

**Minutes  
Permanent Board  
September 30, 2023  
Portland Friends Meeting**

**PB 23-41 Opening Worship**

Friends opened with a period of worship. Toward the end of the worship, Susan Davies, Clerk of the Permanent Board noted that Sarah Spencer, former clerk of Salem Quarter and former member of Permanent Board, died on Friday and asked Friends to hold her family in the Light.

**PB 23-42 Arrival and Welcoming**

The clerk welcomed Friends and introduced Jennie Isbell Shinn (Mt Toby) who led us in an embodiment activity to give us time to feel into our own bodies and from there into the sense of the gathered body. Jennie asked us to feel into our bodies and then to notice one other person. She then asked us to see if there was anything in our bodies that needed attention, tending or repair, in each person or in the body. Then she asked us to ask ourselves, "How am I?"

Jennie then led us in an exercise that comes from the Theater of the Oppressed. She asked us to name an emotion that we were feeling. She then asked us to adopt a pose that represented or expressed these emotions and to look around and notice others responding with their bodies to the emotions being shared in the room. She asked us, "What do you notice or wonder about the gathered body today? What is it like to try to connect as a gathered body over Zoom?"

**PB 23-43 Invitation into the Noticing Practice**

Polly Attwood (FMC), co-clerk of the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group (NPWG), invited Friends on Permanent Board into the work of noticing patterns. The practice of noticing patterns of oppression began from the floor of Yearly Meeting Sessions in 2016. This led to the creation of the working group. In April of 2017 their scope was enlarged to include noticing patterns of faithfulness. NEYM continues this practice today and the NPWG is under the care of Permanent Board.

NPWG supports Friends to engage in the practice of noticing and naming patterns. This work starts with self-examination and an honest loving look at how we have been participants in often unconscious oppressive behaviors. This practice resonates with Friends' faithful practices of honoring that of God in all, and our testimonies of peace and equality. We are all products of society and we each need to do the work of rooting out the seeds of oppression in ourselves.

We need each other to do this work of cultivating the faithfulness that can flow from the practice of noticing and naming patterns of oppression that move us away from our testimonies and lifting up patterns of faithfulness that draw on Friends' practices that bring us into greater alignment with our testimonies.

Together as we practice, we are invited to let go of perfectionism, self-blame, and blaming one another. We are invited to accept that this learning is messy and that we need to hold each other in love, speak truth, and learn from each other's experiences. Through this practice we

consciously choose to listen through our bodies for inner knowing and guidance as Jennie invited us to do this morning. We choose to listen for the Spirit moving among us that calls us into ways of being that we recognize and name as faithful. We choose new ways of being faithful to Divine Guidance that make room for new voices and a deeper discernment coming through the gathered body.

Here are some reminders that can be a resource for us as we engage in this practice

- Focus on patterns (not people): recurring instances that manifest in the body of NEYM that are complicit with oppression
- Attend to what your body is telling you
  - such as tightness or openness in the shoulders; heaviness or lightness of heart; holding your breath or feeling an exhale
- Discern your leading to speak to name a pattern as you would a leading to speak in worship
  - Am I led to speak?
  - Does this need to be shared here with the body?
  - Would this better be shared as an individual conversation?
  - Am I being asked to respond with prayer rather than in words?
- Curiosity is a useful approach when offering a noticing
- Outcomes to sharing will vary; what is important is being faithful
- Receive noticings in gratitude

### **PB 23-44 Roll Call**

Willa Taber (Fresh Pond), Recording Clerk of the Permanent Board read the roll.

**Bold is present in the room. Underline is present on Zoom.**

**Susan Davies** (PB Clerk), **Willa Taber** (PB Recording Clerk), **Darcy Drayton**, Martin Forsythe, **Christopher Gant**, Joyce Gibson, Elizabeth Hansen, Ian Harrington, **Newell Isbell Shinn**, Carolyne Lamar Jordan, Frances Lightsom, **Bob O'Connor**, Allison Randall, Carole Rein, Martha Schwope, Leisa Stamm, Eleanor Warnock, Diane Weinholtz, Donn Weinholtz, **Morgan Wilson**, **Kathleen Wooten**, **Mary Zwirner**

### **Ex-officio members**

Scot Drysdale (Finance clerk), **Sarah Gant** (clerk, Meeting Accompaniment Group), **Rebecca** (Presiding Clerk), **Noah Merrill** (YM Secretary), Elizabeth Reuthe (YM Secretary Supervisor), Jackie Stillwell, (Nominating Committee clerk)

### **Regrets**

Kimberly Allen, Thomas Brenner, Deana Chase, Roger Jasaitis, Meg Klepack, Edward Mair, Christopher McCandless, Anna Radocchia, John Reuthe, Robert Murray (YM Treasurer)

### **Visitors**

Katy Bond, Carl Williams, Melissa Foster, Ellen Neelands, Becky Jones, Reiner Humphries, Aaron Sakulich, Janet Hough, **Keith Olsen**, **Marian Dalton**, **Celadry Humphries**, **Maille Wooten**, **Katherine Williams**, **Arty Williams**, **Brian Drayton**, **Mey Hasbrook**, **Melody**

**Brazo, LVM Shelton, Kristina Keefe-Perry, Jennie Isbell Shinn, Nia Thomas, Pamela Terrien, Polly Attwood, Gordon Bugbee**

**PB 23-45 Orientation and Expectations Document**

Susan Davies (Vassalboro), clerk of the Permanent Board, welcomed everyone to our meeting and drew the attention of members, and particularly new members, to the Orientation and Expectations document for members of Permanent Board, here attached. We expect to continue to revise and expand this document over time.

**PB 23-46 Minutes from August 5**

Susan Davies presented the minutes from the August 5 meeting of the Permanent Board, here attached.

**Friends approved minutes PB-23-28 through PB 23-35. PB 23-36 will be brought back for approval on December 9th.**

**PB 23-47 Minutes from August 9**

Susan Davies presented the revised minutes for August 9 here attached.

**Friends approved all of these minutes except PB 23-39 Concern for Youth and Youth Ministries, which will be brought back for approval on December 9th.**

**PB 23-48 Presiding Clerk's Report**

The Presiding Clerk's written report is attached to these minutes. Rebecca Leuchak (Providence), Presiding Clerk of NEYM, reported that she has been in conversation with many people about Sessions and has read the comments on the evaluation of Sessions. These evaluations have been invaluable to gather a greater sense of how things were.

She has appreciated the comments and suggestions she has received in regard to the group to examine our responses to conflict. She has not responded to all of the 22 Friends who have emailed her about this, but she is looking forward to having conversations with all of them.

Rebecca is here with you as a person who has an extraordinarily busy life. She works, she has a family, she cares for her home, and she wants to serve the Yearly Meeting. Are there hours in the day for all of this? This Yearly Meeting is her love and she wants to serve it as best she can. She knows that we are all people who love the Yearly Meeting and want to serve it the best we can. She is sorry that she only added her written report to the advance documents yesterday afternoon.

Attending the various committees that she serves ex-officio, she is impressed by the amount of faithful work that Friends are doing in service to the Yearly Meeting. The Coordinating & Advisory Committee (C&A) held a retreat September 21-23 at Woolman Hill. One of her learnings from this retreat is not to schedule a C&A meeting so close to a Permanent Board meeting. Much of the work of the retreat involved responding to the events of Sessions. There are many communications that get circulated that contain incorrect information and this has been a problem. What is important is that we lean into our differences and conflicts and hold each

other in love and tenderness and the faith in God's grace. We are broken open and she is grateful to be here with us.

## **PB-23-49 Coordinating and Advisory Report**

The full written report from the Coordinating and Advisory Committee is attached to these minutes.

### **PB-23-49.1 Understanding the needs of Youth Programs**

Coordinating and Advisory Committee proposed that Permanent Board take the following action:

Approve a charge to the Coordinating and Advisory Committee that they bring back to PB for consideration (and approval) in December a Consultative Process that will guide us in an inclusive and responsive understanding of our needs for Youth Programs as a Yearly Meeting, including direct response to the needs of our monthly meetings. This highly consultative work will be assigned to Coordinating and Advisory in collaboration with the Youth Ministries Committee with its vital role of nurturing youth programs, and with the assistance, support, and input from our Yearly Meeting staff. The aim of this work is to put forward a plan for mission, evaluation, dialog and integrative visioning of our Youth Programs, highlighting specific and concrete priorities with which we can align the functions of Youth Programs going forward. This will be accompanied by proposed action steps, under the care of the respective committee and staff charged with this work, all in an effort to advance our growing edges of this essential life within our community.

**Friends approved this recommendation.**

### **PB 23-49.2 Dealing with Conflict**

The Coordinating and Advisory Committee recommended that the Yearly Meeting:

1. Reflect on ways in which the practices described in the C&A report are functioning currently, and how they might be strengthened or changed to better serve these purposes.
2. Explore ways to more effectively and consistently communicate pathways for responding to conflict, recognizing that many Friends may not be aware (or may need to be reminded) of these practices.
3. Consider opportunities and capacities for ongoing education, training, and engagement with skills and methodologies for responding to conflict consistent with Friends faith and practice, both for Friends generally and for those charged with specific responsibilities for response to conflict in the life of the Yearly Meeting. This would potentially include committee and working/resource group clerks, staff, youth ministries volunteers, and Friends serving in other volunteer leadership roles.
4. Examine how resources or capacities developed might relate to our primary purpose of strengthening the life and ministry of local meetings, and how efforts focused on

response to conflict arising beyond the scope of a local meeting might relate to and be informed by wisdom and existing practice in local meetings.

5. Integrate insights from the steps above into the ongoing work of the Yearly Meeting, including especially the work of the Nominating Committee to nurture and support the expressions of gifts and skills in service, and to support the functioning of the Yearly Meeting as a whole.

**In support of this, Permanent Board charges the Coordinating & Advisory Committee, in consultation with Nominating Committee and consistent with our practice, to bring forward to the December 9, 2023, meeting of the Permanent Board nominations for a working group on strengthening capacities for response to conflict rising in the life and work of the Yearly Meeting and to make recommendations to Permanent Board for further discernment and action.**

**Persons serving on this working group would include Friends with relevant gifts, skills, and experience who have expressed their availability and interest, as well as other Friends whose names may rise in this process, to allow for broad consideration. In making nominations, C&A should consider the qualities listed in Sessions Minute 2023-1002. Consistent with Sessions Minute 2023-703, this working group will include the Presiding Clerk, clerk of Ministry & Counsel, and clerk of the Permanent Board.**

**The first charge of this group will be to create a plan of work on creating this process.**

**Permanent Board encourages this group to consider:**

1. **When conflict involves members of C&A, there need to be ways to bring the conflicts to other places.**
2. **There is a need to balance the needs of confidentiality and transparency and there is also a need for there to be ways of reporting back on the resolution of conflicts.**
3. **The goal is not to eliminate conflict but to accept that conflict is a normal part of our life together.**
4. **There is a need to find ways to resolve conflict that bring us to healing.**

**Friends approved the creation of a working group on strengthening our capacities to respond to conflict in the yearly meeting as outlined in the bold text above.**

### **PB 23-50 Friends Camp Budgets**

Robb Spivey (Brunswick) Treasurer for Friends Camp presented the Capital and Operating Budgets for Friends Camp here attached.

**Friends approved the Friends Camp Operating and Capital budgets.**

### **PB 23-51 Youth Ministries Program FAQ**

Noah Merrill (Putney), NEYM Secretary, presented a draft of a FAQ document on our Youth Ministries Program, here attached. Friends are asked to convey any questions or comments about this document to either him or Nia Thomas (Northampton), NEYM Program Director. In particular, they are looking for items that might be added to this document.

### **PB 23-52 2025+ Sessions Visioning & Design Process**

Noah Merrill, NEYM Secretary, presented the report on the 2025+ Sessions Visioning & Design process, here attached. He said that it remains our hope that we can return to Castleton University at a time similar to those that we have used in the past. Friends will be notified when the dates are confirmed.

**Friends approved the overall project as outlined in the report and bringing Phase 1 of this process to the December 9 PB Meeting for approval.**

### **PB 23-53 Honoring Service to Permanent Board**

We honored and expressed appreciation for the people who have completed their service to the Permanent Board in the past year. Leslie Manning completed her term as clerk of the Permanent Board but continues to serve as a member. Bob Murray has completed his term as NEYM Treasurer. Peter Bishop, Joyce Gibson, and Jean McCandless have completed their terms of service on the Permanent Board.

### **PB 23-54 Nominating Committee Report**

Jackie Stillwell, clerk of the Nominating Committee, presented the report of the Nominating Committee here attached.

**Friends approved the nominations included in the report.**

### **PB 23-55 Naming Committee**

Susan Davies brought forward the names of Jeremiah Dickenson(Dover) and Ed Mair (Amesbury) to be continuing members of the Naming Committee.

**Friends approved these nominations.**

### **PB 23-56 Visiting Committee for Three Rivers Worship Group**

Because of the chaotic nature of the end of our meeting on August 5, there was some confusion as to whether we had actually approved the names of members of the Visiting Committee to Three Rivers Worship Group. At the direction of the outgoing and incoming clerks of the Permanent Board, they have begun their work and their first report is attached to these minutes.

**Friends approved Regina McCarthy (Wellesley), Ellen Neelands (Acton) and Mary Zwirner (Beacon Hill) to serve as a visiting committee for Three Rivers Worship Group. They will follow the process that is outlined in their report.**

## **PB 23-57 Minute of Exercise**

In her opening remarks, the clerk noticed a pattern of giving preference to particular positions and an attitude of distrust and assumption of mal intent which are not healthy for our work together. This will not be resolved in one meeting but the work of healing the lack of trust in each other is the most important work before us. Some of us have wondered if, in part, we are being influenced by the current climate of distrust, division, and chaos in the larger society. The spirit of distrust and confusion that was present in our August meetings was part of what prevented us from being able to approve the minutes concerning the appointment of a visiting committee to visit Three Rivers Worship Group, or the minute concerning the Youth Ministries program.

Friends are fond of using traditional Quaker circumlocutions, perhaps being unaware the extent to which some of these serve to gloss over actual issues and they are a part of our long tradition of avoiding conflict. Some of us also have a tendency to speak in metaphors which cause the listener to work hard to understand exactly what is being said. We are people with great imaginations and sometimes we take the metaphors to places far from the intention of the speaker. We need to work to recover the Quaker tradition of plain speaking, and name as clearly as we can exactly what it is that we are speaking of. We must learn the difference between being tactful and being opaque. We must work to deepen our communications, equally striving to understand and be understood, even when patterns of speech, vocabulary and metaphors vary. Clear and precise language is an invitation to move deliberately and together, under the care of the Spirit whom we gather ourselves to in our corporate practice of expectancy. We also must keep an inward watch to see if there is something in us that keeps us from being rightly convicted by the words that are being spoken.

Several friends noticed that in a number of meetings, meetings that were clerked by different people, when a particular topic came up, the same person was called on to speak to the issue first. This was a person to whom the dominant culture normally defers. It appeared that this was a case of power speaking to power. Each time, these first comments set the tone for the rest of the conversation. We have also noted that it appears that, especially when there are strong emotions involved, the initial reservations we express to a course of action may not be the real source of the concerns. Unless these underlying issues are raised, acknowledged, and held in patient tenderness by the body, they are unlikely to be resolved. We were also reminded that sometimes our objections are triggered by unresolved issues that are unrelated to the particular business at hand. It is important for us to notice, and to own, when we are enacting any of these patterns because that is an important step in achieving unity.

A corporate body is not its forms and structures but is fundamentally the relations we have with each other when we meet heart to heart and soul to soul. Building these relationships requires communication and connection and recognizing when we are being broken open.

*Susan P. Davies*  
Susan P. Davies (Dec 13, 2023 13:48 EST)

Susan Davies, Permanent Board clerk

# Orientation & Expectations

for Friends appointed to serve as board members  
of the Permanent Board  
of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends

## **Linked Resources**

[Purpose & Procedures of the Permanent Board](#)

[Core Purpose and Priorities of NEYM](#)

[Structure and Church Governance Chart](#)

[Forms of Service Chart](#)

[Guidelines for Preparing Minutes of the business of New England Yearly Meeting](#)

## **2023-2024 Meeting Schedule, with (some) key expected business for those meetings**

### **September 30 (Portland MM, ME)**

- Welcome and orientation for new members
- Review, updates, and recommendations from Coordinating & Advisory regarding ongoing work before the Yearly Meeting this year
- Friends Camp Budget FY2024 (approved by Friends Camp Committee, needs final approval by PB)

### **December 9 (tentatively at Mt. Toby MM, Leverett, MA)**

- End of year budget review (from FY2023)
- [Funding Priorities Process](#) for FY2025 (recommendation from Coordinating & Advisory), to guide Finance Committee in preparation of FY2025 budget
- Report from Sessions visioning and design Phase 1, and approval of Phase II

### **February 10 (TBD)**

- Update and seasoning of Sessions visioning and design process, Phase II, approval of Phase 3
- Initial FY2025 budget shared by Finance Committee, for PB comments, seasoning, and guidance

### **May 11 (TBD)**

- Consideration and approval, for forwarding to Sessions, of a proposal for the design of Sessions 2025 and beyond



- Presentation by Finance Committee of proposed FY2025 budget, for PB discernment, affirmation, and forwarding to Sessions for approval

*Note: There is also the likelihood of meetings immediately before and after Annual Sessions, as well as the potential for a called meeting of PB, if needed to address specific urgent concerns, given ten days' notice.*

### **Ongoing work before the Permanent Board this year**

- Building trust and strengthening the service of the Permanent Board
  - Supporting and strengthening the spiritual health and functioning of the Permanent Board (and each of its members), nurturing trust within the Board and in relation to the wider body, and improving communication and listening to help the Board serve on behalf of Friends throughout the Yearly Meeting
  - Prayerful review, reflection and, if necessary, revision of charges of working and resource groups
- Sessions visioning & design
  - A yearlong process of consultation and discernment leading to a recommendation to Sessions 2024 for the design of Sessions for 2025 and beyond
- Nurturing the growing edges of our youth ministries
  - Listening, information gathering, analysis, education, and consideration of ways to sustain, adapt, nurture, and grow our overall ministries with youth and families
- Inclusive leadership development and young adult engagement
  - Listening, information gathering, analysis, education, and consideration of ways to advance our overall work towards inclusive leadership development, including young adult engagement and support
- Addressing and transforming conflict
  - Understanding current capacities and needs, and strengthening resources available to help Friends respond in healthy ways to conflict of various kinds as it arises in the life of the Yearly Meeting
  - Holding space for respectful and truthful expressions of differing understandings and narratives of “what’s happening”, and sharing of impacts of others’ words and behaviors
- Personnel policy revision
  - Final steps in a multi-year review, updating, and revision process focused on the personnel policies of the Yearly Meeting, for which Permanent Board has governance responsibility
- Review of quarterly meetings

- As charged by Sessions in 2022 (Minute 2022-40):
  - that the Permanent Board be charged, as time and energy allow, with undertaking a review of the function of quarterly meetings historically and at present, in consultation with the clerks of the eight quarterly meetings (and with quarterly meeting ministry and counsel bodies or relevant equivalents, where applicable)*
- PB stewardship of the essential functions of Salem Quarter during a time of inactivity, including consideration of Fresh Pond Meeting's recommendation regarding Three Rivers Worship Group (as approved in Sessions 2022 minute 2022-45):
  - *Salem Quarter has declared a Jubilee or Sabbath, suspending many of its organizational functions. The following two items will be addressed as specified.*
    - *Salem Quarter grants will be distributed by the Legacy Gift Committee to refresh and restart the Legacy Futures Fund, with a preference given to applicants from the monthly meetings of Salem Quarter.*
    - *The Permanent Board has agreed to undertake other ministry-and-counsel functions of Salem Quarter, including the approval of travel minutes, laying down meetings, and recording of gifts in ministry.*
- Care of Ministry, Eldership, and Spiritual Life process
  - Sessions has charged a "Spiritual Life Listening Group" with ongoing tending of multi-year experiments with how the Yearly Meeting supports ministry, eldership, and the spiritual life of local meetings. PB may hear reports or receive requests for action in support of this ongoing work in the coming year, before this group reports again to Sessions in 2024.
- By-laws drafting and approval
  - Advised by legal counsel, creation, seasoning, and approval of a simple set of distinct organizational by-laws for the Yearly Meeting, reflecting Faith & Practice and existing policies of the Yearly Meeting. This is to simplify and clarify governance, and to facilitate the work of the organization in relation to government, business, and other organizations.
- Real estate responsibilities
  - Supporting the Secretary and Clerk of Permanent Board in assisting with the resolution of real estate matters, in partnership with local Friends, including the South Pittsfield and North Fairfield meetinghouses.
  - Consideration (if needed) of a request to renegotiate the ground lease for Moses Brown School in Providence, RI
- Development and Finance

- Nurturing awareness of the financial priorities and needs of the Yearly Meeting, and of plans and capacities (existing and possible) toward sustainable stewardship and support of Friends' shared ministries
- Continued discernment of principles to guide funding for support of other organizations in the Yearly Meeting's annual budget
- Potential recommendations relating to review of YM accounts by CPA
- Various matters referred to Permanent Board by Coordinating & Advisory Committee (C&A) for discernment or action
  - Consistent with its charge, and as led, C&A may bring matters relating to the overall work and wellbeing of the Yearly Meeting to the Permanent Board for attention and action, usually as part of reports from the Presiding Clerk or Yearly Meeting Secretary.

**NEYM Standing Committees (Accountable to Permanent Board and Sessions)**

*Serve a rotating term, usually 3 years, nominated by Nominating Committee and approved by Sessions or Permanent Board<sup>1</sup>. Charges ultimately approved by Sessions, charges and functioning reviewed regularly (and at least once every 3 years) by Coordinating & Advisory and brought to PB for review and approval.*

*During the year, the Permanent Board may hear report from these groups, or Coordinating & Advisory may refer matters relating to the work of these groups to the Board for discernment and action.*

Includes:

- Nominating
- Finance
- Archives & Historical Records
- Legacy Gift
- Friends Camp
- Sessions Planning
- Board of Managers of Investments and Permanent Funds
- Meeting Accompaniment
- Faith and Practice Revision
- Youth Ministries
- Puente de Amigos
- Nurturing Friends Education at Moses Brown School
- Coordinating & Advisory (all members ex officio)

**Working and Resource Groups (directly under the care of the Permanent Board)**

*Charged by and under the direct oversight of the Permanent Board. "Working groups" carry out*

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<sup>1</sup> For an updated list of groups formally serving on behalf of NEYM, see the *Yearly Meeting Organization and Church Governance* graphic on the page "[How We Do Things](#)" on neym.org.

*defined projects and make recommendations; “resource groups” support local meetings in discernment or engagement with Yearly Meeting commitments.*

*For Working or Resource groups, Friends serve a term usually from ~3 months to ~2 years (with ongoing review), or until completion of the specific charge approved by the Permanent Board.*

*Friends serving on working and resources groups (working, resource) are nominated by the Permanent Board Clerk in consultation with Nominating, Coordinating & Advisory, and relevant partners. Nominations are approved by the Permanent Board.*

As of Fall 2023, these include:

- Antiracism Consultation Working Group
- Right Relationship Resource Group
- Indigenous Boarding Schools Research Group
- Israel-Palestine Resource Group
- Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group

### **Advisory Groups (Accountable to the Secretary and Coordinating & Advisory)**

*Charged by the Yearly Meeting, Advisory Groups exist to provide counsel and advice in needed areas (Personnel, Development) to the Secretary or others in key leadership roles. These groups are intended to be longer-term or ongoing, with regular review to ensure those willing to serve as called bring the needed gifts, availability, skills, and expertise to support the work of the Yearly Meeting. Members of these groups are nominated by the Nominating Committee in close consultation with the Secretary, Coordinating & Advisory, or other relevant stakeholders, and approved by the Permanent Board. They are accountable to the Yearly Meeting Secretary, to the Nominating Committee, and to the Permanent Board.*

As of September 2023, these include:

- Personnel Advisory Group
- Development Advisory Group

### **Responsibilities of Friends appointed to the Permanent Board**

- Hold the work of the Permanent Board and the Yearly Meeting in prayer
- Read and consider all of the advance documents
- Contact authors of reports or agenda items, or contact the clerk of the Board, in advance with informational questions
- Regularly and prayerfully reflect on what might strengthen your own service, and on the functioning of the Board
- Seek to strengthen relationships among board members and among the Board as a body
- As able, seek to share news of the discernment of Board with Friends more widely in ways that are clear, accurate, consistent, and transparent, and that encourage understanding of the depth and substance of the work carried out by the Permanent Board on Friends' behalf

- Send regrets if unable to attend a meeting, and in general maintain contact with the PB Clerk regarding your questions, suggestions, needs, and challenges affecting your service

### **For Friends submitting reports for PB Advance Documents**

- Contact the PB Clerk as early as possible to find out if there will be time on an upcoming agenda, and to coordinate and receive guidance on preparation
- Include your name and the committee, working group, or role in which you are serving, in the report document title
- Whenever possible, follow this [linked template](#) for preparing a report to PB
- Reports for Advance Documents are usually due the Friday one week prior to the scheduled PB meeting.
- Please allow time in advance of the Friday deadline for consultation with the PB Clerk in case any revisions or modifications to your report or proposal are needed.
- Clearly state and highlight in your report any specific items you are bringing for PB approval and/or what you are asking for from the Board

### **Expectations for participation in general**

- Prepare through prayer, reading advance materials, and asking questions in advance if possible to support Friends' discernment at the meeting
- Demonstrate mindfulness that Board meetings are meetings for worship for the conduct of corporate discernment on behalf of the wider body
- Attend meetings in person:
  - if appointed to serve on the Permanent Board, with Zoom participation possible due to extenuating circumstances, by advance arrangement with the Clerk
  - if not an appointed member of the Permanent Board, but part of a local meeting in New England Yearly Meeting wishing to attend (or otherwise invited)
- Present reports or brief items remotely (if this option is available) if not an appointed member of the Permanent Board

### **Minutes of Sessions and the Permanent Board**

- [View Collected Minutes from Annual Sessions and the Permanent Board](#)

### **Policies of the Yearly Meeting**

- [View Personnel, Finance, Data Privacy, Child Safety, and other key policies on neym.org](#)

### **Other resources supporting service**

- [Child and Family Dependent Care](#)
- [Support from the Yearly Meeting Office](#), including travel reimbursement
- Contact Susan Davies, Clerk of the Permanent Board, at [pbclerk@neym.org](mailto:pbclerk@neym.org); Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, at [ymsec@neym.org](mailto:ymsec@neym.org); or Yearly Meeting Office Manager Sara Hubner at [office@neym.org](mailto:office@neym.org) or 508-754-6760

**DRAFT Minutes**  
**Permanent Board Meeting**  
**NEYM Sessions, Castleton VT**  
**August 5, 2023**

**PB 23-28 : Opening Worship**

Friends opened with a period of worship.

**PB 23-29: Clerk's Welcome and Introduction**

Leslie Manning, PB Clerk, welcomed Friends to 2023 NEYM Annual Sessions

**The recording clerk called the roll:**

**Bold** = present in the room; underline = present on Zoom,

**Leslie Manning** (PB Clerk), **Susan Davies** (PB Recording Clerk), **Kimberly Allen**, Thomas Brenner, **Deana Chase**, **Martin Forsythe**, **Christopher Gant**, **Elizabeth Hansen**, **Meg Klepack**, **Frances Lightsom**, Edward Mair, **Christopher McCandless**, **Jean McCandless**, Bob O'Connor, **Carole Rein**, **Martha Schwope**, **Liesa Stamm**, **Willa Taber**, Eleanor Warnock, **Diane Weinholtz**, **Donn Weinholtz**, **Mary Zwirner**

**Ex-Officio:** **Scott Drysdale** (Finance Clerk), **Sarah Gant** (Meeting Accompaniment clerk), **Rebecca Leuchak** (Presiding Clerk), **Noah Merrill** (YM Secretary), **Robert Murray** (YM Treasurer)

**Regrets:** Elizabeth Reuthe (Secretary's Supervisor), Peter Bishop, Darcy Drayton, Joyce Gibson, Ian Harrington, Newell Isbell Shinn, Roger Jasaitis, Anna Radocchia, John Reuthe, Aaron Sakulich (resigned), Morgan Wilson, Kathleen Wooten

**Visitors:** Marian Dalton, Bruce Neumann, Melody Brazo, Becky Phipps, Robert McClellan, Catherine Simmons, Linda Jenkins, Emily Savin, Johanna Jackson, JT Dorr, Meredith Collins, Pat Moyer, Tom Vargo, Gail Melix, **LouAnne McDonald**, **Macci Schmidt**, **Adam Korhman**, **Carl Williams**, **Jennie Isbell Shinn**, **Frederick Martin**, **Jeremiah Dickinson**, **Susannah McCandless**, **Megan Jensen**, **Minga Claggett-Borne**, **Phil Veatch**, **Ben Warner**, **Travis Belcher**, **Polly Attwood**, **Mary Link**, **Betsy Roper**, **Kristina Keefe Perry**, **David Coletta**, **Holly Baldwin**, **Peter Blood Patterson**, **Wendy Sanford**, **Susannah Schell**, **Kim West**, **Jackie Stillwell**, **Jonathan Vogel Borne**, **Lynn Taber**, **Mey Hasbrook**, **Lisa Graustein**, **Melissa Foster**, **Michelle Wright**, **Em McManamy**, **Alan Sifferlin**, **Janice Sifferlin**, **Elaine Emily**, **Janet Hough**, **Jennifer Smith**, **Sarah Smith**

**PB 23-30: Minutes from the PB meeting of May 20, 2023 at Hartford, CT**

**Friends approved**, with revisions

### **PB 23-31: YM Secretary's Report (report appended)**

Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, brought for PB approval the outline for a visioning and design process for 2024 YM Sessions and beyond (appended). This process seeks to lift up and carefully and collectively discern "What do Friends need from Sessions?" For important practical, long-range planning reasons the visioning process needs to be underway in the fall of 2023 in order to be well positioned for 2024. The Secretary clarified the request for PB to first approve, in principle, the arc of the process, with PB approval of later stages in steps. Any significant changes envisioned for Sessions 2025 will need to be approved by Sessions 2024, hence the need to begin the process this fall.

1. Will PB affirm the need to begin this process for the fall of 2023, or before January 2024?
2. Will PB approve initiation of a year-long, multi-stage visioning/exploration process, to prepare for Sessions 2025?

**FRIENDS APPROVED**, with one Friend requesting to stand aside.

### **PB 23-32: Request for approval to re-apply to Friends Foundation for the Aging (justification appended)**

Consistent with the YM grants policy, the Secretary requested that PB Friends approve YM applying for continued funding from the Foundation on Aging. It is PB's charge to approve the purpose; approval of the details is not sought.

**FRIENDS APPROVED**

### **PB 23-33: Presiding Clerk's (no written report)**

Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk, expressed care and concern for victims of Vermont flooding damage and other weather impacts. She also encouraged Friends here at Sessions to be sensitive to the needs of vulnerable Friends due to the ongoing risks of COVID, encouraging mask-wearing, hand washing and other preventive measures. The Presiding Clerk expressed gratitude for the long and faithful service of Leslie Manning as Permanent Board clerk, and informed Friends of some of the items that will come before meeting for business at the 2023 Sessions.

### **PB 23-34 Naming Committee report (report appended)**

Beth Hansen, reporting for the Naming Committee, thanked the other members of the Naming Committee, reminding Friends this is a new process, in only the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. The Naming Committee is bringing these names to serve on the Nominating Committee.

For approval to Class of 2026:

Martha Schwope (Wellesley)  
Kathy Malin, (Smithfield)  
Christopher Gant (Beacon Hill) for help with a Nominating Committee special project

Jeremiah Dickinson, member of the Naming Committee, brought forward as recording clerk for the Naming Committee, the name of :

Beth Hansen

**FRIENDS APPROVED these names**

**PB23-35: Nominating Committee report (report appended)**

Jackie Stillwell, Nominating Committee clerk, reminded Friends that the current nominating process involves a time for hearing concerns, and hearing affirmations, of Friends who are candidates for service.

Jackie Stillwell brought for approval for YM Recording Clerk, to start immediately, the name of:

Susannah McCandless (Burlington FM),

**FRIENDS APPROVED**

And for Permanent Board Recording Clerk, to start at close of 2023 Sessions,

Willa Taber (Fresh Pond)

**FRIENDS APPROVED**

**PB23-35: Youth Ministries Committee Purpose, Procedures, and Composition document**

Jackie Stillwell also brought for approval the Purpose, Procedures, and Composition document for the Youth Ministries Committee. The document is prepared for approval at Sessions. The Nominating Committee is requesting PB approval to send to Sessions.

**FRIENDS APPROVED**

**PB 23-36: Recommendation from Salem Quarter for Three Rivers Worship Group**

Because Leslie Manning, PB clerk had served on the discernment committee for Three Rivers worship group, Susan Davies, PB Recording clerk, stepped in to clerk this minute.

PB took up the recommendation of the Salem Quarter to approve Fresh Pond's recommendation that Three Rivers Worship Group become a monthly meeting. The report from Salem Quarter is available in the Advanced Documents for the June 4, 2022, meeting at p. 34.

PB minutes documenting previous discernment and background are as follows:

***PB 22-47: Salem Quarter Report and Proposals***

*The report from the Salem Quarterly Meeting (SQM) presents the discernment process, background SQM minutes, and request for PB approval of two items pertaining to the Quarter's proposed period of Sabbath.*



**PB 22-47.1** PB approval is requested regarding the SQM proposal for the NEYM Legacy Gift Committee to administer grant funds that have been held and distributed by SQM, for a Sabbath period of 1 to 2 years, as described in the appended SQM report.

**Friends approved**

**PB 22-47.2** Additionally, during the Sabbath period, SQM requests approval from PB that the following essential functions of SQM be overseen by the Permanent Board:  
receiving and endorsing travel minutes  
lifting up and laying down meetings in the Quarter  
discerning and recording gifts of ministry brought by monthly meetings of SQM.  
In the case that a monthly meeting wishes to put forward a recording of gifts of ministry, this process will be under the care and oversight of the Permanent Board, ensuring consultation, participation, and significant involvement from meetings in the Quarter, and following the process in Faith and Practice as much as possible.

These decisions were further approved at Sessions, 2022.

Consistent with the 1985 Faith and Practice, and the proposed (but not yet approved) NEYM Faith and Practice appendix on the Establishing a Monthly Meeting (<https://neym.org/faith-and-practice/appendices/establishing-monthly-meeting-3>), the Clerk proposed that a visiting committee be formed of members of the Salem Quarter.

**Friends Approved a visiting committee.**

Leslie Manning, PB clerk offered names of a committee to visit and worship with Three Rivers and report back to the Permanent Board:

Regina McCarthy (Wellesley)

Ellen Neelands (Acton)

Mary Zwirner (Beacon Hill and Permanent Board member)

No objections were raised to these Salem Quarter Friends serving on the visiting committee, but due to pressures to vacate the meeting room, Friends were prevented from more settled discernment.

**DRAFT minutes**  
**Called Meeting, at close of NEYM Sessions**  
**Permanent Board Meeting**  
**Castleton University, Castleton, VT**  
**August 9, 2023**

**PB 23-37: Opening Worship** Friends opened with a period of worship

**PB 23-38: The Recording Clerk called the roll:**

*Note: Technical difficulties interfered with the functionality of Zoom access to the meeting, preventing some Friends from participating fully.*

Bold= present in the room; underline= present on Zoom

**Susan Davies, PB Clerk; Susan Davies, PB Recording Clerk; Kimberly Allen; Darcy Drayton; Martin Forsythe; Christopher Gant; Beth Hansen; Ian Harrington; Newell Isbell Shinn; Meg Klepak, Frances Lightsom; Leslie Manning, Christopher McCandless, Bob O'Connor; Allison Randall, Carole Rein; John Reuthe; Diane Weinholtz; Donn Weinholtz; Mary Zwirner**

**Ex-Officio: Scott Drysdale (Finance Clerk); Rebecca Leuchak (Presiding Clerk), Noah Merrill (YM Secretary); Elizabeth Reuthe (Secretary's Supervisor), Sara Gant, (Meeting Accompaniment)**

**Regrets:** Tom Brenner; *Robert Murray (past- Treasurer)*; Deana Chase; Joyce Gibson; Roger Jasaitis, Carolyne Lamar Jordan; Ed Mair; Christopher McCandless; Anna Radocchia; Martha Schwope; Liesa Stamm; Willa Taber; Eleanor Warnock; Morgan Wilson; Kathleen Wooten

**Visitors: Susanna McCandless (YM Recording Clerk), Megan Jansen (YM Recording Clerk), Michelle Wright (YM Reading Clerk), Jean McCandless, Ruby Allen-Harvey, Alice Allen-Harvey, Janet Hough, Mey Hasbrook, Marian Baker, Adam Kohrman, Jackie Stillwell, Travis Belcher, Marian Dalton, LVM Shelton**

**PB 23-39: Concern for Youth and Youth Ministries**

Several Friends raised concerns for youth, elevated in their hearts by Sessions epistles from NEYM youth. Friends were reminded that at the August 5, 2023 Permanent Board meeting Friends approved the following minute:

**PB23-35: Youth Ministries Committee Purpose, Procedures, and Composition document**

Jackie Stillwell also brought for approval the Purpose, Procedures, and Composition document for the Youth Ministries Committee. The document is prepared for approval at Sessions. The Nominating Committee is requesting PB approval to send to Sessions.

**FRIENDS APPROVED**

The Youth Ministries Committee *Purpose, Procedures, and Composition* document was subsequently approved by Sessions 2023. The Youth Ministries Committee is not yet seated. Rebecca Leuchak, YM Presiding Clerk, and Clerk of the Coordinating and Advisory Committee (C&A), proposed to Permanent Board that the C&A committee bring recommendations to PB to be heard at the September 30<sup>th</sup> PB meeting. Friends affirmed this plan while noting that care of youth and youth ministries is clearly a part of the charge of the PB.

**PB 23-40: Approval of Sessions Minutes, clerked by Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk**

Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk, introduced each of the remaining minutes from Sessions 2023 requiring approval by PB. Final edited and approved Sessions 2023 minutes will be posted on the NEYM website, pending final formatting and copy editing.

**Report of Activity**  
**Fall 2023**  
**New England Yearly Meeting Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak**

Dear Friends –

The seasons change and crisp weather is just beginning to reach us here in the traditional lands of the Narragansett, Mashantucket, and Pokanoket. The Autumnal Equinox, one of my favorite times of the year. Leaves are starting to turn colors and drop to the earth. We're bringing our harvests in even as we are laying some garden beds to rest for the winter....to be ready for new growth in the spring. And so, Friends, the seasons of our work together progress as well.

Since many of us were together at Sessions 2023 in mid-August, it has been my joy to have conversations with many Friends who served in making our gathering a full and enriching experience. Debriefing with groups and individuals who support us in that gathering and carefully reviewing participants' evaluations have been useful to me personally as well as to our faithful program planners. The thoughtful feedback provided by those who completed the on-line evaluation form is invaluable and I urge us all to take very seriously this vehicle for communicating reflections, ideas, hopes you all hold for this community gathering. Please take a moment to complete this annual evaluation when it comes to your in-box. Your reflections are very important as this input informs the planning for future Sessions gatherings.

I have been communicating with many of you, members of the Permanent Board Committee, and other Friends across the Yearly Meeting on a number of concerns that have been central to our community including some matters that arose during Sessions and in particular our responses as a community to situations of conflict. I thank those Friends who have been able to meet with me to share their perspectives on this matter and for those with whom I intend to speak in the near future. From conversations, I understand that Friends are keen to help move forward nominations for a working group on strengthening capacities for response to conflict arising in the life and work of the Yearly Meeting. The gifts and skills we identified during worshipful reflection in meeting for business at Sessions will assist us in discerning the composition of such a group, if approved.

The Coordinating and Advisory Committee, on which I serve as committee clerk, held a Fall working retreat at Woolman Hill Retreat Center in Deerfield, Massachusetts last weekend. We work under the charge given to the Committee by the Yearly Meeting: "The Coordinating and Advisory Committee (C&A) shepherds the work of the Yearly Meeting in alignment with the core purpose and the 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."

We continued discernment on a number of issues, including some proposals brought to you for this Fall meeting of the Permanent Board, and began work on a number of new matters (see the separate report of the Committee included in the PB Advance Documents).

One pattern of faithfulness that it is essential for us all to hold responsibly is the practice of clear and open communication and accuracy of information sharing. While it is inevitable that exchanges are sometimes misunderstood or misrepresented. There has been an increasing pattern of oral and written messages sent and received among us which involve information that is in fact not correct. The members of the Coordinating and Advisory Committee are concerned with trends in this direction which create potential for difficulties in relations and erosion of trust. The materials the Committee brings before you today are an attempt to correct some misperceptions, as well as recommendation for moving forward along our growing edges. We welcome your questions and ideas.

To listen and to learn about the many strands of care and concern within our community, I have been active in my ex-officio role in a number of committees, working groups, and resource groups (Finance Committee, Legacy Gift Committee, Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness, Right Relationship Resource Group, Nurturing Friends Education at Moses Brown.) This has been rich engagement, and from time spent with the Friends who serve on these bodies, I witness example of faithful and steadfast service to the Divine. And allow me to add that I am grateful for your work here on Permanent Board and in the many other ways that you are fully present in our community.

Thank you!

In all of the above, in all that we are doing, it is important to keep before us what is essential - the guidance of Spirit to lead us forward – building trust, leaning into and working through conflicts, holding each other in tender love as we build and strengthen our community upon the foundation of God's love and grace.

Looking forward to our meeting together, I hope that wherever this Fall finds you, Spirit abides.

Rebecca Leuchak  
Presiding Clerk

**Coordinating and Advisory Committee  
Report to Permanent Board  
30 September 2023**

Friends are reminded of the purpose of our Coordinating and Advisory Committee, as charged by the Yearly Meeting:

**“The Coordinating and Advisory Committee (C&A) shepherds the work of the Yearly Meeting in alignment with the core purpose and the 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.”**

Coordinating and Advisory Committee work involves coordinative perspectives and long-term visioning for our Yearly Meeting, seeking to be always Spirit-led, grounded in and supportive of the Yearly Meeting’s vision.

The Committee serves to move the work of the Yearly Meeting forward in obedience to those responsibilities, recognizing the importance of affirming clear direction and priorities for our work in order to provide guidance. Since our last report to Permanent Board, we have attended to the following matters:

1. A regular review of the “Forms of Service” structural chart outlining the collaborative forms we create for our work together. Available [here](#).
2. Review of the Yearly Meeting’s model of programming, logistics, services, and funding for the event of Annual Sessions with intention for supporting the process of Sessions long-range planning through potential reimagining in a creative, dynamic, consultative, and timely way. This work and the resultant Recommendation for Sessions Visioning & Design process was approved by the Permanent Board at its August 5, 2023 meeting and the full recommendation including the details of a planning process and site search update may be found in the Advance Documents.

The following two major areas of our work on which we have focused were reinforced by concerns raised at Sessions this August:

3. Discernment concerning the **health of and support for Youth Programs of the Yearly Meeting**. This is a priority and the sharing at Yearly Meeting Sessions of concerns and urgings from some members of our community was tenderly and gratefully heard. Friends are reminded of where we are at this moment. The [Youth Ministries Committee's charge, purposes and procedures](#) have been approved. The Nominating Committee has secured service of some Friends for this work and is prioritizing finding additional members to serve. Through ongoing discernment and

appreciation for the great potential of integrated, collaborative visioning, Coordinating and Advisory Committee wishes to propose that Permanent Board take the following action:

**Approve a charge to Coordinating and Advisory Committee that they bring back to PB for consideration (and approval) in December a Consultative Process that will guide us in an inclusive and responsive understanding of our needs for Youth Programs as a Yearly Meeting, including direct response to the needs of our monthly meetings. This highly consultative work will be assigned to Coordinating and Advisory in collaboration with Youth Ministries Committee with its vital role of nurturing youth programs, and with the assistance, support, and input from our Yearly Meeting staff. The aim of this work is to put forward a plan for mission, evaluation, dialog and integrative visioning of our Youth Programs, highlighting specific and concrete priorities with which we can align the functions of Youth Programs going forward. This will be accompanied by proposed action steps, under the care of the respective committee and staff charged with this work, all in an effort to advance our growing edges of this essential life within our community.**

4. The prayerful attention of the Committee is ongoing concerning the dynamics of conflict and response to conflict within our community. We are very aware that this is an issue of vital concern and the members of the Coordinating and Advisory Committee have drafted a proposal for Permanent Board's consideration: **Pathways and Practices for Responding to Conflict in the Life and Service of New England Friends.** (advance documents)

This document seeks to:

- 1) offer a general framing and description of dynamics of conflict as they manifest in the life of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (NEYM);
- 2) clarify, summarize, and articulate current pathways and practices for responding to conflict within NEYM, and
- 3) offer recommendations for next steps in strengthening capacities for response to conflict.

The document seeks to present both a framing of an approach to conflict consistent with Quaker faith and current practice in the Yearly Meeting, and to make explicit specific pathways and responsibilities that exist currently. We are aware that these already existent measures may not have here-to-fore been clearly enough communicated to Friends in our Yearly Meeting community.

We ask that Permanent Board endorse the initial reflections from the Coordinating and Advisory Committee on where attention might helpfully be focused as we look ahead. A full recommendation of next steps will be presented at the Permanent Board Committee meeting in December.

### **Recommendations for Attention Going Forward**

The document **Pathways and Practices for Responding to Conflict in the Life and Service of New England Friends** seeks to present both a framing of an approach to conflict consistent with

Quaker faith and current practice in the Yearly Meeting, and to make explicit specific pathways and responsibilities that exist currently. Below are some initial reflections from the Coordinating and Advisory Committee on where attention might helpfully be focused as we look ahead (excerpted from the full report):

**We recommend that the Yearly Meeting:**

- 1. Reflect on ways in which the practices described above are functioning currently, and how they might be strengthened or changed to better serve these purposes;**
- 2. Explore ways to more effectively and consistently communicate pathways for responding to conflict, recognizing that many Friends may not be aware (or may need of be reminded) of these practices;**
- 3. Consider opportunities and capacities for ongoing education, training, and engagement with skills and methodologies for responding to conflict consistent with Friends faith and practice, both for Friends generally and for those charged with specific responsibilities for response to conflict in the life of the Yearly Meeting. This would potentially include committee and working/resource group clerks, staff, youth ministries volunteers, and Friends serving in other volunteer leadership roles;**
- 4. Examine how resources or capacities developed might relate to our primary purpose of strengthening the life and ministry of local meetings, and how efforts focused on response to conflict arising beyond the scope of a local meeting might relate to and be informed by wisdom and existing practice in local meetings;**
- 5. Integrate insights from the steps above into the ongoing work of the Yearly Meeting, including especially the work of the Nominating Committee to nurture and support the expressions of gifts and skills in service, and to support the functioning of the Yearly Meeting as a whole.**

**In support of this, the Coordinating & Advisory Committee recommends that C&A be charged by the Permanent Board, in consultation with Nominating Committee and consistent with our practice, to bring forward to the December 9, 2023 meeting of the Permanent Board a charge and nominations for a working group on strengthening capacities for response to conflict arising in the life and work of the Yearly Meeting, to make recommendations to Permanent Board for further discernment and action.**

Discernment of nominations to serve as part of this working group would include Friends with relevant gifts, skills, and experience who have expressed their availability and interest, as well as other Friends whose names may rise in this process, to allow for broad consideration. Consistent with Sessions Minute 2023-703, this working group would also include the Presiding Clerk, Clerk of Ministry & Counsel, and Clerk of the Permanent Board.

The work of the Coordinating and Advisory Committee is not only the above, but we hope that for this meeting these matters will be useful and important to prayerfully consider.

In Light and Love,



Rebecca Leuchak

Presiding Clerk/Clerk of Coordinating and Advisory Committee

On behalf of the members of the Coordinating and Advisory Committee: Susan Davies (Permanent Board Clerk), Scott Drysdale (Finance Committee Clerk), Noah Merrill (Yearly Meeting Secretary), Bob Murray (Yearly Meeting Treasurer), Elizabeth Reuthe (Supervisor of the Yearly Meeting Secretary), Carl Williams (Yearly Meeting Ministry and Counsel Clerk)

# Frequently Asked Questions: Youth and Young Adult Ministries

*At Sessions this August, some Friends expressed interest in and concern for the ways NEYM nurtures the spiritual life of youth and young adult Friends, and how that work has evolved in recent years. Below is a synthesis of key information which has been discerned and shared in various reports and consultation processes over the past decade, structured in a “Frequently Asked Questions” format.*

*The purpose of this document is to give more Friends a shared foundation of factual information and context necessary to engage in further conversations and discernment to ensure our youth ministries have the support and guidance needed to thrive into the future.*

*If, reading this draft, you find you have additional informational questions or suggestions for strengthening this document to be a more helpful resource for Friends as we continue this work, please contact Yearly Meeting Secretary Noah Merrill ([ymsec@neym.org](mailto:ymsec@neym.org)) and Program Director Nia Thomas ([Nia@neym.org](mailto:Nia@neym.org)).*

## **Q: Is the Yearly Meeting reducing funds for youth and young adult ministries?**

A: **No.** In fact, funding in support of programs for youth, families, and young adults in the Yearly Meeting’s operating budget—including staff time, program expenses, and more—supporting youth ministries has only *increased* in recent years.

In addition to sustaining the levels of budgeted funds, including staff time, spent supporting youth ministries including our long-cherished retreat programs, NEYM has recently begun making use of a *Growing Edges Fund* thanks to a generous multi-year financial gift for this purpose. This fund supports projects that are on the “growing edges” of NEYM’s youth ministries, ways to explore new, creative, and experimental possibilities to reach and minister to and with youth and families.

In the past year, the fund has been used to support projects focused on support for Quaker families and parents, as well as to increase outreach to Quaker-curious families with children attending Friends Camp. Looking forward, we hope this fund can also enable Spirit-led initiatives happening locally, service-focused youth offerings, and “bridging” initiatives geared towards teens as they depart high school and step into early adulthood. Since Sessions, these funds have also been offered, as part of ongoing

conversations, to support additional informal support for some younger adults who have expressed hopes for opportunities for refreshment and connection beyond existing programming focused on life-stage-appropriate spiritual formation and vocational discernment for younger adults.

In addition to this fund, conversations and consultation are underway about the possibility of establishing an endowment providing ongoing annual support for youth spiritual formation activities, both now and in the future.

Furthermore, in the past two years the Yearly Meeting has invested substantial new resources to take proactive steps toward renewed or new engagement with families and youth. A key example of this is the decision by the Permanent Board, at the recommendation of the Program Director and youth ministries staff, to dedicate \$20,000 in funds from the YM's operating reserves to ensure that the YM could provide no-charge attendance to *all* youth at Sessions 2022. This bold effort has been credited by many families (and by youth ministers from multiple monthly meetings) with encouraging families' return to in-person Sessions, and the sustained and increased participation of many families and youth at Sessions 2023 affirms this ongoing commitment.

**Q: I've heard there are fewer retreats being offered than in previous years. Is that true, and if so, why is that?**

A: This school year (2023-2024) we are offering the same number of retreats for Junior Yearly Meeting (elementary age) and Young Friends (high school age) youth as well as for young adults as were offered last year. For the Junior High Yearly Meeting (middle school) program, there are one fewer weekend retreats scheduled than last year. This decision was made primarily to create a more manageable workflow for the Coordinator, and to allocate sufficient time to embrace the full scope of responsibilities within the Children and Family Ministries Coordinator role. This decision was also informed by the small number of youth currently participating in this program, where a number of recent retreats have served fewer than ten youth.

Beyond this one shift from last year to this school year, over the last five years, there has been some other reduction in the number of weekend retreats offered. This gradual reduction is due to four key factors:

- **Reduced retreat attendance levels.** As has been reported consistently, our teen retreats now average an attendance of about 25% of what they were ten years ago. It is important to note that this dramatic decline in attendance is consistent

not only with demographic “waves” within our Yearly Meeting but also across the liberal Quaker world and liberal faith communities in general. This is to say, it is a widespread external reality, not simply a challenge we are facing in the youth programs of New England Yearly Meeting.

Not only are significantly fewer families participating in Quaker meetings and churches at this time, the model of weekend retreats—which comes with so many long-cherished strengths—is also increasingly in conflict with economic and cultural realities for many youth and families. Notable factors include: youth activities which require weekend participation now impacting almost all teenagers, youth and parent exhaustion levels from living heavily scheduled lives, working parents unable to drive long distances, and youth being more risk-averse (less likely to feel comfortable attending a weekend-long gathering for the first time or when they do not know the other participants well).

- **The increase in resources required to offer safe and high-quality retreats at this time.** Over the past thirty years, retreat participant needs have increased. With many families and youth living in increasingly stressful and strained circumstances, many arrive at our events with significant pastoral care needs.

Because an increasing proportion of retreat participants do not have an active connection to a local meeting, more of the outreach, follow up, and basic introduction to Quakerism needed to support these participants falls to coordinators. When families are not connected to meetings (and in many cases when families are connected), many youth and families expect coordinators to play a primary pastoral support role outside of retreats that they are not equipped to play in the longer term. In some of our programs, volunteer capacity has been declining and the burden carried by retreat coordinators has become heavier in many arenas.

The pandemic exacerbated these long-term trends and added health and safety planning and management to the work of offering retreats. Many denominations have seen their version of weekend retreats programs dissolve in recent decades. It is a testament to the incredible dedication, vision, and skill of so many volunteers, parents, youth, local meetings, and, of course, coordinators that our programs continue to be such a source of joy and spiritual sustenance amid these momentous challenges outside of our scope of control.

- While we joyfully continue to offer our beloved weekend retreats, we recognize that **weekend retreats are not accessible or desirable for all youth and that,**

**for many youth and families, retreats alone do not provide holistic faith formation and a long-term sense of belonging to the Quaker faith into adulthood.**

Because retreats are only one component of the faith formation and leadership development which the Yearly Meeting hopes to help to offer Quaker and Quaker-curious youth, we have a commitment to exploring and supporting other approaches and models that can be offered in addition to seasonal weekend retreats. This requires prioritizing time, energy, and attention.

At the bottom of this document, you will find the *Areas of Focus* developed over several years that guide the Youth Ministries Staff in their shared work which includes—and goes beyond—weekend retreats. While there has been much energy and Life discovered in committing to, sharing widely about, and beginning to grow into these *Areas of Focus* in the past few years, it is clear that this is long-term work, requiring diligence, adaptation, patience, creativity, conversation, and partnership.

- A final consideration in setting the retreat schedule for the school year is a **commitment to creating manageable workloads for staff to do high-quality work and a sustainable rate**. While many Yearly Meetings and Quaker organizations are confronting widespread burnout and high staff turnover, we strive to support healthy, realistic expectations for all staff.

A reality that may be invisible to many Friends is that some previous youth coordinators worked far beyond the number of hours required or budgeted for their terms of employment, essentially volunteering hundreds of hours of service each year in addition to their staff role. While there is so much to be grateful for that was made possible by these tremendous contributions, it is not appropriate for our Yearly Meeting to expect current and future staff to be willing to do this, or enjoy the life circumstances that allow them to contribute consistently in such a sacrificial way.

As we are now in a time of staff transitions, this is an opportunity for the Yearly Meeting to stand by its commitment to inclusive leadership development, making space for staff with family and other substantial commitments to succeed in their service.

**Q: I've heard concerns that there are insufficient volunteers willing to serve as staff for our youth programs. Is this true?**

Over the last decade, recruiting enough well-qualified volunteers to serve as youth programs staff has been an increasing challenge despite extensive time spent on recruitment efforts.

Some older Friends who have served these programs for decades have stepped back due to the impact of aging and the need for more rest. Many working-age Friends face barriers to serving a week-long event in the summer due to limited time off and the need to avoid loss of income from time away from paid work.

Coming out of Sessions this year, recruitment is a key challenge being held by Sessions planners and options—including offering financial stipends to a much larger group of volunteers—are being actively explored.

**Q: With whom can I share my hopes, concerns, offers of service and resources, and insights?**

**Kara Price** ([kara@neym.org](mailto:kara@neym.org)) serves as the Children and Family Ministries Coordinator.

**Drew Chasse** ([drew@neym.org](mailto:drew@neym.org)) serves as the Interim Young Friends Coordinator while the search for the new Teen and Outreach Ministries Coordinator is underway.

**Nia Thomas** ([nia@neym.org](mailto:nia@neym.org)), Program Director, supervises the youth ministry staff and has primary responsibility for young adult-specific programming while the Teen and Outreach Ministries Coordinator search is underway.

**Noah Merrill** ([ymsec@neym.org](mailto:ymsec@neym.org)), Yearly Meeting Secretary, has overall responsibility for the Yearly Meeting staff and care for the wider ministries of the Yearly Meeting.

## Areas of Focus: Youth Ministries Team

*[These Areas of Focus reflect the guiding priorities for the ongoing service of the Youth Ministries staff of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends. This articulation was first shared with youth, families, and meetings, along with a letter inviting partnership and conversation, in July 2020, and arise from consultation, discernment, and learning over several years prior.]*

- 1. Provide youth with flexible opportunities for spiritual nurture, faith formation, loving care, and relationship building**
  - a. Experiment with methods beyond big group weekend long retreats
  - b. With YFs, shift towards localized “youth group” model, building partnerships with local meetings
  - c. Provide a consistency of care and sense of belonging for current participants even as forms change
  
- 2. Increase skills, motivation, and capacity of local meetings to support the faith formation of youth and families**
  - a. Help meetings grow in the purposefulness and effectiveness of their youth ministries
  - b. Help meetings connect the dots between ministry for their youth and families, engagement in their local community, and justice concerns
  - c. Help more Friends without school age children better understand how this pandemic and related challenges have affected and are affecting families and youth and how to be responsive
  
- 3. Nurture and develop the leadership of seasoned and emerging youth ministers and religious education teachers**
  - a. Offer opportunities for reflection, connection, and mentoring
  - b. Seek to grow generative partnerships that will serve more youth and families across New England
  
- 4. Empower Quaker parents**
  - a. Both directly and through our relationship with local meetings, encourage practice of the Quaker faith at home
  - b. Amplify the experiences of Quaker parents and families in places where it can inform Yearly Meeting decision making throughout the year
  
- 5. Share the story of what is emerging within our vibrant, resilient, and multigenerational faith**
  - a. Communicate regularly with Friends outside the “youth ministries box” about “the wide bridge” we are building so more people hop on

# **2025+ Sessions Visioning & Design**

## **Process Overview, Proposed Charge for Phase 1, and Site Search Update**

*Recent years have brought many changes, both internal and external, to the context and circumstances surrounding NEYM Annual Sessions. These include increasing costs, diminished capacity to pay on the part of many Friends and families, reduced and shifting patterns of attendance, increased demand for supportive services and capacities, reductions in volunteer availability, and growing awareness of the need to focus and prioritize limited attention and resources.*

*In light of all of these changes, the Yearly Meeting's model of programming, logistics, services, and funding for the event of Annual Sessions is in need of review and reimagining. With an overall financial deficit for Sessions 2022, a projected deficit for Sessions 2023, as well as a relatively low level of operating reserves as of summer 2023, there is a need to carry out this review and reimagining creatively, dynamically, consultatively, and in a timely way.*

—Recommendation for Sessions Visioning & Design process, approved by  
Permanent Board 8/5/2023

As a next step in carrying out the [proposal approved by the Permanent Board in August 2023](#) (referenced above), this document presents:

- 1) An **overview of the year-long process** for visioning and design for the future of New England Yearly Meeting's Annual Sessions to inform planning for Sessions 2025 and beyond<sup>1</sup>;
- 2) A **detailed charge for Phase 1** of that process, to take place in the fall and winter of 2023; and
- 3) An **update** on reactivating and completing a concurrent **site search process** to identify and assess possible locations and facilities in the Northeast that might support whatever design and requirements are ultimately approved.

*Questions and suggestions related to this approval may be shared with the Yearly Meeting Secretary ([ymsec@neym.org](mailto:ymsec@neym.org)) and/or Sessions Planning Clerk ([sessions@neym.org](mailto:sessions@neym.org)).*

### **1. Overview**

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<sup>1</sup> See Sessions overview timeline and graphic in Appendices, below.



- a. Consistent with the approved proposal, this document envisions a year-long process of listening, consultation, clarification, and design leading to a recommendation for a new approach to the event of NEYM Annual Sessions that will guide planning and implementation for Sessions 2025 and beyond, at a minimum for the next three years (2025-2027).
- b. The process as a whole would take place between September 2023 and Sessions 2024, and be divided into three phases:
  - i. Phase 1 (Sept-Dec 2023): Identifying and articulating key issues, challenges, and dynamics involved in planning and implementing Annual Sessions. *Consultant working closely with those in key roles.*
  - ii. Phase 2 (Dec-May 2024): Wide consultation and listening (with particular emphasis on the hopes and responses arising from and supportive of local meetings); analysis of responses and implications; and recommendations for Sessions design; to Permanent Board to guide development of final proposal. *Working group with key involvement of Sessions Planning Clerk, Sessions planners.*
  - iii. Phase 3 (May-July 2024): Clarifying and improving recommendations, identifying needed resources, and developing a plan for implementation following Sessions 2024. *Working group with key involvement of Sessions Planning Clerk, Sessions planners.*

This process will result in a final proposal to be brought to the Permanent Board prior to Sessions 2024 for final review and forwarding to Annual Sessions in 2024 for approval<sup>2</sup>.

## **2. Charge for Phase 1: Identifying the Essential Issues**

- Exploration will include, but not be limited to, articulating financial dynamics (costs of planning, implementations, and attendance), relational dynamics (how current approaches affect relationships with individuals, families, and local meetings) as well as dynamics related to resources (recruitment, accessibility, energy, attention) and lifting up tradeoffs in these and other important areas.
- Articulating tensions experienced as inherent to Sessions as currently constituted (e.g. desire for more time and consideration of substantive matters in business meeting vs. interest in more spacious time for fellowship and worship without

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<sup>2</sup> While changes are not anticipated, this projected timeline and process is of course subject to change due to external factors and extenuating circumstances, including the availability and timeline of facilities which might host YM Sessions. As has been the case for several decades, the Yearly Meeting Secretary is ultimately responsible for making decisions relating to arrangements for Sessions, consulting with the Clerk of Sessions Planning, the Events Coordinator, and the Coordinating & Advisory Committee.

business)

- Mapping out or documenting pros, cons, tradeoffs and unknowns for general models that have been considered in recent years (in-person residential, online only, hybrid, non-residential)
- Engaging an external consultant to provide leadership to this Phase, and to conduct interviews of Friends who hold or have recently held a major role with responsibilities for the planning and implementation of Annual Sessions.
  - This consultant would work closely with the Secretary and other Sessions planners to gather, analyze, and interpret the challenges and key considerations identified in this process, to inform the next steps of the process.
  - This person would need strong listening and interviewing skills, systems thinking gifts, capacity to analyze, organize, and express in writing complicated issues, and the ability to get to the heart of complex matters.
- This Phase 1 process should include inviting initial input (via survey, phone conversation, or otherwise) with those holding a major Sessions role, with the hope of ensuring the process benefits from their insights and experience from the very beginning.
- A summary report from this process will be presented to the Permanent Board in February 2024, along with a detailed charge for Phase 2, along with any needed nominations (in consultation with the nominating committee) for that phase.

### **3. Update on Sessions Site Search**

Because we are conducting the process articulated above in order to provide guidance for planning to implement recommendations to begin in fall 2024, we will also need to know by then what sites may be available to us before much of that planning can proceed. Whatever direction we take will need to be supported by appropriate facilities and resources. This process should draw out and lift up our deepest hopes; it must also be grounded in reality. Therefore, a small team distinct from the groups exploring visioning and design will proceed in parallel with the process described above.

The goal of this group will be to evaluate a variety of possible sites throughout the Northeast to inventory and assess their capacities and availability to support a variety of needs (accessibility, cost, location, skills, physical plant). The focus of that process is to determine a range of sites that could support various types of Sessions gatherings, beyond simply evaluating their suitability for Sessions as currently shaped.

This team will be led by the Events Coordinator and will include invitations to Friends who have been involved in Sessions site search efforts in recent years. Its purpose will be to develop, by May 2024, a menu of possible sites, with various strengths and

weaknesses of each, to help inform the final discernment of the plan for 2025 and beyond, and to ground next steps in the realities of existing and available locations and facilities.

###

**Appendix 1:** [Link to Sessions Visioning & Design Proposal](#) as approved by PB, 8/5/2023.

**Appendix 2:** Timeline of Key Milestones.

	Sessions 2024 prep	Longer-term visioning & design
September 2023	Update to PB re: '24 location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposal for process overall, and detail for Phase 1 approved</li> </ul>
October 2023	<i>Theme and Speakers begin by EOM</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site Search Group is reactivated to help people understand site possibilities and limitations with different Sessions models</li> </ul>
November 2023		
December 2023	Permanent board (12/9) <i>Speaker and theme Finalized</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report back from Phase 1; proposal and nominations for Phase 2</li> </ul>
January 2024		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch of Phase 2</li> </ul>
February 2024	Permanent Board (2/10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update to PB on process and any needed clarifications of charge and direction</li> </ul>
March 2024	<i>Plenary and BHH speakers announced</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth staff map out implications of different Sessions models</li> </ul>
April 2024	<i>Invitation to Sessions materials due</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listeners/working group members and staff work together to sketch out trade-offs/implications of potential recommendations</li> </ul>

May 2024	<i>Updates to the YM website and RegFox registration set up.</i>  Permanent Board (5/11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phase II report seeking PB affirmation; along with sketch of known implications, detailed charge for Phase 3</li> </ul>
June 2024	<i>Registration launches 6/1</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch of Phase 3</li> <li>Development of recommendations to implement approved recommendations from Phase 2</li> </ul>
July 2024		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phase 3 continues</li> </ul>
August 2024		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final recommendations for Sessions vision and design presented to PB, Sessions 2024 for approval</li> </ul>
September 2024		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning for Sessions 2025 begins, guided by approved recommendations</li> </ul>

**Appendix 3:** Graphic of Three Parallel Processes happening in 2023-2024.



NEYM Nominating Committee Report to Permanent Board  
24 September 2023

Nominating Committee met on 7 September and welcomed five new members. There are currently 7 openings on the committee if you or someone you know is called to serve. Please let the Permanent Board Clerk know, as the Naming Committee for this year is in the process of being formed.

In addition to the *First Readings* below, there are several areas of service that are currently open and we hope to fill them as soon as possible to support a positive transition. Please share any leadings of Friends who might be a good match for the Clerk's Table Reading or Recording Clerks, Sessions Clerk, Treasurer or Youth Ministries Committee – clerk and two new members.

Use this link for the descriptions of service on the NEYM [website](#). Here is the introduction to the Youth Ministries Committee: *The Youth Ministries Committee serves to support the work of nurturing the faith life, spiritual growth, and leadership of children and youth of New England Yearly Meeting. The committee sees children as fully spiritual beings and advocates for this perspective within the Yearly Meeting (YM). The committee works 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.* Link to the complete [PP&C](#).

There are many other opportunities for service reflected in the slate in the advance documents. Please send us your suggestions.

The process for approving nominations by Permanent Board during the year is to send *first readings* in this written report a week or so in advance of the Permanent Board meeting. Any concerns, questions or affirmations should be communicated immediately to the Nominating Committee clerk. The clerk will follow-up with a nominee to share concerns without naming who brought them forward. The focus will be on the concerns and how they may be addressed. Depending on the outcome of this exchange, the nominee will either be brought forward for second reading, or withdrawn from the nomination. Depending on the situation, there may be a brief mention of the concerns and response.

**Theme and Speakers Team** begins its work immediately after sessions. At sessions we approved two continuing members from last year. They will be joined by the Sessions Clerk and the Presiding Clerk and hopefully three new members. The work of this Team is essentially to gather a sense of how Spirit is moving (or impeded) in the wider body, distill a theme for the coming year, discern and invite guest speakers for sessions 2024. A complete description of the work can be found [here](#). Members are approved for one year of service.

Gifts and Skills hoped for:

The work of discerning a theme and discerning speakers can be considered to be halves of a whole, and the Theme and Speakers team needs Friends who have gifts in both directions.

Friends with a sense of what we are yearning for and what we need to hear may bring depth to the discernment of the theme, while Friends connected to wider Quaker communities, like FGC, FUM, other Yearly Meetings, as well as bloggers, elders and mentors, would be helpful in naming and contacting potential speakers.

*First Reading:*

**Theme and Speakers Team – Jennie Isabel-Shinn, Mt Toby Meeting**

**Theme and Speakers Team – Isaiah Grace, Beacon Hill Meeting**

**Theme and Speakers Team – Jay O’Hara, Portland Meeting**

Each of these Friends is grounded in Spirit, perceptive of how Spirit is moving around them, as well as being well traveled among Friends outside our yearly meeting.

**Friends Committee on National Legislation** A total of 6 representatives are appointed by NEYM. Currently serving are Betsy Cazden (Providence), and Jim Grace (Beacon Hill).

*First Reading:*

**FCNL Representative – Scot Drysdale, Hanover Meeting** – currently serving on FCNL Policy Committee.

**FCNL Representative – Matt Southworth, Wellesley Meeting**

**FCNL Representative – Kaj Telenar, Wellesley Meeting**

The above *First Readings* will come forward for *Second Readings* and hopefully approval at the Permanent Board meeting on 30 September. Please contact me with affirmations, questions, or concerns immediately so follow-up can be done prior to that meeting.

Faithfully,  
Jacqueline Stillwell (Monadnock)  
Clerk, NEYM Nominating Committee  
(603)933-2608 or [jacqueline.stillwell@gmail.com](mailto:jacqueline.stillwell@gmail.com)

Nominating Committee members: Sara Smith (Concord), Anna Lindo (Framingham), Beth Hanson (Westerly), Chris Gant (Beacon Hill), Tim Lamm (Worcester), Kathy Malin (Smithfield), Martha Schwope (Wellesley)

**Report from the Three Rivers Visiting Committee  
September 24, 2023**

Dear Susan,

We hope the attached report communicates our intent in carrying out our duties as a Listening Committee. Hopefully, clarity about our work will free up the Permanent Board for further processing the August meeting.

In the Light,

Ellen, Mary, and Regina

**Report from the Three Rivers Visiting Committee**  
(Regina McCarthy, Ellen Neelands, and Mary Zwirner)  
September 24, 2023

We understand our work as fulfilling the role of a designated visiting committee of Salem Quarter, as outlined in the [Faith and Practice chapter on establishing new meetings](#). We are reporting to Permanent Board, in lieu of Salem Quarter, due to the Sabbatical.

Confusion about the process of establishing a meeting during the Salem Quarter sabbatical, has created friction and hard feelings, adding to our work, in ways not anticipated by Faith & Practice. We believe in the healing of deep, respectful listening. Accordingly, we plan to listen for the diversity of voices in our communities, in two stages:

1. Consultation & visitation with the Three Rivers community. We have listened to the hosts, and are in the process of setting up a listening time, with the shared goal of, "raising up what is on people's hearts: hopes, fears, concerns, all of it."
2. Consultation and deep listening with the Salem Quarter community. Planning for this stage will be built on the first, likely with similar goals. Naturally, Permanent Board members who are a part of Salem Quarter will be included in our work with the Quarter.

We intend to continue to keep you apprised of our progress along the way, and are always happy to receive your guidance and input as we embark upon this important work. We are, of course, happy to answer any questions that we can. We suggest that people with questions about Three Rivers attend worship with them and go to their website to find out more.

Ultimately, we plan to bring a report to Permanent Board that reflects the complex tapestry of voices within Salem Quarter, including the part of Salem Quarter known as the Three Rivers Worship Group.

In the Light,

Mary, Ellen, and Regina

September 25, 2023