

A Proposal for A Sabbath / Jubilee period of renewal and relationship in Salem Quarter, in preparation for discerning a way forward for the Quarterly Meeting.

Approved May 22, 2022

“Sabbath is not simply the pause that refreshes. It is the pause that transforms... Sabbath is an invitation to receptivity, an acknowledgment that what is needed is given and need not be seized.” – Walter Brueggemann, Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now

Essential Question at Hand:

The overarching purpose of this Sabbath Period is to open up a space of Holy experimentation; to make room for Spirit-led discernment. It is the hope of this committee that a period of rest and rekindling of relationships might lead to clarity.

As a Quarter we are opening ourselves to Spirit and movement. We are inviting God to come into the Quarter. In a sense we are letting the structure go. Setting it free. We've taken care to assign all the essential business pieces to other bodies and then offer Monthly Meetings the opportunity of planning gatherings. Practically, we are giving up control of the committees of the Quarter, with the goal of revisiting the question of its future at the end of this Sabbath.

Background from SQM Listening Session:

At a listening session held January 22, 2022, Friends learned that the terms of the current officers are up in Spring of 2022. With the exception of the Treasurer, who is serving an additional term, no one has stepped forward into leadership of the Quarter. In fact, no one is called into service on the committees of the Quarter. Those gathered participated in a brainstorming activity. After reflecting on our activity and discussion grounded in worship we were clear to proceed in developing a proposal that outlines a period of Sabbath for the Quarter. This proposal will be brought to our next gathering of business. This period of Sabbath ought to be one that lifts up connection, possibilities for delight, and opportunities for grief and lament. This should be a time for making space and discovering a new thing.

Proposal

How long might this Sabbath last?

- This Sabbath period will begin in Spring 2022 and last no longer than Spring 2024. The determining factor on the back end is that Legacy Gifts can no longer oversee the Quarter Grants after Spring 2024.

During this time of rest, how will the Quarter respond to essential work that it is supposed to do according to NEYM's Faith and Practice?

The Clerk of the Permanent Board of Yearly Meeting has agreed that the Permanent Board will consider assuming oversight and facilitate the following areas of business, including publicizing them to Monthly Meetings Salem Quarter. The Permanent Board will actively encourage and invite members of Salem Quarterly Meeting to participate with the work of the Permanent Board as it pertains to any Salem Quarterly Meeting business that comes to the Permanent Board. Specifically, in the event that any request for the recording of a gift in the ministry comes to the Permanent Board, we ask that they explicitly invite the involvement of members of Salem Quarterly Meeting monthly meetings in any discernment process that emerges:

1. receiving and endorsing travel minutes that come from Monthly Meetings for travel beyond the Quarter,
2. lifting up and laying down meetings in the Quarter,
3. discerning the Recording of Gifts of Ministry brought by a Monthly Meeting in the Quarter,

Administering the various funds we have as a Quarter:

- Administration of the Salem Quarter Grant Funds will be overseen by the Legacy Gifts Committee. Please see THIS PROPOSAL for the refreshing of the Legacy Futures Fund using the interest earned on principle of Salem Quarter investments in the Pooled Funds of NEYM, with priority given to members of Salem Quarter.
- The BuffamBreedBoyce (BBB) Funds for Suffering will be overseen by the Treasurer of the Quarterly Meeting in conjunction with consultation from the Monthly Meeting clerk making the request for those funds. Requests are made to the Treasurer on behalf of Friends-in-need by a Meeting Clerk, potentially in collaboration with a support committee, as a meeting discerns. The funds are distributed discreetly.

What kinds of programming will occur during the Sabbath period?

Our focus during this year is fourfold, and will become more defined through input:

- Ground ourselves in Quaker Faith and Practice;
- Deepen our relationships, knowing each others' gifts and spiritual life: seek a deeper fellowship and encourage holy encounters among Salem Quarter Friends;

- Create inclusive opportunities for play for all generations of Friends;
- Ultimately to discern a vision for the form and functioning of Salem Quarterly Meeting moving forward.

Schedule of Gatherings

The Year is divided in four Quarters (allowing for summer break). We suggest a smorgasbord of directed activities from which to pick and choose. For example: queries, educational experiences, Zoom small groups, readings, worship sharing, in-person gatherings - all aimed at deepening and sharing our understanding of the Quarter.

The schedule below follows the rotation previously set forth in our gatherings of the Quarter and is ordered alphabetically. Each Monthly Meeting is invited to host a gathering for the rest of the Quarter that provides for opportunities for connection, delight, and fun.

- Summer of 2022 - Summer Fun Kickoff (BHFH)
- Fall 2022 Framingham
- Winter 2023 Fresh Pond
- Sp 2023 Lawrence Andover / Acton
- Summer 2023 Three Rivers
- Fall 2023 Wellesley
- Winter 2024 Amesbury / NorthShore
- Spring 2024* Friends Meeting Cambridge

Sabbath Queries: (These queries might inform Gatherings)

- What do we seek in a deeper spiritual life?
- How can the Quarter serve our faithfulness?
- Who are we as a Quarter?
- What is the Quarter's relationship to Yearly Meeting?
- What is the Quarter's relationship to the Monthly Meetings?
- How do we ground in Quaker Faith and Practice?
- What do we value in community?
- How can intergenerational fun help us to know each other?
- Are there ways to support relationships among our youth across meetings?
- How do we strengthen connections between individuals and meetings?
- How do we celebrate life transitions / events as a region?
- What deepens fellowship and holy encounters among Friends?
- What are the joys you receive from the Friends that appear in your life?
- What are the joys that you share with Friends who appear in your life?
- How is God calling us to be together?
- What forms and functions support us?

How will we support Meetings in hosting gatherings?

Beacon Hill Friends House has been invited to serve as a resource and to facilitate:

- Initiating the gathering planning via email with meeting contacts
- Offering planning support where needed to the Meeting Volunteers
- Running event registration and outreach (Listserv, Facebook, website)
- Answering questions about the gatherings via email or phone

In addition, Beacon Hill Friends House will reconstruct, host, and maintain a website for the Quarter to capture and archive the information of the Quarter: past minutes, grant procedures, and upcoming events.

When the Sabbath Period is over - how will structure discernment about what is next for Salem Quarter?

At the end of the two years, or earlier if led, the Sabbath Planning Committee will hold the process of convening a final listening session to guide discernment and next steps.

Prepared by: Sabbath Planning Committee: Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers), Ellen Neelands (Acton), John Robinson (Framingham), Kathleen Stearns (Amesbury), CharM Wood-Harrington (Wellesley), Kathleen Wooten (Lawrence / Andover) with consultation from Jennifer Higgins-Newman and Nils Klinkenberg of Beacon Hill Friends House.