughout the year as staff for Junior and Junior High Yearly Meeting, as Resource People for Young Friends, and as coordinators for all of these programs and communities. And we see these communities getting smaller each year.

This year, all four youth coordinators are both members of the YAF community and also people who have grown up in and been nurtured by the youth programs that we now are called to serve. We would like to share some of our personal testimony of our own experiences being raised by the gifts of former and current youth ministers, and our call to carry on that ministry.

Rainer Humphries:

When I graduated from Young Friends, the next Yearly Meeting I started staffing Child Care. Nine years later, I've been the coordinator for two years. This space, this community, these youth programs were the only place that I felt safe to be myself until high school. My gifts are with the youngest children and so that's where it makes sense for me to give back into the community. Being able to introduce and create the foundation for friendships and community and spirituality with the smallest members, to put them on the path for what I received from this community, is the most powerful thing I do every year. There is one particular friendship budding this week that everytime I see them together I think of Hannah Baker, who is still my best friend that I met when we were in Child Care together in 1999. I want these youth programs to continue to create the space for relationships as deep as the ones I have.

Lilly Campbell:

I went to my first JHYM retreat in September 2009. I wore a tie-dye raincoat the entire time (even to go to sleep), I broke a glow stick and got glow juice in my eye and it really hurt, and as I was leaving Cel Humphries gave me a hug, even though we had never spoken before. I could not WAIT to go back.

Most of us treat middle school as a painfully awkward transition that you just have to get through. Adults will shrug and promise it will “just get better.” But JHYM felt different from that. Every retreat I would savor the passage of time, because each year at the 8th-grade circle we would be reminded how much we would miss our friends, and after all you only get 5 retreats to fall in love with each other before the next batch

graduates into the ethers of young friends. So each time I arrived at a retreat I tried to make time slow down, to let things unfold, to enjoy their unfolding.

Friends, is this not what we do in waiting worship? In this very room are the adults who built the container for me to experience the Kingdom of Heaven, to act as if it has arrived, a weekend where you have everything you need: snacks and the unconditional love of everyone around you. I actually know what this feels like because of these programs. I bring this wisdom to every community and relationship in my life because I know now what groups of people in a loving community are capable of.

I have spent the last 6 years staffing JHYM retreats, watching and learning from Gretchen and the all star team of staff that support her—each of whom staffed ME—trying to understand how all of this works. This year I produced it, and I did a pretty good job (cue applause). One of the frustrating things about doing a good job, however, is that, as is so often the case in youth work, when you are doing it well it looks really really easy. It is not. Coordinating this past week is the hardest thing I have ever done.

The reality is that middle school is (hopefully) not the only transition you will experience in your life. And one framing of the project of JHYM is to practice building joy, acceptance, and comfort into our constantly changing communities. That is why we deal so much with the themes of self love and friendship-building in JHYM, because you don't have to wait to be complete to be loved, by other people, or the Spirit, or yourself. If you learn that that kind of divine love is accessible to you as a middle schooler, you learn that it is always accessible.

Drew Chasse:

I was introduced to Quakerism when I was 9 on the occasional weekend I'd be at my mom's house. My personal connection to Quakerism really rooted itself years later in 10th grade, when a Young Friends retreat bumped into me at Mt Toby. Everybody swarmed me and half harassed, half welcomed me to start going to retreats. I went to the next retreat and then didn't miss a single one until I aged out. At my first Young Friends retreat, hours after arriving I was in a fish bowl program and I shared a message with the group that was deeply personal and moved me to tears. Looking back now, it's wild to me that I felt able to immediately be that vulnerable, I was generally very quiet, shy, and drawn back. I remember afterwards RPs thanking me for sharing what I shared and I felt so valued.

My second and third year in Young Friends I served on Ministry and Council. I cherished this role and felt a deep pride in knowing my community had chosen me to be a part of holding the magic that is the Young Friends Community. This purpose carried me through high school which was otherwise a time of grief for me. I struggled with deep depression, and Young Friends retreats were a place where I felt unconditional love, a place where I got to talk to trusted adults about their own experience with mental health in a way that made me feel like I could live with my pain and become an adult with a full multidimensional life.

In my freshman year of college, I was in crisis and called an RP that I had met while in Young Friends, because I needed help and couldn't bring myself to confide in any other adults. She came to my campus to pick me up. She listened to me and helped me to be able to talk to my parents, and that saved my life. So when I knew that Young Friends needed an interim coordinator this summer I didn't feel any hesitation, I just felt the yes. Even though I knew I didn't have the experience I feel the YFs deserve in their coordinator, I knew that I could give them what I had and that's what I needed to do. I am so grateful to New England Yearly Meeting for creating the space for Young Friends to exist.

We long to be seen and known as people, with our own joys and concerns, needs and boundaries, limits and leadings. Our lives have been shaped by this Yearly Meeting and specifically these youth programs. We are called to this ministry. We have been diligently tending the friendships of 4-year-olds, sitting with screaming 5th graders, helping 8th graders understand their own transitions into adulthood, and faith-

fully caring for high-schoolers who are stepping into a world that is full of uncertainty. We are carrying all of the complex emotions—pain and joy, grief and excitement—of all of the children that we work with, and reflecting it back to them. We are fed by this ministry and exhausted by it, as we pour ourselves into the gardens of each and every child that comes through these programs, and we are depleted.

We want to give this community's children and grandchildren the experience we have had. We want them to build friendships as strong as ours, to find meaning in their lives, to feel purposeful as the world around them seems to keep falling apart. We want to care for our elders. The people who have made these programs possible deserve to be able to continue following their own leadings based on joy and their own capacity rather than on the needs and constraints of the program. They have been working too hard for too long, and we are so deeply grateful for their continued mentorship both of us and of our communities. This is our ministry.

Our gardens are drying up. As we perform our ministry for the youth, we are unable to foster and feel sustained in our YAF community. We don't see each other very often, between coordinating programs and switching t-shirts while we shift from one age group to another. We have so little time and energy to tend the communities that are within our care, and we give everything to the youth programs and have no reserves to nurture our own YAF community. Over the years the YAF community has dwindled from a strong group with numbers in the 40s, to 20s, to a handful of Friends whose paths cross briefly.

We miss being young friends. We miss the cohesion and depth of vulnerable connection. We miss the play and laughter. We miss having peers to grow with as we learn what we each believe and how we each are led. We struggle to find our place and our voice in the wider NEYM community, where our gifts are seen and named and nurtured, and where we are not just valued for our "youthful energy." The place that we have found for ourselves is predominantly in supporting our youth programs and working to make the space for them that we were nurtured in as youth.

The youth programs of NEYM have been incredible for the last 30 or 35 years, but it has been largely the same people that have been performing that ministry the entire time. Those people are ready to step back and step down, but we are not enough to step up and fill their shoes.

We don't want to be seen as the next wave of leadership—we are left feeling like the last wave of support standing under a crumbling edifice. We want to be seen as members of this community whose ministry is going unsupported; we are a group of people who are running on fumes and watching the youth programs fall apart around us as we try and save them.

We're doing this work because of what we've received and because we want these programs to continue. This is coming from a place of intense gratitude and from a place of being greatly depleted. We want the wider community to understand our feeling of "where are my people, where is my community?" We are pouring ourselves into this shared ministry that is so all-consuming that we don't have time for our own YAF community.

This is the epistle, the state of the YAF community. We are depleted and exhausted, and we are spending 90 hours of Sessions to serve our children, holding all of their pain, and we love them and we will continue to do it. This is our work. That's what being a YAF means right now, for most of us.

We fear that the wider NEYM community sees our ministry and the youth programs as auxiliary to the Yearly Meeting—that the youth programs provide a service that allows the adult Yearly Meeting to do business—when the reverse is equally true. We feel that the youth programs are in large part the purpose and life of this Yearly Meeting.

Within our ministry, we have children from 8 months old to 18 years. We are holding the life of this faith, and our faith is not large. We are loving these kids, your kids, our kids, in the ways that we were shown love when we were youth, a radical and all powerful love that we want to continue showering down on them. The future of this Yearly Meeting is in our hands and in our hearts, and we need more support.

Epístola de Los Amigos (Cuáqueros) en Cuba

Gibara 19 de febrero del 2022

A todos nuestros Amigos Cuáqueros:

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

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

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

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

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

En la luz

Junta Anual de los “Amigos Cuáqueros” en Cuba

Cuba Yearly Meeting Epistle

To all our Quaker Friends:

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

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

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

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

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

In the Light,

Yearly Meeting of the Quaker Friends in Cuba

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