

**Permanent Board Agenda**  
**May 11, 2024, Concord Monthly Meeting**  
**11 Oxbox Pond Rd Canterbury , NH**  
**9:00 AM - 3:30 PM EDT**  
***Gather for hospitality 8:30***

**8:30 AM**                    **Greetings and fellowship**

**9:00 AM**                    **Opening Worship**

**PB clerk's comments**

**Roll Call**

**Approval of March 19, 2024 PB minutes**

**North Fairfield (Maine) meetinghouse conveyance-** Meet & Greet with Rabbi Ben Gorelick and Dr. Sonja Birthisel

**Salem Quarter-** Return of Quarterly functions and responsibilities to Salem Quarterly Meeting

**Yearly Meeting Secretary's Report**

NEYM Financial Stewardship and Discernment presentation

*Context pertaining to finance:* Sessions 2024; Antiracism Consultation; YM Contributions Criteria wg; Evaluation of Stipends wg; Legacy Gift Review

Development Update

**Presiding Clerk's Report**

**FY25 budget-** for PB review/affirmation, to send to Sessions

**Friends Camp-** informational update

**LUNCH BREAK**

**Committee and workgroup updates and reports**

Spiritual Life Listening/Ministry & Spiritual Life update

Noticing Patterns wg- verbal report

Antiracism Consultant update- listening and questions

May 11, 2024

Legacy Gift and Legacy Review - listening and questions; needed approvals for ongoing funding

Recruiting Sessions volunteers - potential contingencies

**Nominations from PB clerk**

Naming Committee- Second Reading, for approval, **Jay O'Hara**;

Stipends wg- Second Reading, for approval **Roger Jasaitis; Doug Armstrong; Eleanor Warnock; Bre-anne Brown**

**Nominating Committee- second reading nominations for approval**

Youth Ministries – **Melissa Becce**, Hartford Meeting;

Finance Committee – **Stefan Walker**, Worcester Friends

Sessions Visioning Planning WG- **Maggie Fiori**, Portland Friends

Interim Sessions Recording Clerk- **Brian Drayton**, Souhegan preparative

**Closing worship**

## White Supremacy Culture, A Summary

From *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001

Characteristic	Antidote
<p><b>Perfectionism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on what is wrong</li> <li>• Mistakes seen as personal, shameful</li> <li>• Little reflection when things go wrong, hard to learn from 'mistakes'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop culture of appreciation</li> <li>- Develop learning organization, "mistakes" seen as opportunities</li> <li>- When giving feedback, always speak to the things that went well first</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sense of Urgency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no "time" to be inclusive, be thoughtful, consider the long-term consequences</li> <li>• Default is to the current (white) norm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be realistic about how long things take</li> <li>- Understand that there are no shortcuts to building a diverse community</li> <li>- Adhere to agreed-upon decision-making processes; no "shortcuts"</li> </ul>
<p><b>Defensiveness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criticism of those in power seen as threatening, rude, or inappropriate (due to either/or thinking)</li> <li>• New/different ideas seen as threatening</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Name defensiveness as an issue and explore how it impedes the mission</li> <li>- Understand the link between defensiveness and fear and build community as an antidote to fear</li> </ul>
<p><b>Quantity over Quality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on content rather than on process</li> <li>• Emphasis on what can be easily and "objectively" measured</li> <li>• Discomfort with emotions and tension</li> <li>• End up making decisions that don't stick</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adhere to organizational values that value inclusion and process</li> <li>- Develop protocols for knowing when to move off content and into process, and build skills in having difficult conversations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Worship of the Written Word</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If it's not written down, it doesn't exist</li> <li>• Those with strong documentation and writing skills are more highly valued, whether this is related to the organizational mission or note</li> <li>• There is one right way to do things</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acknowledge that there are many ways of reaching the same goal</li> <li>- Accepting and implementing decisions made in different ways</li> <li>- Understand that there are many skillful ways of being in the world and it is desirable for all to flourish</li> </ul>
<p><b>Paternalism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it</li> <li>• Those with power think they are capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power</li> <li>• Those without power understand they do not have it and understand who does</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop clear and transparent decision-making processes</li> <li>- Clearly defining roles and responsibilities</li> <li>- Emphasize transparency and discussion</li> </ul>
<p><b>Either-Or Thinking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unable to see 'both/and'</li> <li>• Hard to learn from experience or accommodate diverse views</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Notice when either/or thinking arises and note this out loud as a group</li> <li>- When there is pressure to make a decision "right away," take time to lower</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fosters conflict, urgency, oversimplification of complex issues</li> </ul>	<p>the emotional temperature and consider alternatives</p>
<p><b>Power Hoarding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little value around sharing power</li> <li>• Those with power believe that they have the whole organization's interests at heart and see those advocating for change as ill-informed or...</li> <li>• Those in power don't see themselves as hoarding power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Actively share power, i.e. by rotating leadership positions</li> <li>- Clearly define and abide by organizational roles and responsibilities</li> <li>- Emphasize leaders' responsibility to develop others' leadership skills</li> <li>- Stay focused on the mission</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fear of Open Conflict</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on being "polite"</li> <li>• Those who bring up difficult issues are seen as rude, blamed for 'causing problems'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build distress tolerance and conflict management skills</li> <li>- Use discomfort as a signal for investigation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Individualism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasize (supposed) individual achievement/competition over cooperation</li> <li>• Fosters isolation</li> <li>• Leads to focus on individual v collective/organizational goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support teamwork and develop related skills</li> <li>- Emphasize collective goals</li> <li>- Actively give credit to everyone contributing to a process/activity/goal</li> </ul>
<p><b>Progress is Bigger/More</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assume that increasing in size is necessarily a good thing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carefully evaluate plans and proposals for their impact on the mission/community</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objectivity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belief that there is such a thing as "objective"</li> <li>• Devalues emotion (and people expressing emotion), hypervalues "logic" (and people arguing "logically")</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accept that there are many ways to experience a given situation</li> <li>- Assume that everyone has a valid point and it is your job to understand it fully</li> </ul>
<p><b>Right to Comfort</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those with power have a right to be comfortable</li> <li>• Scapegoating those who "cause" discomfort</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hold the systemic view that allows you to not take things personally</li> <li>- Accept that change and inclusion brings discomfort</li> </ul>

**Draft Minutes  
Permanent Board  
Called Meeting on Zoom  
March 19, 2024**

The March 19, 2024 Called Meeting of the NEYM Permanent Board opened with a period of worship.

**24-29 Welcome and Announcements**

Susan Davies (Vassalboro), Clerk of the Permanent Board, welcomed Friends to the Called Zoom meeting and requested the approval of two items prior to initiating the meeting's business.

**24-30 Request for Approval of a *pro tem* recording clerk for the meeting**

In the absence Willa Taber, Recording Clerk, Susan Davies announced that Liesa Stamm (Hartford) agreed to serve as *pro tem* Recording Clerk for the March 19, 2024 Called Meeting of the Permanent Board and asked Friends to approve this request.

**Friends approved Liesa Stamm to serve as *pro tem* Recording Clerk for the March 19<sup>th</sup> Called Meeting of the Permanent Board.**

**24-31 Request for approval to add an item to the meeting Agenda**

The Finance Committee and Friends Camp requested that the Permanent Board approve an updated NEYM bank resolution that is needed in response to recent personnel changes.

**Friends approved the addition of this item to the Agenda.**

**24-32 Opening Comments**

With much sorrow, Susan Davies informed us that Christopher McCandless is now in hospice care. She requested that we hold the McCandless family in the light and asked that we take a moment to be with Christopher and his family in prayer

Following the period of prayer, Susan Davies opened the meeting by commending the NEYM staff for very ably carrying out the work of our organization in Noah's absence. Most of the Permanent Board's business for the March 19<sup>th</sup> Called Meeting involves assisting staff in continuing their work by reviewing and hopefully approving measures for advancing a number of charges for NEYM staff and Permanent Board working groups.

In this context Nia Thomas reported that she is in close touch with Noah and Honor and shared Noah's deep gratitude for the prayers, love and care for him and Honor communicated to them by the NEYM community. The hallway in their house is now papered with all the cards and expressions of love sent to them. Nia further informed us that planning for Noah's return to service has begun with a focus on his primary priorities. Information on the scope of Noah's service when he returns will be shared with the Permanent Board when these are clarified.

In terms of other NEYM business, Susan indicated that Jackie Stillwell, Clerk of NEYM Nominating Committee, who was not able to attend the meeting, provided the Permanent Board with an update on the Committee's work. This is the first reading of the Committee's nominations, a second reading of which will be brought to the May 11 meeting of the Permanent Board, hopefully for approval. Friends are encouraged to share their thoughts about these nominations to the Nominating Committee.

Susan also brought to the Permanent Board's attention a longstanding need to finalize and approve By-Laws. She recommends that proposed By-Laws be reviewed and finalized by a small advisory group in consultation with the NEYM Secretary and the Coordinating and Advisory Committee.

### **24-33 Roll Call**

The tech host, Bob O'Connor, froze the Zoom screen order and Friends introduced themselves in the order they were viewed on the screen.

### **Permanent Board Members**

Susan Davies (PB Clerk), Liesa Stamm (PB *pro tem* Recording Clerk), Deana Chase, Darcy Drayton, Chris Gant, Beth Hansen, Carolyne Lamar Jordan, Meg Klepack, Fran Lightsom, Bob O'Connor, Carole Rein, Martha Schowope, Eleanor Warnock, Diane Weinholtz, Donn Weinholtz, Morgan Wilson, Kathleen Wooton.

### **Ex-Officio Members**

Marion Dalton (Treasurer), Scot Drysdale (Finance Clerk), Sarah Gant (Clerk, Meeting Accompaniment Group) (Acting Secretary for Pastoral Care and Governance), Rebecca Leuchak (Presiding Clerk), Nia Thomas (Acting Secretary for Programs and Administration), Carl Williams (Clerk of Ministry and Counsel).

### **Other Friends**

Polly Attwood, Fran Brokaw, Elizabeth Hacala (NEYM Events Coordinator), Janet Hough, Allia Sifferlen, Maille Wooton.

### **Regrets**

Kimberly Allen, Thomas Brenner, Martin Forsythe, Roger Jaasaitis, Edward Mair, Leslie Manning, Chris McCandless, Anna Radocchia, Allison Randall, John Reuthe, Newell Isbell Shinn, Willa Taber (PB Recording Clerk), Mary Zwirner, Noah Merrill (YM Secretary), Elizabeth Reuthe (YM Secretary Supervisor), Jackie Stillwell (Clerk of Nominating Committee).

### **24-34 Approval of Minutes**

**Friends approved the minutes for the Permanent Board Meeting held on Zoom on February 10, 2024.**

#### **24-35 Request for Approval of the 2024 March Bank Resolution**

Finance Committee and Friends Camp need an updated bank resolution that designates who can open bank accounts and sign checks for NEYM and Friends Camp. These updates are needed because of recent personnel changes. The updated bank resolution is appended to these minutes.

**Friends approved the updated Bank Resolution.**

#### **24-36 Request for Approval of a Revised Charge for Sessions Visioning 2025 and Nominations, as available**

Nia Thomas provided an update on the need to revise the charge and timeline for the work of the Sessions Visioning Working Group. As a result of unforeseen challenges, the original Sessions Visioning and Design process was delayed. The Permanent Board now is requested to approve an adjustment to the original charge that will separate the consultation and listening process for future Sessions planning from the establishment of a more time sensitive Working Group to conduct a search for a 2025 Sessions site.

If approved, the new Sessions Vision Planning Working Group will design a plan for consultation and listening among Friends across New England. The consultation plan will be developed during the Spring of 2024, and brought to the Sessions Planning Leadership and the Coordinating and Advisory Committee for comment by July 1, 2024, and to the Permanent Board in mid-July for affirmation. The consultation plan will be shared at Sessions 2024 as requested by the Presiding Clerk.

**Friends then approved the establishment of a Sessions Vision Planning Working group to design a consultation and listening plan among Friends across New England as a basis for informing a vision and the priorities for future Annual Sessions.**

**Friends commended Nia and others for proposing a revised plan to allow a more reasonable time period for conducting the important work of planning for future Annual Sessions.**

#### **24-37 Request for Approval of Nominations for the Sessions Visioning Planning Working Group**

Nia Thomas presented proposed nominations for the Sessions Vision Planning Working Group.

**Friends approved the nomination of Alison Levie (Bennington) and Matt Southworth (Hartford) (*pending final discernment*) to serve on the Sessions Vision Planning Working Group.**

#### **24-38 Request for Approval of a Revised Proposal and Timeline for the 2025 Sessions Site Search Advisory Group**

Elizabeth Hacala, NEYM Events Coordinator, detailed the proposed revisions to the timeline and process for conducting a search for a 2025 Sessions location. The revised process will reduce the scope of the original Working Group charge. The need for the revised process results from challenges in finding Friends who represent a wide range of needs and perspectives to serve on

the Site Search Working Group. Under the revised site search process, Elizabeth Hacala will compile a list of potential sites by May 2024. A small advisory group of Friends will work with Elizabeth to discern what specific site needs of participants should inform the selection of a 2025 Sessions Site. During May and June, Elizabeth will prepare a report on each possible site that will be brought to the advisory group for discernment. In July a draft contract with the top choice of sites will be brought to the Permanent Board. The proposal will include costs, benefits and any drawbacks for the site. Five Friends have indicated a willingness to participate in the Site Search Process and two others are in the process of discernment to participate.

**Friends approved the revised timeline and process for conducting the 2025 Sessions Search and appointing an advisory group to support the work of NEYM Events Coordinator, Elizabeth Hacala.**

#### **24-39 Request for Approval to Un-Designate Unused Nurturing Faithfulness Funds**

The Coordinating and Advisory Committee recommended that the Permanent Board un-designate the unused funds currently held in a board-designated account to support the Nurturing Faithfulness program. In May 2021 Permanent Board approved the designation of \$30,000 from NEYM reserves for a Continuing Projects account to support the program, as needed. Marion Dalton (NEYM Treasurer) and Nia Thomas provided background on the current request to un-designate the \$27,159.89 of unused funds in this account. Thanks to the hard work, generous contributions, and commitment of many Friends, the Nurturing Faithfulness program only used \$2,840.11 of the designated funds. Given the current shortfall of NEYM's reserves from the recommended level, the Coordinating and Advisory Committee recommends that the Nurturing Faithfulness funds be un-designated from their current purpose and returned to NEYM reserves.

**Friends approved un-designating the Nurturing Faithfulness program funds and the return of the \$27,159.89 unused portion of the funds to NEYM reserves.**

#### **24-40 Request for Approval of a Working Group Charge for Evaluation of the Volunteer Stipends Experiment**

As part of approving a plan for a three year experiment with offering stipends to volunteers serving in five leadership positions in the Yearly Meeting (Permanent Board Minute 21-43), the Permanent Board committed to appointing a Working Group in 2024 to evaluate the experiment to date. The Working Group's assessment should give particular emphasis to the impact of the stipends on increasing inclusion. The Working Group will provide a written report of its findings to the Permanent Board prior to its meeting in July 2024 and will have members present at the meeting to give a presentation and answer questions.

**Friends approved the establishment of a Working Group consisting of 3-4 Friends not currently receiving honoraria to evaluate the volunteer stipends experiment and to provide a written report of their findings to the Permanent Board in July 2024.**

#### **24-41 Update on a Proposal for Conveyance of North Fairfield Friends Meeting**

Sarah Gant, as Clerk of the Meeting Accompaniment Group, reported on the current status of North Fairfield Friends Meeting. The Meeting was discontinued in 2017 and laid down in 2021.



Yearly Meeting has paid for miscellaneous expenses to maintain the property since 2017 as a new owner is being sought. The original deed requires that the lot be transferred to a religious non-profit organization. Two faith leaders in the area have brought a proposal to the Permanent Board to utilize the building to establish an interfaith collaborative. Their proposal will be brought to the May 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Permanent Board.

Sarah asked Friends to consider whether the mission of the proposed organization is aligned with NEYM ideals. Several Friends commented and asked questions on the proposal. Sarah requested that Friends send any additional questions or comments about the conveyance proposal to [sarahgant@neym.org](mailto:sarahgant@neym.org) before the next Permanent Board meeting

The Called Meeting ended with a period of silence and prayers in honor of Christopher McCandless and his family, as well as Elizabeth Reuthe.



# Final Proposal for Revitalization & Stewardship of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House

Dr. Sonja K. Birthisel & Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick  
As Representatives for Mifneh L'Kedushah

Presented to the New England Yearly Meeting Permanent Board  
May 11, 2024

## Executive Summary

The purpose of this proposal is to build relationships and continue dialogue as we explore with the New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) the exciting possibility of stewarding the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House into the future.

The historic space, established in 1784, is located in central Maine, and has largely been vacant since the meeting was discontinued in 2017, and officially laid down in 2021.

We - Dr. Sonja Birthisel and Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick - are an energetic young duo of faith leaders, seeking a home for our emerging collaborative project, **nVolution**. The mission of nVolution is:

- To give space, place, and opportunity for the next generation of multi-faith spiritual leadership to emerge and be supported.
- Become an incubator and hub for community-led spiritual and religious projects that are welcoming to all people in central Maine and beyond.
- Approach our work with a philosophy of flexibility and emergence, sensing and responding as the spirit moves in our world today.

We are excited to continue conversations with NEYM about your hopes and dreams for future use of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House, and mutually addressing further logistical and due-diligence questions that may arise.

## How Did We Get Here?

In late August, 2023, I (Sonja) was sharing breakfast with my friend, Joey LeBlanc, when his phone rang. “Hi Joey, it’s your mother. I’m talking to Barb from The Historical Society about the old Quaker Meeting House just down the road. Here, I’ll put you on speakerphone...”

(Joey was raised less than a mile from the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House, where his family still live today, proprietors of the aptly named “Quaker Hill Disc Golf Course.”)

“Oh, hi Barb!” Joey replied. “How can I help?”

“Well, as you know, the Meeting House was laid down a few years ago, and is still looking for new owners. We thought about it for the Historical Society but it didn’t make sense. We’re afraid it’ll get sold to out-of-state real-estate developers or something horrible. Do you know any nonprofits or good community people who’d be interested in bringing an old building back to life?”

Joey looked me in the eye across the table and burst out laughing. He mouthed the words “you guys want an old Quaker Meeting House, right?” at me. Also laughing, I nodded vigorously and whispered back “Almost definitely. Let me call Ben and double check!”

He gathered himself. “I might know some people.”

And that was how Rabbi Ben and I learned about the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House.

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I met Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick in August 2020, in the depths of the pandemic. I had just started in my role as Director of the Wilson Center for Spiritual Exploration and Multifaith Dialogue, an Orono-based nonprofit closely affiliated with the University of Maine. Rabbi Ben was on his way out of Maine to begin congregational work in Denver, Colorado - but our paths briefly crossed.

In those few weeks, we became fast friends who delighted in deep conversation, challenging each other over questions of spirituality, religion, and ways of bringing G-d to life in this world. We enjoyed exploring what might be possible if we were willing to put in the work to continue collaborating. We stayed in touch.

Three and a half years later, that exploration has proved to be among the more consequential of our lives; Rabbi Ben moved back to Maine last fall and spent the year as Rabbi-in-Residence at the Wilson Center, where I’m finishing a four-year tenure as Director. Together, this year, we worked on: developing a multi-faith curriculum centered around transcendent practices and experiences that deepen our connection with self, community, and God; facilitating student and community creation of spiritual services and programming; providing spiritual care and guidance to our communities; and continuing to explore together and challenge each other in many beautiful ways.

For some time now, we've also dreamed about what might be possible in our collaboration with a space to truly bring our creative spiritual vision to life.

Enter stage left: The North Fairfield Friends Meeting House.

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A few weeks after that fateful breakfast with Joey, Holly Weidner gave Rabbi Ben and me a tour of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House, and we fell in love. The wheels have been turning ever since, and this document is the to-this-moment culmination of that process.

## **Assumptions**

We thought it might be helpful to start with a few assumptions we're operating under, based on conversations we've had with various parties to date. Please know that we're not attached to these assumptions; we understand that this is a conversation meant to follow the flow of divine will and we welcome further information, ideas, and feelings as they come.

Note: We have updated this list from that included in our February proposal to incorporate helpful factual edits supplied by one Friend.

Things we think are true:

- The North Fairfield Friends Meeting was discontinued in 2017, and responsibility for the property was assumed by the New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM). The process of laying down the North Fairfield Friends Monthly Meeting was finalized in 2021. The Meeting House basement had been occupied briefly in 2017.
- In 2020 and into 2021, NEYM had serious discussions with the local Historical Society about donating the building and whatever fixtures remained inside, for use by the community. However, those discussions petered out, and the Historical Society is no longer interested in taking on the building and associated property.
- In 2022 NEYM re-engaged with the process of finding next uses for the Meeting House that align with its spiritual mission.
- NEYM's ultimate goal is to transfer ownership of the building, remaining fixtures (other than records or historical artifacts of interest to NEYM Friends that might be found at a later date), and surrounding property to an organization that is mission-aligned, has a sound financial plan, and will bring a strong sense of community and purpose to the space once again.
- There remain several unknowns about the building and grounds at this time, including the age and condition of the roof, the condition of the plumbing, septic, and electrical systems.
- There is mutual interest in an ownership transfer whereby our non-profit, Mifneh L'Kedushah, becomes the new steward of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House.

We further think that a timeline (past and future) for decision-making about such a transfer could be concisely summarized as follows:

- September 2023: Register interest in the building and have a tour of the facility.
- October 2023: Send a formal letter-of-interest to representatives of the Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting and NEYM, noting our interest in exploring future stewardship of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House.
- December 2023: Meet with Noah Merrill and Susan Davies for preliminary conversation about mutual hopes, dreams, and desires for the community space, early-stage vetting, and discussion of next steps.
- February 2024: Circulate written Proposal for Revitalization & Stewardship of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House for NEYM Permanent Board review.
- February 2024: Susan Davies initiates PFAS testing with State of Maine DEP.
- March 2024: Meet with Susan Davies and Sarah Gant who share initial encouraging feedback on proposal; discuss next-steps.
- April 30, 2024: Meet with Susan, Sarah, and Noah to share mutual progress updates; significant topics included condition of plumbing and preparations for May 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- May 3, 2024: Submit revised proposal to NEYM Permanent Board.
- May 11, 2024: In-person presentation to the Permanent Board for discussion and a potential approval of concept.
- Summer 2024: Transfer of ownership of the North Fairfield Meeting House.

In this timeline, we have sought to concisely summarize important communications and milestones already reached, and future dates considered possible in some conversations.

Please note that this schedule moving ahead is not meant to be binding, but is rather intended as a check to our operating assumptions meant to facilitate ongoing communication about what is possible and feels aligned to all parties involved.

## **Who We Are**

In a nutshell, we are a duo of faith leaders, following our respective calls to ministry into new and serendipitous territory. We have attached our CVs as background to this proposal, highlighting details about our individual training, skills, and accomplishments to date. We have also summarized especially pertinent information briefly in the bios below:

Dr. Sonja Birthisel is an ELCA Lutheran, who currently attends the Church of Universal Fellowship in Orono, ME. Her academic background is in Ecology and Environmental Sciences, with expertise in climate change adaptation and mitigation in agricultural systems.



While teaching at the University of Maine during the early days of COVID-19, she felt deeply called to re-focus her energy toward tending to the spiritual wellbeing of her (suddenly remote, and terrified!) students. She was contemplating seminary when she heard the news that the Wilson Center for Spiritual Exploration and Multifaith Dialogue was hiring a new Director. It was the perfect next-step.

As Director, Sonja has doubled the Wilson Center's weekly program offerings, while consistently exceeding her Board's fundraising expectations in order to close sizable budget deficits. She has achieved this organically, by building great relationships with students, Board members, alumni, and friends, and by creating a feeling of organizational momentum and a culture of community empowerment.

She is additionally an activist and community organizer, variously working on campaigns for climate justice, workers rights, and Indigenous sovereignty. She is a duly elected member of the Orono Town Council and serves on several nonprofit Boards.



Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick was raised Modern Orthodox Jewish in an intentional community in northern New Mexico. While his educational background is in engineering, his professional life has been spent in education. He spent 11 years as the President of a small 4-year college, where he primarily focused on the creation and integration of human-centered liberal arts education training and assessment practices into his and other technical colleges. Today, the curriculum he developed is used in industries ranging from mountain guiding to commercial aviation to NASA.

More recently, he is the founder of Mifneh L'Kedushah, a school of transcendent exploration for Jewish youth, with programs running at ten locations across the US. He has also served as congregational Rabbi for The Sacred Tribe, a Denver-based synagogue grounded in Kabbalah - Jewish mysticism.

Today, he is the Rabbi-in-Residence at the Wilson Center for Spiritual Exploration and Multifaith Dialogue, where he is concurrently designing a curriculum for and leading a semester-long coming-of-age program, aiming to create space for college students to grow as fully expressed and spiritually connected people in the space of community.

His portfolio includes designing many innovative events and experiences to explore spirituality through art and embodiment practices, creating and/or leading several organizations with multi-million dollar annual budgets, and expanding ideas of what is possible in educational and spiritual spaces.

## **Our Core Philosophy**

Though we understand the world through the lenses of different religious traditions, our collaborative work is motivated by a strong foundation of shared philosophical and theological principles, including a shared commitment to building connections across lines of division.

**What is G-d?** We believe in an expansive concept of the divine, that is present within, between, and beyond us – that is to say that the relationships we nurture with self, community, and G-d are all facets of the same holy and wondrous divine. We know G-d through the magic of photosynthesis, the rising action of yeast as we bake bread, and the connective mystery we feel unequivocally as love. We know G-d through personal and communal practice, through prayer-in-our-hearts, and at scales from the quantum to the infinite.

**Your Life is Your Prayer.** Judaism demands our fullest self-expression, given freely within community, as a moral imperative. Our shared scriptures tell us to pray without ceasing. How does one do this? By aligning our creation – that which we bring to life in this world - with our thoughts, our deepest feelings, and divine will.

Further, in Jewish practice there is the idea that “your prayer is incomplete if it’s offered alone.” That is, it’s not enough to retreat into oneself, to pray and seek enlightenment on one’s own; it is our purpose to be deeply in connection with one another, spiritually, emotionally, physically - wholly. Jesus’ words highlighting that the greatest commandments of all are to love G-d with our whole heart and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves likewise makes unavoidable this ethos of heart-centered engagement with the world.

**The Reformation Continues.** Martin Luther didn’t mean to start a revolution; he simply did the thing his “bound conscience” demanded he do when faced with the injustices and hypocrisies of his time. He came to understand, as is shared in the roots of Quaker tradition, that much of the structure and dogma of our religious traditions is culturally constructed, and does little to build our unique, unmediated individual and communal connection to the divine. We, inspired by Luther’s life and by Kabbalah, see ourselves within a timeless stream of transformation and re-creation. We seek, as the spirit moves, to practice stripping away those layers that have come to separate and divide us, that we might better return to the heart of our scriptures and together draw closer to G-d.

## **A New Vision for the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House**

Together, we are seeking a space to serve as home for an emerging collaborative project. The working title of this initiative is *nVolution* - a word connoting the artistic and spiritual process through which divine inspiration flows through into manifest creation. Our mission, as best we understand it presently, is:

- To give space, place, and opportunity for the next generation of multi-faith spiritual leadership to emerge and be supported.

- Become a hub and incubator for community-led spiritual and religious projects that are welcoming to all people in central Maine and beyond.
- Approach this work with a philosophy of flexibility and emergence, sensing and responding as the spirit moves in our world today.

The North Fairfield Friends Meeting House would be the perfect home for this project: it has lived for more than two centuries as a nexus of G-d energy and teems with potential for spiritual expansion; it is centrally located to our already existing communities and families; it is close enough to Portland and Boston so as to make destination travel possible, is “just right sized” for the sort of spiritual and artistic exploration we envision.

We understand that addressing deferred maintenance and undertaking some renovation of the space would be necessary to bring the building back to life and equip it for future use, and we are prepared to fundraise for and take ownership over this transition process.

Our ask is that, if you feel inspired by our vision and potential as new stewards, you offer the as-is facility to us as a gift or for nominal cost (e.g., \$1) in order to set us up for success as we undertake the ambitious work of revitalizing the building. We further ask that any covenant created as part of an ownership transfer process grant us freedom to continue imagining and evolving what this project will become, in accordance with our mission.

Through this process and into the future, it is our hope and intent to build and maintain good relationships with those who have been connected to this space – and the land on which it sits – throughout history. We have reached out to local leaders in the Land Back movement to solicit advice and connection with indigenous neighbors. We would be honored to host occasional Quaker meetings or other events for which Friends wished to make use of the space. And, in the event that ownership of the cemetery were transferred with the building, we would hold with reverence and care the responsibility of maintaining the cemetery, and seek to include families and loved ones of the deceased in conversation and decision-making regarding its upkeep.

### **Logistics & Draft Budget**

We are both affiliated with an existing religious nonprofit, Mifneh L’Kedushah, which would act as the formal entity to take ownership over the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House in event of an ownership transfer. Mifneh is governed by a five-person multi-faith Board of Directors consisting of Dr. Sonja Birthisel (President), Ariel Peterson (Vice President), Jack Leopold (Secretary), Amy Bliss (Treasurer) and Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick (Spiritual Leader / Director).

For the purposes of this proposal, we have drafted a three-year budget for this project. This budget is broken into major *Income* and *Expense* categories, below. To the extent possible, with our existing knowledge, we have sought to realistically account for all that is needed to adequately resource this undertaking, and considered how our time, skills, and connections might best be leveraged to make the project financially viable.



We expect most of our first year would be spent in three ways: (1) maintenance and renovation projects, (2) engaging in the interpersonal work of making connections toward future tenancy and partnerships, and (3) building out our programming portfolio and bringing that to life.

Then, in our second and third years, we anticipate launching a full lineup of programs and space-rental opportunities, such that by the end of year three we would be at full operational capacity.

**Draft Budget for nVolution FY24/25 - FY26/27 (Assuming FY Begins July 2024)**

***Income***

	<b>FY24/25</b>	<b>FY25/26</b>	<b>FY26/27</b>
Angel Investment Loan	150,000		
Donations	25,000	30,000	40,000
Grants	20,000	50,000	50,000
In-Kind Donations	50,000	20,000	15,000
Rental	20,000	50,000	75,000
Fundraising	25,000	30,000	30,000
Programming	10,000	40,000	60,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>300,000</b>	<b>220,000</b>	<b>270,000</b>

**Notes on Income:** We envision our first year focusing on building/grounds revitalization and capacity-building, laying the foundation for important revenue streams in years to come.

In years two-three (FY25/26 and FY 26/27) we anticipate our donor base, rental income, and programming will grow to become increasingly established and dependable sources of revenue supporting the organization in the longer-term.

At this stage, we anticipate taking a \$150,000 angel loan to cover the cost of building materials and contractor-required work, noted in the expenses byline below. We have assumed a good deal of community help in the process of revitalizing the building, listed in the “in-kind donations” line, above. Given that our friend networks include many skilled tradespeople and we have strong experience mobilizing “work parties” of volunteers to accomplish great things, we think these numbers are within the bounds of realistic.

With regard to programming, we expect that a religious education pilot being developed from within Mifneh’s educational portfolio could rent and regularly use the building for courses, spiritual gatherings, and the like, serving as an “anchor tenant” and providing a stable ongoing

source of revenue. Due to the expected timing of building maintenance work, we don't anticipate being able to offer the school space in the first year, but do anticipate this could launch in FY25/26. This accounts for the large leap in rental income we are assuming between years one and two.

The rest of the numbers flow as you might expect, and we welcome feedback and clarifying questions on any other assumptions we have made herein.

**Expense**

	<b>FY24/25</b>	<b>FY25/26</b>	<b>FY26/27</b>
Deferred Maintenance, Repairs, & Improvements	100,000	25,000	5,000
Staff Payroll	50,000	75,000	100,000
Payroll Taxes	7,650	11,475	15,300
Workers Comp Insurance	1,000	1,550	2,100
Contract Services	5,000	8,000	8,000
In-Kind Labor	50,000	20,000	15,000
Non-Personnel Expenses	5,000	20,000	25,000
Utilities	15,000	17,500	20,000
Property & Liability Insurance	3,800	3,950	4,200
Programming	1,000	10,000	25,000
Marketing	5,000	5,000	5,000
Community Relations	1,500	1,500	1,500
Consulting	6,000	6,000	6,000
Loan Repayment		15,000	15,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>250,950</b>	<b>219,975</b>	<b>247,100</b>

**Notes on Expenses:** As the building improvement projects slow down after year one, we anticipate a corresponding decrease in direct (mostly material) expenses related to the building, although we continue to anticipate in-kind contributions (skilled friends and volunteers helping with projects) to remain an important aspect of operations for some time. Most other items flow as we think you might imagine, and again, we welcome feedback and clarifying questions.

<b>Running P&amp;L (Savings)</b>	<b>49,050</b>	<b>49,075</b>	<b>71,975</b>
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## **Conclusions & Thanks**

We hope that this document addresses many of your questions about who we are, and paints a picture of the future we could create for the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House and the surrounding central Maine community that this space served for over 200 years.

We are deeply grateful for the process of discernment that has accompanied our interest in the Meeting House to date. Our conversations with NEYM representatives and with each other have helped crystalize a vision for our emerging collaborative project, nVolution, that feels, to us, alive, powerful, and spiritually engaged.

We are excited to collaborate and explore with you, and to continue conversations on questions both spiritual and logistical. How does our vision align with your dreams for future stewardship of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House? What about this proposal is unclear or gives you pause? What do you find inspiring? What sparks your curiosity? What do you wish we'd thought to include?

We look forward with hope and gratitude toward ongoing dialogue and mutual discernment around future stewardship of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House.

*-Dr. Sonja K. Birthisel & Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick*

## Education

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### University of Maine

PhD, 2018 | Ecology and Environmental Sciences | 3.98 GPA | Phi Kappa Phi  
Dissertation: Multi-Tactic Ecological Weed Management in a Changing Climate

MS, 2013 | Ecology and Environmental Sciences | 4.00 GPA

Thesis: Sources of Variability in Agronomic Weed Seed Predation: Time, Space, Habitat, and Hyperpredation

### Luther College

BA, 2010 | Biology, Mathematics minor | 3.77 GPA | Phi Beta Kappa

## Research Experience

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### Faculty Associate

2020-Present, University of Maine

- Coordinated a multi-state working group on tarping and soil solarization for weed management
- Supervised student research on life cycle analyses of agricultural plastics and soil microplastics
- Served as a Special Projects Assistant studying natural climate solutions with the Daigneault Lab

### Contract Scientist

Spring-Summer 2022, State of Maine

- Conducted an issue analysis and co-authored a scientific and technical report on behalf of the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) and the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIFW) as per LD 937.

### Postdoctoral Research Associate

2019-2020, University of Maine (Daigneault Lab)

- Estimated the mitigation potential of natural climate solutions for the state of Maine
- Conducted farmer focus groups to understand barriers to adoption of soil health building practices
- Studied farmer 'mental models' and decision-making related to climate change in order to design tailored and effective outreach materials

### Graduate Research Assistant

2015-2018, University of Maine (Gallandt Lab)

- Conducted stakeholder-driven field and laboratory research testing soil solarization and tarping for control of agronomic weeds, and investigated impacts of these practices on soil ecology
- Conducted on-farm surveys to identify weeds that are currently rare in Maine but could become increasingly problematic in a changing climate
- Created an educational computer game, WEEDucator, to teach beginning farmers about ecological weed management through interactive animations and simulation modeling
- Conducted a systematic review of the literature on ecological weed management and climate change

2011-2013, University of Maine (Gallandt Lab)

- Conducted on-farm field research to measure sources of variability in agronomic weed seed predation

### Laboratory Assistant

Summer 2008, CAPE Technologies

- Ran protocols to test levels of dioxin in environmental samples; conducted R&D to streamline protocols

## Publications

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A.J. Chase, M.S. Erich, I.J. Fernandez, & **S.K. Birthisel** (2023). Evaluating the loss-on-ignition method to monitor changes in agricultural soil organic carbon over time.

**S.K. Birthisel**, R.S. Clements, & E.R. Gallandt (2021). Review: How will climate change impact the 'many little hammers' of ecological weed management? *Weed Research*.

R. Clements, **S.K. Birthisel**, A. Daigneault, E. Gallandt, D. Johnson, T. Wentworth, & M.T. Niles (2021). Climate change in the context of whole-farming systems: opportunities for improved outreach. *Climatic Change* 166 (40).

**S.K. Birthisel**, B.A. Eastman, A.R. Soucy, M. Paul, R.S. Clements, A. White, M.P. Acquafredda, W. Errickson, L-H. Zhu, M.C. Allen, S.A. Mills, G. Dimmig, & K.M. Dittmer (2020). Convergence, continuity, and community: a framework for enabling emerging leaders to build climate solutions in agriculture, forestry, and aquaculture. *Climatic Change* 162 (4).

**S.K. Birthisel** & E.R. Gallandt (2019). Trials evaluating solarization and tarping for improved stale seedbed preparation in the Northeast USA. *Organic Farming*.

**S.K. Birthisel**, G.A. Smith, G.M. Mallory, J. Hao, & E.R. Gallandt (2019). Effects of field and greenhouse solarization on soil microbiota and weed seeds in the Northeast USA. *Organic Farming*.

E.H. Roche, E.B. Mallory, & **S.K. Birthisel** (2019). Using farmer storytelling to build understanding of our "new weather reality." *Journal of Extension* 57 (5).

E.R. Gallandt, **S.K. Birthisel**, B.J. Brown, M. McCollough, & M.A. Pickoff (2018). Organic farming and sustainable weed control. Chapter 34 *in* *Weed Control: Sustainability, Hazards and Risks in Cropping Systems Worldwide*. N.E. Korres, N.R. Burgos, & S.O. Duke, eds. Science Publishers: Boca Raton, FL.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2018). Multi-tactic ecological weed management in a changing climate. PhD Thesis: University of Maine, Orono, ME. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/etd/2928/>

R.G. Smith, **S.K. Birthisel**, S.C. Bosworth, B. Brown, T.M. Davis, E.R. Gallandt, A. Hazelrigg, E. Venturini, & N.D. Warren (2018). Environmental correlates with germinable weed seed banks on organic farms across northern New England. *Weed Science* 66, 78-93.

**S.K. Birthisel**, E.R. Gallandt, R. Jabbour, & F.A. Drummond (2015). Habitat and time are more important predictors of weed seed predation than space on a diversified vegetable farm in Maine, USA. *Weed Science* 63, 916-927.

**S.K. Birthisel**, E.R. Gallandt, & R. Jabbour (2014). Habitat effects on second-order predation of the seed predator *Harpalus rufipes* and implications for weed seedbank management. *Biological Control* 70, 65-72.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2013). Sources of variability in agronomic weed seed predation: Time, space, habitat, and hyperpredation. Masters Thesis: University of Maine, Orono, ME. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/etd/2023/>

## Teaching Experience

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### Instructor: Field Problems in Ecology & Environmental Sciences (EES 217)

May 2023, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Instructor for hands-on intensive travel and field study course

### Instructor: Introduction to Sustainable Gardening

April 2022, Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens

- Developed and taught a mini-course on sustainable horticulture principles and practices

### Co-Instructor: Plant Science (PSE 100)

Fall 2022, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Provided lesson plans and technical assistance to ensure success of this co-instructed course

### Instructor: Human Populations and the Global Environment (EES 100)

Spring 2020, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Adapted and facilitated lectures, class activities, and assessments for a class of 150
- Supervised the work of a Teaching Assistant and two undergraduate Maine Learning Assistants

### Instructor: Critical Issues in Environmental Policy / Capstone (EES 489)

Fall 2019, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Revised syllabus, developed class activities and assessments
- Provided mentorship for student Capstone projects

### Instructor: Introduction to Ecology and Environmental Science (EES 117)

Fall 2019, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Facilitated skills-based seminar course

### Instructor: Environmental Horticulture Capstone (PSE 430)

Spring 2019, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Developed syllabus, class activities, and assessments
- Provided mentorship for student Capstone projects

### Teaching Assistant: Plant Taxonomy (BIO 464)

Fall 2018, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Facilitated one lab section and assisted with grading

### Instructor: Cropping Systems (PSE 101)

Spring 2018, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Developed syllabus, writing labs, and assessments
- Coordinated lectures with co-Instructors and guest experts

### Instructor: Plant Science (PSE 100)

Fall 2017, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Developed syllabus, lectures, labs, and assessments
- Lectured and facilitated three lab sections
- Supervised the work of a teaching assistant

### Teaching Assistant: Principles of Sustainable Agriculture (PSE 105)

Falls 2015, 2016, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Guest lectured and assisted with grading

### Teaching Assistant: Experimental Design (PSE 509)

Spring 2016, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Developed and taught unit on linear regression
- Assisted with lecturing and grading

**Service Member: FoodCorps/AmeriCorps**

2013-2014, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Bangor, ME

- Developed and taught K-12 garden-based nutrition and science lessons

**Teaching Assistant: Plant Science (PSE 100)**

Fall 2012, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Assisted with lab facilitation and guest lectured

**Instructor: Microbiology and Wilderness Survival Skills**

Summer 2012, Maine School of Science and Mathematics Science Camp, Limestone, ME

- Developed and taught week-long courses for middle school students

**Teaching Assistant: Introduction to Biological Principles (BIO 100)**

2007-2010, Luther College, Decorah, IA

- Assisted with laboratory instruction, grading, and tutoring

## Advising & Student Engagement

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**Director**

2020-present, The Wilson Center, Orono, ME

- Runs an independent nonprofit affiliated with University of Maine that offers students and the wider community opportunities to engage in spiritual exploration and multifaith dialogue
- Partners with University of Maine Office for Diversity and Inclusion, Student Life, and other on-campus partners to provide expertise and programming on religious diversity
- Serves on University of Maine President's Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

**Senior Honors Thesis Committee Member**

2019-2023, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Co-chaired the committee of Bailey Lewis (2023)
- Served on the committees of Ashley Kayser (2020) and Sarah Meyer-Waldo (2021)

**Member of Graduate Faculty**

2018-2022, University of Maine

- Served on the committees of MS students Ruth Sexton Clements (2021) and Andrew Chase (2022)

**Academic Adviser for Ecology and Environmental Sciences Program**

2019-2021, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Provided tailored academic advising to up to 50 undergraduate students

**Co-Coordinator for Graduate Student Climate Adaptation Partners (GradCAP) Program**

2018-2019, USDA Northeast Climate Hub

- Co-coordinated pilot project to create a virtual consortium of graduate Scholars from across the Northeast USA working on climate adaptation in agriculture, aquaculture, and forestry

**Adviser for EPSCoR Summer Research Internships**

Summer 2015; 2016-2017, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Served as mentor to four high school student projects through UMaine's EPSCoR program
- Student Grace Smith co-authored a manuscript
- Student Ana Eliza Souza Cunha co-authored a peer reviewed outreach bulletin

**Adviser for Summer Research Fellowship**

Summer 2016, University of Maine, Orono, ME

- Served as mentor for Swarthmore Biology major Gavriella Mallory's Summer Research Fellowship

**Service Member with FoodCorps/AmeriCorps**

2013-2014, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Bangor, ME

- Reached 1,900 students with garden and nutrition-related programming through activities implemented in classrooms, cafeterias, after school programs, and community events

## Resident Counselor

2010-2011, Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, Aurora, IL

- Lived in residence hall with high school students; built community, enforced school policies, and mediated student disagreements
- Co-advised Theater Club

## Awarded Grants (\$263,828 Total)

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**S.K. Birthisel** & B. Gorelick (2023). Support for a Wilson Center Rabbi in Residence and Related Programming (three grants, totaling \$8,760). Jewish Community Endowment Associates.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2021-2023). Support for Interfaith Luncheon series (three grants, totaling \$5,880). Jewish Community Endowment Associates.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2022). Orono Contra Dance re-launch (\$800). Hamm Campus Activities Grants.

B. Katz & **S.K. Birthisel** (2022). Seed grant for a community garden at the Wilson Center (\$500). Maine Hunger Dialogues.

T. Shanteler & **S.K. Birthisel** (2022). Support for a Kosher commercial dishwasher at the Wilson Center (\$3,903). Jewish Community Endowment Associates.

**S.K. Birthisel**, S. Barker, J. Labouff, & S. Caron (2022). Leveraging our religiously diverse landscape toward community wellbeing (\$6,000). Interfaith Youth Corps.

J. Leopold & **S.K. Birthisel** (2021). Culture night series to expand DEI reach of community dinner series (\$1,000). Interfaith Youth Corps.

**S.K. Birthisel**, S. Ishaq, A. Smart, & E. Kinnebrew (2020). A working group on tarping and soil solarization (\$19,350). Northeast IPM Center Partnership Grant.

A. Daigneault, I. Fernandez, A. Weiskittel, **S.K. Birthisel**, H. Pingree, and S. Curran (2019). An integrated approach to quantifying the GHG mitigation potential of Natural Climate Solutions from Maine's working lands (\$132,174). United States Climate Alliance USCA Grant Program for NWL Research.

R. Dennet (2019). Maine Climate Resilience Training Program (\$29,787). Northeast SARE Partnership Grant ONE19-334.

A. Daigneault, I. Fernandez, C. Isenhouer, and **S.K. Birthisel** (2019). A Maine soil health initiative to enhance agricultural sustainability and mitigate climate change (\$22,981). Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions Sustainability Research Grant Program.

**S.K. Birthisel** & G.M. Mallory (2016). Impacts of soil solarization on soil microbial community and function (\$714). University of Maine School of Food and Agriculture Analytical Laboratory.

E.R. Gallandt, **S.K. Birthisel**, A.K. Hoshide, & D. Hiebeler (2016). A decision-aid to improve weed management on Maine organic farms (\$15,000). Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions Sustainability Research Grant Program.

**S.K. Birthisel** & E.R. Gallandt (2015). Soil solarization for enhanced weed control in vegetables (\$5,000). Maine Agricultural Center Research and Extension Grant Program.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2014). Annie's grants for gardens: Ridge View Community School outdoor classroom (\$2,500). Annie's Homegrown, Inc.

C. Greaves & **S.K. Birthisel** (2014). Fuel Up to Play 60 Grant: Ridge View Community School playground revitalization (\$2,400). Fuel Up to Play 60, LLC.



**S.K. Birthisel** (2012). The effects of vegetative cover on hyperpredation of weed seed predator *Harpalus rufipes* DeGeer (\$3000). MAFES Graduate Student IMP Initiatives Grant Program.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2012-2018). Graduate student travel and degree-related grants (six grants, totaling \$4,078). University of Maine Graduate Student Government.

## Outreach Materials

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B.J. Brown & **S.K. Birthisel** (2024). Seed-Eating Beetles, Solarization, and Climate Change, with guest Sonja Birthisel. Into The Weeds (New York State IPM) Podcast, available on Spotify.

N. Lounsbury & **S.K. Birthisel** (2023). Sonja Birthisel, Agroecologist & PhD from the University of Maine. Podcast interview for The Market Garden Podcast, available at: <https://notillmarketgardenpodcast.libsyn.com/sonja-birthisel-agroecologist-phd-from-the-university-of-maine>

**S.K. Birthisel** (2022). Tarping in the Northeast: A Guide for Small Farms. Northeast IPM Center IPM Toolbox Webinar, available at: <https://www.northeastipm.org/ipm-in-action/the-ipm-toolbox/tarping-in-the-northeast-a-guide-for-small-farms/>

N. Lounsbury, **S. Birthisel**, J. Lilley, & R. Maher (2022). Bulletin #1075, Tarping in the Northeast: A Guide for Small Farms. University of Maine Cooperative Extension, available at: <https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/1075e/>

A. Daignealt, E. Simons-Legaard, **S.K. Birthisel**, J. Carroll, I. Fernandez, & A. Weiskittel (2021). Final Report: Maine Forestry and Agriculture Natural Climate Solutions Mitigation Potential. University of Maine Center for Research on Sustainable Forests, available at: [https://crsf.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/214/2021/08/UMaine-NCS-Final-Report\\_final\\_8.4.21.pdf](https://crsf.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/214/2021/08/UMaine-NCS-Final-Report_final_8.4.21.pdf)

**S.K. Birthisel** (2020). Non-Chemical Weed Management. UNH Weed IPM Webinar Series presentation, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YtnUArGx7Jg&feature=youtu.be>

**S.K. Birthisel**, E. Conover, & C. Gunderson (2020). Dance Your PhD: Multi-tactic ecological weed management in a changing climate. AAAS video contest entry, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBsyqzT4YWQ>.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2018). Rain, rain, go away: Effects of changing precipitation on days suitable for agricultural fieldwork. USDA Northeast Climate Hub GradCAP webinar presentation, available at: [https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/sites/default/files/birthisel\\_final\\_web508.pdf](https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/sites/default/files/birthisel_final_web508.pdf).

**S.K. Birthisel**, E.R. Gallandt, & A.E. Souza Cunha (2018). Solarization and tarping for weed management on organic vegetable farms in the Northeast USA. eOrganic bulletin, available at: <https://articles.extension.org/pages/74713/solarization-and-tarping-for-weed-management-on-organic-vegetable-farms-in-the-northeast-usa>.

**S.K. Birthisel**, P. Rimkunas, J. Sullivan, & E.R. Gallandt (2017). WEEDucator: a digital tool for agricultural weed management education. Computer game prototype, available at: <https://skbirthisel.weebly.com/outreach.html>.

**S.K. Birthisel**, E.R. Gallandt, & E.M. Venturini (2017). Physical weed control: Managing weeds through hand weeding, cultivation, and flaming. UMaine Weed Ecology bulletin, available at: <https://skbirthisel.weebly.com/uploads/1/0/6/9/106960183/physicalweedcontrol.pdf>.

**S.K. Birthisel** & E.R. Gallandt (2017). Seedbank management: Managing weeds through germination, preemption, predation, and flaming. *UMaine Weed Ecology bulletin*, available at: <https://skbirthisel.weebly.com/uploads/1/0/6/9/106960183/seedbankmanagement.pdf>.

G.K. Landis, **S.K. Birthisel**, & E.R. Gallandt (2017). Weed management for beginning farmers: Principles for organic growing. *UMaine Weed Ecology bulletin*, available at <https://umaine.edu/weedecology/wp-content/uploads/sites/354/2017/10/beginningfarmers.pdf>.

A. Jones, **S.K. Birthisel**, R. Jabbour, F.A. Drummond, & D. Yarborough (2013). Carabidae (ground beetles) on Maine farms. *UMaine Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet No. 196*. University of Maine, Orono, ME. Available at: <https://extension.umaine.edu/blueberries/factsheets/insects/insects-196-beneficial-insect-series-2-carabidae-ground-beetles-on-maine-farms/>.

## Scholarly Presentations

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**S.K. Birthisel**, B.J. Brown, & E.R. Gallandt (2019, February). Looking for 'rare' weeds of agronomic concern in a changing climate. Talk presented at Weed Science Society of America annual meeting, New Orleans, LA.

R. Sexton, **S.K. Birthisel**, & E.R. Gallandt (2018, November). Impacts of increasing precipitation on physical weed control. Poster presented at the Rutgers Climate Symposium, New Brunswick, NJ.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2018, August). Communicating within and beyond science. Graduate student workshop facilitated at American Society for Horticultural Science annual meeting, Washington, DC.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2018, August). Comparing solarization and tarping for weed management in the Northeast USA. Talk presented at American Society for Horticultural Science, Washington, DC.

**S.K. Birthisel**, E. Mallory, & E.H. Roche (2018, March). Farming in a new weather reality: Farmer stories from Maine. Talk presented at USDA Northeast Climate Hub meeting, New Brunswick, NJ.

**S.K. Birthisel** & E.R. Gallandt (2018, January). WEEDucator: A digital tool for organic weed management education. Talk presented at Weed Science Society of America annual meeting, Arlington, VA.

**S.K. Birthisel** & E.R. Gallandt (2017, February). Solarization in the Northeast: Effective weed control with transient effects on soil microbes. Talk presented at Weed Science Society of America annual meeting, Tucson, AZ.

**S.K. Birthisel** & E.R. Gallandt (2016, February). Solarization for improved stale seedbed preparation in the Northeast. Poster presented at the Weed Science Society of America annual meeting, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

**S.K. Birthisel**, E.R. Gallandt, R.G. Smith, S.C. Bosworth, A. Hazelrigg, & B.J. Brown (2015, August). Potential invasions and extirpations of rare agronomic weeds in northern New England. Poster presented at the Ecological Society of America annual meeting, Baltimore, MD.

R. Jabbour, **S.K. Birthisel**, F.A. Drummond, & E.R. Gallandt (2013, November). Habitat effects on granivore diversity and weed seed predation in a New England farmscape. Invited talk in Program Symposium "Impacts of Global Change on Biodiversity and Biological Control" at the Entomological Society of America annual meeting, Austin, TX.

**S.K. Birthisel**, E.R. Gallandt, R. Jabbour, & F.A. Drummond (2013, August). Comparing sources of variation in agronomic weed seed predation: Time, space, and habitat. Talk presented at the Ecological Society of America annual meeting, Minneapolis, MN.

**S.K. Birthisel**, E.R. Gallandt, R. Jabbour, & F.A. Drummond (2013, February). Variation in seed predation across a farmscape. Talk presented at the Weed Science Society of America annual meeting, Baltimore, MD.

**S.K. Birthisel**, E.R. Gallandt, & R. Jabbour (2013, February). Hyperpredation of seed predator beetle *Harpalus rufipes*. Poster presented at the Weed Science Society of America annual meeting, Baltimore, MD.

## Press & Online Appearances (Partial List)

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How to make your own mulch at home. **Bangor Daily News** article available at:

<https://bangordailynews.com/2020/06/09/homestead/yes-upcycled-diy-mulches-work-but-with-a-few-limitations/>

What you should know before you take a flamethrower to weeds. **Bangor Daily News** article available at: <https://bangordailynews.com/2020/06/02/homestead/what-you-should-know-before-you-take-a-flamethrower-to-weeds/>

The biggest mistake first-time gardeners make when mulching. **Times Herald-Record** article available at: <https://www.recordonline.com/story/lifestyle/2020/06/18/garden-careful-when-spreading-mulch/3177439001/>

This simple trick could rid you of your weed woes for good. **Bangor Daily News** article available at: <https://bangordailynews.com/2020/06/03/homestead/this-simple-trick-could-rid-you-of-your-weed-woes-for-good/?ref=most-popular>

Here's what works when it comes to natural weeding solutions. **Bangor Daily News** article available at: <https://bangordailynews.com/2020/05/23/homestead/heres-what-works-when-it-comes-to-natural-weeding-solutions/>

The easier way to make a garden bed. **New York Times** article available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/24/realestate/the-easier-way-to-make-a-garden-bed.html>

Maine gardener: And you think you hate weeding now? **Portland Press Herald** article available at: <https://www.pressherald.com/2020/02/02/and-you-think-you-hate-weeding-now/>

Whether or not Roundup is safe, the gardener has better options. **Washington Post** article available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/home/whether-or-not-roundup-is-safe-the-gardener-has-better-options/2019/09/17/8ccb8a5e-ca95-11e9-a1fe-ca46e8d573c0\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/home/whether-or-not-roundup-is-safe-the-gardener-has-better-options/2019/09/17/8ccb8a5e-ca95-11e9-a1fe-ca46e8d573c0_story.html)

UMaine graduate student researchers attend GradCAP workshop. **UMaine News** release available at: <https://umaine.edu/news/blog/2019/04/01/umaine-graduate-student-researchers-attend-gradcap-workshop/>

Reducing weeds: A 101 on soil solarization. **A Way To Garden Podcast** episode available at: <https://awaytogarden.com/reducing-weeds-a-101-on-soil-solarization-with-sonja-birthisel/>

Sonja Birthisel will help you meet the beetles. **Portland Press Herald** article available at: <https://www.pressherald.com/2017/11/26/meet-the-beetles/>

That seed-eating ground beetle may be your garden's best friend. **Bangor Daily News** article available at: <https://bangordailynews.com/2018/04/12/homestead/that-seed-eating-ground-beetle-may-be-your-gardens-best-friend/>

How to solarize your garden for weed prevention. **Midwest Workshop & Garden** YouTube video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPQ40KFOGmU>

In the weeds. **UMaine Today** YouTube video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYurDLnsDOM>

## Other Presentations

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**S.K. Birthisel** (2022, September). How Can We Be Honest Brokers in an Honestly Broken System? Invited Seminar at The Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions, Orono, ME

**S.K. Birthisel** & I. Peterson (2020, November). Effort to Shut Down the Last New England Coal Plant. Invited Talk at NHCUC New England Environmental Justice Youth Summit, Zoom.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2020, January). Soil Solarization and Tarping for Improved Stale Seedbed Preparation. Invited talk at Empire State Producers Expo, Syracuse, NY.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2020, January). Weed Management in a Changing Climate. Invited talk at Maine Agricultural Trades Show, Augusta, ME.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2019, December). Organic Weed Management in a Changing Climate. Invited talk at New England Vegetable & Fruit Conference, Manchester, NH

**S.K. Birthisel** (2019, November). Climate Change Adaptation Strategies. Workshop at MOFGA Farmer to Farmer Conference, Northport, ME

**S.K. Birthisel** (2019, October). Farmers' Tools & Resources. Invited classroom lecture and discussion for UMaine Climate Adaptation course, Orono, ME

R. Clements & **S.K. Birthisel** (2019, October). Sustainable Farming in a Changing Climate. Invited workshop for middle school girls at Expanding Your Horizons STEM event, Orono, ME.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2019, September). Seed predation: An ecosystem service on Maine farms. Invited classroom lecture at College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, ME.

**S.K. Birthisel**, R. Clements, & A. Daigneault (2019, September). Climate adaptation for Maine farms. Workshop at MOFGA Common Ground Country Fair, Unity, ME.

E.H. Roche, **S.K. Birthisel**, & G. Koehler (2019, August). Introduction to the Maine Climate and Agriculture Network. Invited talk at Maine AGCOM meeting, Augusta, ME.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2019, April). Adapting Maine farms to climate change. Invited talk at Merryspring Nature Center, Camden, ME.

E. Mallory, B. Tooley, & **S.K. Birthisel** (2019, March). Farming in a changing climate. Invited lecture for Aroostook Soil and Water Conservation District Winter Ag School, Houlton, ME.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2019, January). Clear plastic for weed solarization. Invited talk at Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association Mulching and Tarping Conference, Fairlee, VT.

**S.K. Birthisel** & E.H. Roche (2019, January). Weather tool show and tell. Workshop at the Maine Agricultural Trades Show, Augusta, ME.

- S.K. Birthisel** (2018, December). Global and US perspectives on climate change and agriculture. Invited lecture for UMaine Principles of Sustainable Agriculture class, Orono, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2018, November). Soil solarization. Invited lecture for UMaine Organic Matter Management class.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2018, September). Ground beetles! Invited workshop at MOFGA Common Ground Country Fair, Unity, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2018, September). Dichotomous keys and why we use them. Invited workshop for UMaine Weed Biology and Identification class, Orono, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2018, September). Choosing hand tools that work for you. Invited demonstration at UMaine Master Gardener Field Day, Old Town, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2018, July). Solarization and tarping for weed management. Invited talk at UMass Extension Organic Weed Management Field Day, North Easton, MA.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2018, May). Weed seedbank management. Invited lecture at Eastern Maine Orchid Society Meeting, Orono, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2017, November). Role of predatory ground beetles in weed seed predation. Invited lecture as part of Xerces Society short course on conservation biological control, Unity, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2017, November). Dirty weeds done dirt cheap: Coupling weed ecology and economics to aid farmer decision-making. Invited seminar at the Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions, Orono, ME.
- A. Daigneault, J. Jansujwicz, S. Roy, S. De Urioste-Stone & **S.K. Birthisel** (2017, November). A conversation about decision support tools (Moderator: L. Silka). Panel discussion at the Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions, Orono, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2017, September). Seed predation. Invited classroom lecture at College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2017, February). Agronomic weeds and climate change: Scouting for potential invaders. Talk presented at Maine Climate and Agriculture Network Graduate Student Mini-Symposium, Orono, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** & E.R. Gallandt (2016, April). Soil solarization for weed management in a changing climate. Talk presented at Maine Climate and Agriculture Network Symposium, Orono, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2016, November). A decision-aid to improve the economic sustainability of Maine organic farms through improved weed management. Lightning talk presented at Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions Seminar, Orono, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2016, September). Managing weeds with soil solarization & occultation. Talk presented to visiting beginning farmers and Purdue Cooperative Extension personnel, Old Town, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2016, August). Mechanistic differences between soil solarization and occultation for weed control. Talk presented to the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Old Town, ME.
- S.K. Birthisel** (2016, July). Soil solarization and occultation for weed management. Talk presented at UMaine Sustainable Agriculture Field Day, Old Town, ME.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2016, May). Organic weed management in a changing climate. Talk presented during FoodCorps Graduate Research Symposium Webinar.

**S.K. Birthisel** & E.R. Gallandt (2016, April). Soil solarization for weed management in a changing climate. Talk presented at UMaine Climate Change and Agriculture Symposium, Orono, ME.

E.R. Gallandt, B.J. Brown & **S.K. Birthisel** (2015, September). Climate change and weed management. UMaine Climate Change and Agriculture Symposium, University of Maine, Orono, ME.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2015, July). Managing weeds with soil solarization. Talk presented at the UMaine Sustainable Agriculture Twilight Tour, Old Town, ME.

T.K. Fogler, K.M. Brown, **S.K. Birthisel**, & E. Ripley (2015, February). STEM Hub teen science café. Panel discussion for the Dexter-Dover-Guilford STEM Hub, Dexter, ME.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2013, June). Ecological weed management. Workshop presented at two Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association Farmer Training Project events, Orono, ME and Brunswick, ME.

**S.K. Birthisel** (2012, March). Hand weeding tools for the small-scale vegetable gardener. Workshop presented at the Maine Rural Living Day, Thorndike, ME.

## Scholarships & Awards

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- Community Solidarity Award, 2023, Food AND Medicine
- Gulf of Maine 2050 Scholarship, 2019, Gulf of Maine Research Institute
- Fiore Art Center Academic Writing Residency Award, 2019, Maine Farmland Trust
- Distinguished Nominee for Edith Patch Award, 2019, UMaine Edith Patch Award Committee
- Outstanding Service Award, 2018, UMaine College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, & Agriculture
- Samuel L. Boucher Horticulture Education Scholarship, 2018, UMaine School of Food and Agriculture
- Student eOrganic Article Competition Winner, 2018, American Society for Horticultural Science Organic Interest Group
- Outstanding Contribution to Sustainability Research by a Graduate Student, 2017, Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions
- Correll Fellowship, 2015, UMaine Ecology and Environmental Sciences Program
- Sarah Jane White Spruce Memorial Scholarship, 2015, UMaine School of Food and Agriculture
- Graduate Student Travel Award, 2013, Weed Science Society of America
- Regent Scholarship, 2006-2010, Luther College

## Other Academic & Community Service

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- Member of the Maine Bureau of Labor Education Advisory Board (2023-present)
- Member of the Maine Rail Group Board (2023-present)
- Member of ISO-NE Consumer Liaison Group Coordinating Committee (2022-present)
- President of The Sacred Tribe Board of Directors (2022-present)
- Member of the Orono Town Council (2022-present)
- Member of the Board of Food AND Medicine (2022-present)
- Faculty Adviser for Maine Peace Action Committee (2020-present)
- Volunteer with the Maine People's Alliance (2020-present)
- Teacher for Young Adults With Pizzaz youth program (2019-present)
- Member of Church of Universal Fellowship Board of Trustees (2019-present)
- Member of Maine Climate and Agriculture Network (2016-present)
- Contra dance caller (2016-present)

- Instructor for Our Whole Lives comprehensive sexuality education program (2015-present)
- Faculty Adviser for UMaine Interfaith Group (2021-2022)
- Member of the Epic Skill Swap organizing committee (2018-2022)
- Editorial Board Member for Spire: the Maine Journal of Conservation and Sustainability (2019-2020)
- Interim Coordinator of Maine Climate and Agriculture Network (Fall 2019)
- Member of UMaine Friends of the Herbarium Society (2016-2019)
- Coordinator for Wilson Center SCOPE Community Service Grants Program (2017-2018)
- Coordinator for Dorothy Clarke Wilson Peace Writing Prize (2017-2018)
- Garden caretaker for the Wilson Center at UMaine (2017-2018)
- Member of Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast planning committee (2017-2018)
- Faculty Sponsor for UMaine undergraduate AcroYoga club (2016-2017)
- Organizer of Bangor Blues monthly dance series (2016)
- Member of UMaine Witter Research Center Farm Manager hiring committee (Spring 2016)
- Member of UMaine Ecology and Environmental Sciences seminar committee (2012-2013)

## Affiliations & Certifications

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- Cooperative Extension Tractor Safety certification
- Cooperative Extension Master Gardener
- ServSafe Manager certification

## Selected Education

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### Jewish Spiritual Leadership Institute, New York, NY

- Rabbinic Ordination, 2019
  - Beit DeIn: Rabbi Monte Sugarman, Rabbi Reuven Silverman, Rabbi Steven Blane
  - Thesis: *Psychedelics and Judaism*

### ALEPH: The Alliance for Jewish Renewal, Philadelphia, PA

- Jewish Spiritual Director Certification Program, 2018
  - Thesis: *Transcendent Practice in Modern Kabbalah*

### Davvenen' Leadership Training Institute, Falls Village, CT

- Jewish Service Leadership Certificate Program, 2017

### Wilderness Education Association, Black Mountain, NC

- Program Assessor Trainer, 2011

### Alaska Pacific University, Anchorage, AK

- MS, Chemical Engineering, 2002
  - Thesis: *Synthetic Control of Intrinsic Ground State Defects in a Mixed Valence Quasi-One-Dimensional Sodium Crystal Chain*
- MS, Chemistry, 2002
  - Thesis: *Ultrafast Vibrational Dynamics in a Quasi-One-Dimensional System*
- BS, Chemical Engineering, 1999
- BS, Chemistry, 1999
- BS, Environmental Science, 1999

## Key Skills

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- **Educational Leadership:** Extensive experience in leading educational institutions and programs, with a focus on transformative and experiential learning.
- **Curriculum Development:** Proficient in designing innovative and comprehensive curricula, blending traditional and modern educational theories.
- **Experiential Learning Techniques:** Proficient in creating immersive learning experiences, utilizing innovative techniques to enhance student engagement and understanding.
- **Assessment Design & Analysis:** Skilled in developing and implementing effective assessment strategies, including competency-based and portfolio models.
- **Interdisciplinary Teaching:** Skilled in integrating various disciplines such as Kabbalah, quantum mechanics, and modern educational methodologies for a holistic teaching approach.
- **Program Design & Implementation:** Expertise in conceptualizing and executing educational programs that combine academic rigor with real-world application.
- **Strategic Planning & Execution:** Demonstrated ability in strategic visioning, planning, and execution, ensuring alignment with educational goals and institutional growth.
- **Community Engagement & Collaboration:** Strong background in fostering community relationships and collaborative educational environments across diverse cultural and spiritual settings.
- **Mentorship & Faculty Development:** Experienced in mentoring educators and developing faculty capabilities to foster a progressive and dynamic educational workforce.
- **Inclusion & Diversity Advocacy:** Committed to creating inclusive learning environments, emphasizing respect and accommodation for diverse student needs.

## Selected Professional Experience



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## The Wilson Center, University of Maine

Rabbi-in-Residence, 2023-2024 Academic Year

- **Innovative Program Development:** Pioneered the creation and implementation of a unique Coming-of-Age program, seamlessly integrating educational elements from diverse spiritual traditions such as Kabbalah, Hinduism, Sufism, the I-Ching, and Western Gnostic practices, tailored to the diverse needs of the University of Maine community.
- **Pastoral Care and Student Support:** Provided comprehensive pastoral care, offering essential guidance and emotional support to students and staff, enhancing the Center's supportive environment.
- **Multifaith Worship and Inclusivity:** Designed and led inclusive multifaith worship services, fostering a campus atmosphere of spiritual inclusivity and active interfaith dialogue, contributing to a broader understanding and respect among various faith communities.
- **Cultural and Religious Event Coordination:** Organized and executed significant Jewish ceremonies and cultural events, enriching the campus's religious and cultural landscape, and promoting cultural awareness and diversity.
- **Interfaith Educational Collaboration:** Co-taught and facilitated a range of multi-faith educational programs, encouraging mutual understanding and collaborative learning among students from different religious backgrounds, aligning with contemporary interfaith educational practices.

## Mifneh L'Kedushah – A School of Transcendence, Multiple Locations Across the USA

Executive Director, 2018-Present

- **Innovative Curriculum Design:** Developed and implemented a unique curriculum integrating Kabbalistic teachings with modern educational techniques, enhancing students' personal growth and spiritual understanding.
- **Strategic Leadership in Educational Programming:** Spearheaded the overall strategic vision, fostering the school's expansion and aligning educational objectives with comprehensive personal development goals for children.
- **Assessment and Engagement Strategies:** Crafted and utilized novel assessment tools to measure student engagement and intellectual progress, ensuring a deep, experiential understanding of key concepts.
- **Experiential Learning and Capstone Projects:** Guided students in creating and presenting Bar or Bat Mitzvah projects, emphasizing these as capstone experiences that reflect their holistic learning journey and personal growth.
- **Collaborative Partnerships for Educational Enhancement:** Established and nurtured partnerships with various academic institutions and community organizations, broadening the educational scope and fostering a collaborative learning environment.
- **Faculty Development and Teaching Methodology Innovation:** Led initiatives for faculty development, focusing on innovative teaching methodologies to effectively communicate complex spiritual concepts in an accessible manner.
- **Community Building and Inclusivity:** Actively promoted and facilitated community-building activities, creating a nurturing and inclusive educational setting that encourages exploration and application of spiritual principles.

## The Sacred Tribe, Denver, CO

Congregational Rabbi, 2020-2023

- **Leadership in Worship and Ceremonial Services:** Orchestrated diverse religious services and ceremonies, ensuring they were meaningful and engaging, contributing to the spiritual wellbeing of the congregation.
- **Pastoral Care and Spiritual Guidance:** Provided comprehensive pastoral care and spiritual counseling, supporting community members through various life stages and challenges, fostering a supportive and nurturing environment.
- **Educational Program Development:** Developed and implemented a wide range of educational programs tailored to different demographics, including innovative adult education initiatives and youth engagement activities, enhancing the congregation's learning experience.
- **Interfaith Dialogue and Outreach:** Led interfaith dialogues and community outreach initiatives, building and strengthening relationships both within the Jewish community and with other faith groups, promoting understanding and collaboration.
- **Religious, Social, and Educational Enrichment:** Played a key role in overseeing and enriching the congregation's religious, social, and educational activities, ensuring a vibrant and dynamic community life.

## Congregation Bet Ha'am, South Portland, ME

Executive Director, 2017-2019

- **Educational Program Development:** Spearheaded the development and implementation of innovative adult and youth education programs, aligning them with the human skills curriculum from my dissertation, focusing on personal growth, community engagement, and holistic development.

- **Strategic Leadership in Educational Operations:** Directed comprehensive synagogue operations, with a special focus on educational initiatives, strategic planning, and community-building.
- **Collaborative Growth and Outreach:** Worked closely with the Board of Trustees, staff, and volunteers, as well as the larger Jewish community, fostering organizational growth and enhancing community outreach, particularly through educational programs.
- **Revenue Growth through Educational Initiatives:** Drove a successful growth initiative, significantly increasing program attendance and volunteer engagement, particularly in educational offerings, leading to exceeded revenue and participation targets.
- **Staff Development with a Competency and Portfolio Based Framework:** Created and administered a personnel development plan focused on enhancing educational competencies among staff, including performance metrics, training programs, and assessment tools, leading to improved team performance and educational delivery.

### **The Mountain Guide School, Multiple International Locations**

Director, 2005-2016

- **Curriculum Innovation and Technical Education:** Established an accredited 4-year technical college with a groundbreaking curriculum that seamlessly integrated technical skills training with comprehensive human skills development.
- **Competency-Based Educational Framework:** Designed and implemented a comprehensive, portfolio-based competency model for the objective assessment of human skills, incorporating behavioral indicators and thresholding concepts to ensure student competence.
- **Human Skills Integration in Technical Training:** Innovated in the field of technical education by incorporating behavioral economic theory and outcome-aligned heuristics, enhancing student decision-making and leadership capabilities.
- **Global Collaboration and Accreditation:** Fostered international collaboration and accreditation by partnering with government agencies, training organizations, and industry leaders in 11 countries and 4 languages, enhancing the school's global presence and curriculum validity.
- **Diverse Team Leadership and Inclusivity:** Managed a diverse team of 7 administrators and 58 instructors, focusing on multicultural education and inclusivity across global campuses, and overseeing the development of over 180 students.
- **Financial and Operational Management:** Demonstrated financial leadership by managing a \$7.2 million annual budget, ensuring financial sustainability and transparency in a multi-country operation.
- **Strategic Growth and Marketing Initiatives:** Drove the strategic expansion of the college, utilizing various media channels to enhance reach and market presence, resulting in significant growth in program attendance and global recognition.

### **The Wilderness Education Association, Black Mountain, NC**

Director of Curriculum and Accreditation, 2012-2014

- **Curriculum Development and Accreditation:** Spearheaded the development and implementation of comprehensive accreditation standards for Outdoor Leadership programs at 38 universities globally, enhancing the quality and consistency of educational experiences.
- **Collaboration and Standardization:** Worked closely with academic institutions to establish and uphold rigorous educational standards, focusing on continuous improvement and excellence in outdoor leadership training.
- **Assessment Process Design:** Developed a robust process for assessing schools, creating criteria and methodologies to evaluate the effectiveness and quality of their outdoor leadership curriculums.
- **Accreditation Framework Development:** Pioneered the construction of a detailed accreditation framework, defining benchmarks for educational excellence and compliance, ensuring high standards across all participating institutions.
- **Implementation and Monitoring of Standards:** Oversaw the implementation of these new standards and frameworks, regularly monitoring and providing feedback to institutions, ensuring adherence to the established guidelines and continuous improvement in curriculum delivery.

## **Selected Projects**

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### **The Art Paradigm**

Co-Facilitator, December 2022 to April 2023

- **Innovative Program Development:** Co-developed "The Art Paradigm," a 10-week immersive program uniquely blending artistic, spiritual, and professional elements to guide participants towards meaningful and financially stable work.

- **Curriculum Design and Concept Integration:** Crafted the program structure to delve into the interplay between spirituality, art, and business, addressing critical themes like the influence of money and desire in creative endeavors and the development of a personal creative process.
- **Dynamic Learning Experiences:** Created and facilitated a range of interactive educational experiences, including workshops, small group tutorials, and daily audio content, to deeply engage participants in exploring these paradigms.
- **Holistic Teaching Approach:** Employed a comprehensive teaching methodology that combined personal storytelling, examination of diverse narratives (artistic, spiritual, business), and practical applications to the participants' professional and personal lives.
- **Community-Centric Learning Environment:** Cultivated a collaborative learning atmosphere, fostering peer interactions, discussions, and reflective practices through platforms like Voxer, enhancing community support and dialogue.
- **Participant Empowerment and Outcome Focus:** Guided participants towards a practical understanding and application of an artistic approach in their professional life, aiming to enhance personal fulfillment, creativity, and financial insight.

## Mussar

Creator and Facilitator, August to October 2022

- **Innovative Program Design:** Developed a unique three-month program that uniquely combined the Jewish philosophy of Mussar with quantum mechanics principles, aiming to foster personal growth and a deeper understanding of life's interconnectedness.
- **Holistic Educational Approach:** Merged ethical teachings from Mussar with advanced quantum mechanics concepts, creating a comprehensive curriculum for self-improvement and enhanced worldview comprehension.
- **Personal Growth Tracking:** Implemented a behavioral indicator/portfolio system, enabling participants to systematically track and assess their development in ethical character traits and personal growth.
- **Narrative Learning Techniques:** Utilized storytelling as a central teaching method, facilitating a richer understanding of complex philosophical and scientific ideas through relatable narratives.
- **Emphasis on Transformation:** Encouraged participants to engage in self-reflection, linking their life experiences with the program's teachings, thereby promoting personal transformation aligned with ethical and scientific insights.
- **Interactive Learning Environment:** Fostered an immersive and active learning setting where participants discussed, participated in workshops, and practiced reflective exercises, applying the program's teachings to their own spiritual and personal paths.
- **Development Portfolio Creation:** Guided participants in creating their own growth portfolios, documenting their journey of transformation during the program and establishing a basis for ongoing personal development.

## Shalom Maine

Co-Founder, 2018

- **Innovative Educational Integration:** Initiated and led the formation of an organization dedicated to harmonizing adult education across six synagogues from diverse Jewish denominations (Reform, Conservative, Orthodox), fostering a comprehensive and inclusive educational landscape.
- **Collaborative Educational Platform:** Orchestrated efforts to create a diverse and inclusive educational platform, bridging denominational gaps and bringing varied Jewish traditions and perspectives together.
- **Resource and Curriculum Sharing:** Facilitated the exchange of resources, educators, and curricula among participating synagogues, significantly enhancing the quality and diversity of educational experiences available to adult learners in the Jewish community.
- **Diverse Educational Offerings:** Curated and developed a broad spectrum of educational programs, catering to various interests and observance levels, ranging from traditional Torah study to contemporary Jewish thought and ethics.
- **Inter-Denominational Dialogue:** Fostered dialogue and understanding across denominations, establishing a unique learning environment where members of different Jewish communities could mutually enrich their knowledge and perspectives.
- **Special Events and Lecture Series:** Organized joint events and lecture series featuring esteemed speakers and educators, showcasing the depth and diversity of Jewish learning, scholarship, and thought.
- **Adaptive Teaching Methods:** Implemented progressive teaching methods and approaches, including online classes and interactive workshops, to reach a wider audience and accommodate evolving educational preferences and styles.

## The Passover Experience

Director, January to April 2017

- **Immersive Theatrical Production:** Spearheaded an 8-day interactive theater program, meticulously designed to

emotionally parallel the Passover story, guiding participants through an experiential 3-hour journey.

- **Emotional Journey Design:** Crafted the experience to navigate through six key emotional stages - helplessness, bondage, terror, liberation, gratitude, and creation - offering a deep, comprehensive exploration of the Passover narrative.
- **Innovative Storytelling Techniques:** Employed cutting-edge theatrical and storytelling methods, deeply engaging participants and enabling them to intimately experience the emotional and spiritual dimensions of the Passover story.
- **Interactive Set Creation:** Developed a series of vivid, interactive sets and scenarios, symbolically tracing the Israelites' journey from slavery to freedom, significantly enhancing the overall immersive quality of the program.
- **Collaborative Artistic Effort:** Collaborated with a diverse team of actors, musicians, and artists, bringing the Passover story to life with a blend of historical authenticity and creative flair.
- **Reflective Discussions Facilitation:** Led reflective debriefing sessions post-experience, encouraging participants to process their experiences and relate the themes of freedom and redemption to their personal life narratives.

## Unction

Director, October 2021

- **Innovative Retreat Leadership:** Conceptualized and led a unique three-day spiritual retreat that creatively combined storytelling, personal transformation, and Jewish teachings in a serene mountain setting near Denver, offering a unique educational experience.
- **Immersive Educational Sessions:** Facilitated immersive sessions inspired by the rich narratives and teachings of Judaism, utilizing the art of storytelling to impart deep spiritual lessons and insights.
- **Guided Personal Reflection:** Conducted sessions that encouraged personal reflection and introspection, helping participants draw connections between personal stories, Jewish faith, and traditional themes, fostering a deeper understanding and personal growth.
- **Integration of Mystical Teachings:** Seamlessly incorporated Kabbalistic principles, guiding attendees in exploring these mystical teachings as pathways to deeper spiritual understanding and connection.
- **Empowerment and Self-Discovery:** Motivated participants to explore and discover their own "Unction" or sacred purpose in life, leading them on a transformative journey of self-discovery and spiritual enlightenment.
- **Community and Supportive Environment:** Created and maintained a safe and nurturing environment, encouraging individuals to connect deeply with themselves and others, thereby fostering a sense of community and collective spiritual exploration.

## Building the Whole Human: A Professional Development Series

Creator and Lead Instructor, Annually from 2010 through 2016

- **Comprehensive Educator Training Program:** Developed and led a six-month training program, covering a wide range of teaching competencies and methodologies, tailored to modern educational needs.
- **Fundamentals of Education Training:** Delivered in-depth training sessions on core principles of contemporary educational theory and practice, establishing a strong foundational knowledge base for participants.
- **Advanced Curriculum Design Workshops:** Facilitated specialized workshops in advanced curriculum design, empowering educators to create engaging, effective, and adaptable educational plans.
- **Assessment Techniques Best Practices:** Integrated best practices in student assessment, instructing educators on designing, implementing, and analyzing various assessment methods.
- **Innovative Teaching Strategies:** Concentrated on cutting-edge pedagogical strategies, equipping teachers with the skills to foster dynamic, interactive, and student-centered learning environments.
- **Mentorship Skills Development:** Introduced a mentorship module, training educators in effective mentorship practices to promote professional growth and development within educational communities.
- **Inclusion and Diversity Focus:** Emphasized the importance of inclusive teaching, providing educators with practical tools and strategies to create diverse and accommodating learning environments for all students.

## Move

Director, June and July 2016

- **Interdisciplinary Art Installation Leadership:** Co-created a distinctive 10-day art installation in Ireland, collaborating with a Buddhist monk and a Pagan/Celtic priestess, focusing on the creative synthesis of diverse spiritual and cultural expressions.
- **Innovative Visual Artistry:** Developed "light tapestries" as a central visual feature, intricately blending patterns of light with fabric to create visually captivating displays, demonstrating a unique approach to artistic expression.
- **Dynamic Performance Integration:** Seamlessly incorporated live music and dance performances into the installation,

providing an engaging and immersive experience for audiences, showcasing the ability to create dynamic learning environments.

- **Contemplative Space Design:** Thoughtfully designed the installation as an intimate and reflective space, inviting attendees to explore the rich intersections of different spiritual traditions through art, enhancing their understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures.
- **Artistic Mediums Fusion:** Orchestrated a harmonious integration of various artistic forms – light, music, and dance – each element synergistically contributing to the overall aesthetic and thematic impact of the installation.
- **Community Building and Spiritual Exploration:** Fostered a communal atmosphere, enabling attendees to engage in shared spiritual exploration and connect with diverse cultural and religious practices, emphasizing the importance of community in learning experiences.

## **Selected Presentations, Conferences, and Teachings**

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### **Transcendent Curriculum Design**

Darkhei Rephua, 2021

### **Divergent Thought**

Darkhei Rephua, 2020

### **Transcendent Practice in Modern Kabbalah**

The Kabbalah Center, 2020

### **Most of All, I Want My Child to be a Good Person**

Limmud Boston, 2018

Limmud Chicago, 2018

Limmud New Orleans, 2018

Limmud Seattle, 2018

Limmud, Boston, 2017

### **Using Behavioral Indicators in Adult and Children's Education**

NewCAJE, 2018

### **The Six Elements of Spiritual Feedback**

Limmud Chicago, 2017

Limmud Seattle, 2017

### **Using Behavioral Indicators to Assess a Human Based Competency Training Program**

Corporacion Nacional Forestal, 2016

American Alpine Association, 2016

American Avalanche Association, 2015

Wilderness Education Association, 2015, 2014, 2013, and 2012

# **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.

To: The Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends  
From: Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, Putney (VT) Friends Meeting  
Re: Report in preparation for PB meeting on May 11, 2023

Dear Friends,

I cannot begin to write without acknowledging the grief and gratitude I feel for the lives, testimony, and service of Christopher and Jean McCandless, and Elizabeth Reuthe. In addition to these three Friends, I know so many of us—and our meetings—have lost treasured loved ones in recent months. Together and apart, I hope we will each allow space for memory, for grief, and for celebration of their presence in our world. To their families, and to all of us, I know Friends and loved ones across New England and beyond extend our prayers, bearing witness to the fruits of Love.

On behalf of my whole family, I want to express my profound thanks for the expressions and acts of sacrificial care, support, and service shared by so many Friends and Friends meetings in recent months, and for the tangible and exceptional efforts and flexibility of Friends serving through the Yearly Meeting during my recent leave, following the murder of my brother Justin, my only sibling, on January 12. To the members of Coordinating & Advisory Committee, to the Yearly Meeting Staff, to the members of the Permanent Board, and especially to Nia Thomas and Sarah Gant in their roles as acting secretaries in my absence, we are grateful beyond words.

For those who may not know, after the immediate days and weeks of crisis in January and February, my brother's memorial was in early March. It was a gift and a balm to see New England Friends there. The memorial, held under the care of Putney and Schenectady Monthly Meetings, was a tender and gathered time of celebration and mourning, held at the Powell House Quaker Conference Center in Old Chatham, New York, where my brother and our family have deep roots.

As of this writing, the trial for the person charged with his murder and six other related felonies has yet to be scheduled; some aspects of the investigation continue. Because of my close involvement in the circumstances surrounding my brother's death, I will be called as a primary witness when the trial is held. Ongoing efforts to provide care and support for my teenage nephew as he looks toward the future are complex and turbulent.

I am daily reminded: Grief is not a linear process. Love is stronger than death. God's presence, mercy, and faithfulness are everlasting.

I returned to service a step at a time in early April. There are tender and joyful moments, and harder days. Things will not be the same, as I will never be. I am grateful for Friends' patience, and for your persistence and prayer.

More specifically, this spring I'm seeking to reconnect with and attend to some of the various aspects of our work, focusing especially on: 1) development and fundraising to meet our

financial goals, 2) supporting staff and volunteer servant leaders in prioritizing and carrying out their work, 3) supporting local meetings, 4) addressing obstacles and clarifying paths forward for key initiatives as we move toward Sessions, and the coming year.

Through all of this, I continue to feel the importance of doing what I can to **help us nurture a more shared understanding of the wider context in which our many decisions and actions are held**, the varied and yet coherent process of renewal in which the Yearly Meeting has engaged in recent years. I believe it is especially important to **support the members of the Permanent Board in having the information, framing, and context** with which to exercise our charge for discernment and stewardship on behalf of the wider body of Friends in our region.

In service to this goal, at this May meeting I will share a **presentation on the various dimensions of financial discernment and stewardship** in process at this time, as well as a **review and update on our continuing experiment strengthening the Yearly Meeting's support of ministry, eldership, and the spiritual life of our local meetings**. I have also included in the advance documents, as an informational background item a **brief snapshot reflecting several of the matters currently being shepherded** by Coordinating & Advisory Committee, in keeping with that committee's charge from the Yearly Meeting.

This time of harrowing has brought me to see our service together on behalf of Friends, and my part in it, with new eyes. This too is a gift, one I know will continue to unfold. For now, I abide in gratitude, and look forward with hope to seeing many of you in person in Concord on May 11.

### **Re: the Antiracism/ "Equity Design" consultation proposal in the advance documents**

Carrying forward the work of the Antiracism Consultation Working Group, in which Nia Thomas and I have participated since it was created, immediately upon my return to work I engaged at length with Melvin Bray, the principal of *Collabyrinth*, the consultant selected by the working group after an extensive and deliberative process. Melvin and I have had engaging, informative, and (to me) encouraging conversation about how he and his colleagues might be able to support New England Friends, and I am hopeful we may find a path forward to work together.

Following that consultation and building on previous engagement with other members of the Working Group, Collabyrinth submitted a proposal for their prospective work with New England Yearly Meeting. **That proposal is attached for informational purposes.**

After consulting with and seeking guidance from the Coordinating & Advisory Committee, it is clear to me that the next step is to bring this proposal to the Permanent Board in its current form, as an update on an ongoing process, and to seek further guidance from the Permanent Board in how this process and relationship may proceed.

While the Yearly Meeting Secretary is responsible for engaging and managing consulting relationships on behalf of the Yearly Meeting, after consultation I believe that both the projected financial costs contained in the proposal and some aspects of the proposed approach raise important questions that are beyond what I understand as my current authorization, or the guidance I have received.

**I am therefore bringing this proposal, not for immediate approval, but for your awareness, and to hear further guidance to inform ongoing conversation and negotiation with Collabyrinth about our needs, our means, and how this project might move forward.**

anchored in Grace,

Noah

Noah Merrill  
Secretary  
New England Yearly Meeting of Friends

## Implementation

## Time-Sensitive Discernment

## Ongoing

Establishing and investing in designated **endowments as carriers for vision & mission** (S, AG, FC, C&A)

**Annual Funding Priorities Cycle:** making existing practice and process more visible, intentional, inviting (C&A)

**Annual Budget Process,** including multi-year projections to aid planning (FC, S)

**Planned giving;** cultivating, inviting, and stewarding estate gifts (S, P)

**Sessions visioning & design,** as relates to financial stewardship, sustainability, and opportunity costs/tradeoffs (WG)

**Nurturing a spirituality of stewardship:** How can Friends approach personal and corporate decisions about money and financial stewardship in ways informed by our faith? (S, P)

**CPA review:** making financial management and reporting more transparent, share more helpful information to inform discernment (WG, S, P, FC)

**Support of Other Organizations** in operating budget: Criteria? Which orgs, and how much? (WG)

**Local meeting discernment** regarding care, stewardship, and uses of meetinghouses and property - how this fits into ongoing programming (S, P)

**Financial resilience and strengthening:** development including annual fund (gifts from households and meetings) and other diversified streams (S, AG)

Evaluation and Discernment of **Experiment with Stipends for Volunteer Leadership** (WG)

**Local meeting financial stewardship:** wisdom sharing and workshops/resource sharing - how this fits into ongoing programming (S, P)

*FC: Finance Committee  
C&A: Coordinating & Advisory  
WG: Dedicated working group  
S: Staff  
AG: Relevant advisory group  
LG: Legacy Gift Committee  
YM: Youth Ministries Committee  
P: Other partners (Everence, CPA)*

Review, Editing, and Approval of **revised Personnel Policy** for NEYM (S, AG, C&A)

**Reflection on past uses** (LG), and **discernment process on future use** (\*TBD/C&A), of **Legacy Gift Funds**

**Youth Ministries listening, consultation, and reporting,** as relates to programmatic approaches, staffing, participants, financial stewardship, sustainability, and opportunity costs (S, YM)

Revised 4/19/24

# What signs of thriving do you see?

1 in 5 Friends who gathered this year for training and consultation about service to their local meetings were new to wider events hosted through New England Quakers

40% of participants in our at-capacity midwinter retreat for young adults were newcomers

Expanded online opportunities for peer relationship; one-day events like Living Faith, Meeting Care Day, and Meeting for Listening

Increased accessibility; elder care, childcare for events, enabling stipends for Friends serving as volunteer servant leaders

Friends with little previous involvement beyond their home meeting are being nourished by sharing their gifts of service through the Yearly Meeting

Dozens of new youth, new volunteers, parents, and grandparents participating in youth ministry retreats this year

More 30- to 50-year-olds contributing leadership, service, and vision at Sessions and elsewhere

Friends Camp finances and staffing on a renewed and stable footing

Short-term service opportunities allow increased participation and sharing of gifts

50+ Friends meetings and groups engaged with the new Meeting Accompaniment Group in recent months



NEW ENGLAND  
QUAKERS



Dear Friend,

Are you led to encourage the life of Friends today, and to nurture the Quaker movement as it could be—10, 50, 100 years from now? Do you yearn for multigenerational spiritual communities where everyone takes part, with gifts liberated to serve, responding to the condition of our neighbors and the wider world? Are you passionate about being part of a living faith tradition offering enduring guidance, accompaniment, and nurture throughout the whole of people's lives?

If so, we're writing today to invite you to join Friends of many ages across our region in being part of the "Generations Together" financial sustainability campaign.

The signs of thriving we see fill us with hope. And sustaining the ministries of New England Quakers this year and for generations to come requires substantial financial resources. In recent years, the pandemic and related disruptions were setbacks to ensuring the support Friends' shared ministries need, this year and in the time to come. Whatever our circumstances, each of us shares in the responsibility for the whole, as we honor our connection to the living stream of Friends past, present, and future. Responding to a shared leading to this service, a group of Friends of different ages and life circumstances have come together in recent months to invite you to join us in what we're calling "Generations Together."

Please consider helping us to expand the numbers of Friends households contributing ongoing support of our shared ministries through your gift in any amount. If you already give: thank you, we are deeply grateful. As your means allow, we hope you will consider an increase in your annual gift, or setting up a monthly gift, if you're able. And: Why do you give? This is a living story that you could share, with a Friend you might encourage to contribute, or with your Friends meeting.

In the coming months, we look forward to sharing news about the progress we're making together, as we partner with the Spirit to sustain our shared service for the present and future of Friends.

**Spring is here...will you join us?**

[neym.org/donate](https://neym.org/donate)



To: The Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends  
From: Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk of the Yearly Meeting, Providence (RI) Friends Meeting  
Re: Report in Preparation for the Permanent Board Meeting on May 11, 2024

Dear Friends,

I have been praying for us all these past months and in anticipation of our time together on Saturday, here is my wish... that we come together this Saturday all perfectly imperfect. Let us bring our authentic selves to our time together. Let us appreciate those things which unite us. Let us not discount our differences but face them squarely with appreciation for each other and with demonstration of bravery, care, and self-reflection in difficult conversations. Let us take strength from that foundation of love that binds us together, linking us all in mutual and interdependent relationship.

May that underlying reality of love as the first motion, the force of creation, give us all vision and courage to work together. To help each other when sometimes we lose connection to the essential, when we err or stray the path. And to affirm the many ways that our collective efforts bear witness to the Divine force that is working within and among us.

I intend to enter in to our time together committing to worshipful listening for divine guidance, with ears and mind open to hear the wisdom that Friends share about the matters we will consider. And I offer my understanding that any particular item of business we discern is a part of the larger, complex, and vital whole New England Yearly Meeting.

The totality of life in and of the Spirit is never static; it is always in motion. The more flexible, nimble, open to other perspectives and possibilities we can be, the better we will be able to serve today's Society of Friends and help all to thrive in our changing world.

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My main activities in the past several months have been several.

I serve as clerk for the Coordinating and Advisory Committee which has met multiple times each month since our last Permanent Board meeting. (See the Committee Report in the Advance Documents.) Currently I am planning for that committee's annual June retreat.

With deep gratitude to those with whom I have worked over the past five months, I have served as a member of the ad-hoc group to develop a charge for the Conflict Response Team of the Yearly Meeting. We gathered for four deeply reflective and grounded meetings and have a proposed charge and process to present for your discernment on Saturday. (See the Advance Documents.)

In early April, I attended the Living Faith gathering at the Friends School in North Dartmouth, Massachusetts. It was a joy to see many of you there and all the other Friends from across New England who joined in a day of song and workshops and worship and connection.



In late April, I attended the second annual Quaker Leadership conference held at the Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, Indiana. It was a joy to be there with Friend Kathleen Wooten and others from around the Friends world for two-and-a half days of worship, presentations, discussion, and F/friendship. The theme of the gathering was “Stories for the Future.”

Our 364<sup>th</sup> NEYM Annual Sessions gathering with the theme “Let Us Faithfully Tend the Seed,” is just three months away, on August 2 through 7, at Castleton, Vermont. I have been active in planning on the Theme and Speakers Working Group and the Sessions Planning and Program Committees. Our Sunday afternoon plenary speaker will be Lloyd Lee Wilson, a North Carolina Friend living in Greensboro who began his journey in Quakerism at Friends Meeting, Cambridge! Genna Ulrich of Portland (ME) Monthly Meeting will present the Bible-half hour series. And Toussaint Liberator, who initiated a drumming circle at Cambridge Friends, will lead an all-ages drumming circle event on Monday night. For other late breaking news, see the May edition of the NEYM newsletter, just out!

With so much good work happening across our community, I have been listening for a clear sense of the rhythm and focus of our Yearly Meeting’s business for this year. I look forward to highlighting the exciting life that is happening across our Yearly Meeting in lifting up our Quarterly Meetings, bringing to Friends assembled the wealth of leadings that individuals follow in faithfulness to Spirit, among our recorded ministers and Friends pursuing initiatives supported by the Legacy Gift funding, going strong in its tenth year. Discernment is ongoing and I hope to hear from a number of quarters and committees, as well as from you on Permanent Board, as I shape the agendas for our work together in faith and witness.

Whether you are an old-timer or a recent-attender or have not yet participated, I invite you all to join in this event either in person on campus or through the Zoom connections offered. Spread the word about our gathering. And remember that it is volunteers who make Sessions happen! You can learn about the many ways you can be part of making this great event a reality by consulting the volunteer web-page: [https://neym.org/volunteer-sessions?mc\\_cid=dbf604f61f](https://neym.org/volunteer-sessions?mc_cid=dbf604f61f)

Finally, and importantly, I have continued to sit with and am honored to serve as ex-officio with the Finance Committee, the Development Advisory Group, the Right Relations Resource Working Group, the Noticing Patterns of Faithfulness and Oppression Working Group, and the Legacy Gift Committee. And I serve as a member of the Spiritual Life Listening Group.

Thank you, Friends, for all you do in the life of our Yearly Meeting, in your local meetings, and in your communities and families.

We are all God’s hands!

Love and Light to all and see you on Saturday!

Rebecca

To: The Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting  
From: Rebecca Leuchak, Clerk of the Coordinating and Advisory Committee  
Re: Report of the Coordinating and Advisory Committee for the Permanent Board Meeting  
Date: May 11, 2024

Across our Yearly Meeting those who serve on the Coordinating and Advisory Committee see such faithfulness and loving involvement at the monthly, quarterly and yearly meeting levels from Friends who feel the call to serve. We recognize the challenges that service to our Friends communities pose to us as individuals – the time and energy this work takes. The difficulties of balancing deep commitment to our faith communities with the necessities of living out our lives in our day-to-day responsibilities.

We are grateful to you for your steadfast involvement serving on Permanent Board and in the many other ways you serve. We are deeply grateful for the community we form, and are energized by this gathering in Spirit that inspires us to do the work that we are called to do.

Let me here remind you of the charge of the Coordinating and Advisory Committee of our 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.”

( <https://neym.org/committees/coordinating-and-advisory> )

The committee is entirely ex-officio, made up of the current holders of these various positions: the Yearly Meeting Presiding Clerk, the Yearly Meeting Secretary, the Supervisor to the Yearly Meeting Secretary, the clerk of Permanent Board, the clerk of Ministry and Counsel, the Yearly Meeting Treasurer, the clerk of Finance committee, and the clerk of Yearly Meeting Nominating committee. We are joined by the Clerk of the Accompaniment Group and our Yearly Meeting Program Director.

Those of us who serve on the Coordinating and Advisory Committee are attempting to hold the big picture of the Yearly Meeting while supporting and engaging with specific initiatives and issues that need to be addressed. In this we are pitching and tending to a big tent, incorporating many areas of attention and interconnection.

We hope you have had a chance to read through the list of matters cared for by C&A and that you have seen reflected there the rich depth and breadth of activity within our New England Yearly Meeting. This list is provided to you purely as an informational addition, which might prove helpful in offering some context, if needed, as part of our discernment for some of the matters that will be brought before us on Saturday for discernment and action.

Imperfect as individuals and imperfect in our work together, Coordinating and Advisory Committee has in its work sometimes struggled along the path of its responsibilities, its job of supporting and providing guidance for the work of other committees, resource and working groups, groups of advisors, and individuals within our Yearly Meeting. Most challenging is when the areas of focus for our work seem to compete with each other for attention. There have often been miscommunications, lags in needed follow through, and quite honestly we have allowed some slips through the cracks as we've all worked to manage various responsibilities. It is clear that we have made mistakes and feel it is important to acknowledge our limitations. For the impact of these shortcomings we apologize deeply. We aim to learn and grow in our service. We hope Friends will appreciate that the love and care our Committee holds for all in our community and all areas of activity in the Yearly Meeting fuels our commitment to do better and be better in our service moving forward.

A key area where apology is needed is in the lapse in communication by the Coordinating and Advisory Committee with the Legacy Gift Committee concerning the Legacy Gift Review Process. We gave very late response to the assessment process engaged in by the three-member team who worked faithfully and carefully over a long time to produce their report assessing ten years of dynamic and impactful support of Friends' leadings to do good work in the Yearly Meeting and beyond. Closer communication along the way would have prevented the misunderstandings and frustrations that resulted. This report is included in the Advance Documents and Friends are asked to give loving consideration of the way forward when we consider this matter on Saturday's agenda.

Some of the other work that the Coordinating and Advisory Committee members have engaged in since our last Permanent Board meeting in March includes the following:

- C&A has been holding and supporting staff transitions; welcoming Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary back to his responsibilities, post bereavement leave. We have cared for the resultant realignment of other staff responsibilities, including some adjustments that are needed for other staff members.
- We have experienced deep sorrow at the loss of our dear Friend Elizabeth Reuthe who had served for many years as Noah's supervisor. C&A has felt clear to offer as an interim solution: As has been our practice in the past, Susan Davies, clerk of the Permanent Board, will be serving in that role temporarily while a new Supervisor is identified. Friends are reminded that those who may have questions, feedback, or concerns regarding the service of the Yearly Meeting Secretary should contact the Clerk of Permanent Board until a new Supervisor is identified. The needs for that supervisory position will, in the near future, be the topic of C&A discernment taking into consideration longer-term questions of sustainability of both people and programs, and implementation of big picture priorities..

- In the area of strengthening the volunteer pool and voluntary service Friends bring to our Yearly Meeting in a variety of ways, C&A has been reviewing the Yearly Meeting Nominating Process and the challenge of building capacity for the work of the Nominating Committee to proceed. More on this will be brought to the July meeting of the Permanent Board in the form of a recommendation.
- Concern also has been given to the life of our quarterly meetings where good things are happening, challenges are being faced, healing is in progress or is sought, and how support might be offered as appropriate.
- Our committee continues to support the Accompaniment Group's work with monthly meetings, the Yearly Meeting's Prayer List and Yearly Meeting resources for pastoral care. These areas of work are considered within the wider context of ministry and spiritual life within the Yearly Meeting.
- For your attention, discernment, and action at this May meeting of the Permanent Board, we are bringing a request to approve the Clerk of Ministry and Counsel as a member of the Accompaniment Group.
- C&A has supported the work of the ad-hoc working group delegated to draft a charge for a Conflict Response Team within the Yearly Meeting. Their report on the charge is included in the Advance Documents.
- C&A continues to hold in its care the Finance Committee's work of determining the Yearly Meeting's operating budget. This yearly process is seen from the broader perspective of all areas of financial stewardship. See the Financial Stewardship Discernment chart included in the Advance Documents.
- Support is ongoing for the work of the Contributions Criteria Working Group. It is seen as inextricably linked to other areas of financial stability and sustainability. And it is within this broader context that this initiative will allow us to mindfully consider how we are being led by Spirit to support organizations outside of the Yearly Meeting. We look forward to hearing the fruits of their work.
- Consideration of the broader financial landscape includes the work emerging from the Development Advisory Group and the planning of initiatives for fiscal stewardship which are supported by C&A. An example is the spring fundraising appeal. See the draft postcard in the Advance Documents.

- C&A has appraised where we are in the process of establishing a consultancy in Anti-racism and Equity Design, seeing the need for further clarification and guidance from Permanent Board on how this work may move forward.
- The Friends Camp Governance Review process and the on-going spiritual and programmatic relationship between Friends Camp and the wider Yearly Meeting are being held by C&A. Phase III of this shared long-range planning will be an area of care moving forward.
- C&A has been in regular conversation ensuring support for the processes established for discernment related to the future shape and location of Sessions. As the Sessions Vision Planning Working Group begins its work, on current proposals for Sessions Planning for 2025 and beyond are in development. A proposed new member of the Vision Planning working group is brought to you for your approval on Saturday.

In all of the above, the members of the Coordinating and Advisory Committee are very busily engaged. These areas of activity involve many of you, and include other Friends not currently serving on Permanent Board. Each has their own particular timelines and variable seasons and rhythms of activity – sometimes in a flurry of work and forward movement and other times more quiet and at times even on pause. The challenge is to maintain channels of communication and awareness of progress or challenge in forward movement. To be up-to-date on how things are doing, to be alert to how and when to help, and to be responsive when called upon, to remain open to God’s guidance amid urgency, these are the challenges we face. It gives us strength to know we are not alone.

In humility, faith, and service,

Rebecca Leuchak

Clerk of the Coordinating and Advisory Committee

Initiatives being shepherded-Overview for PB Reporting

Initiative being shepherded
ARCH New England Extension: Aging Resources, Consultation, and Help
Carrying Forward Commitments to Inclusive Leadership Development
Completing Review of Program and Governance of Friends Camp: Phase III
Conflict Response Working Group/process: Next Steps
Consider/Discern Next Steps re: Review of Quarterly Meetings: Purpose, care, oversight, geography
CPA Review of Accounts
Development: Annual Fund, meeting budget, restoring cuts, rebuilding reserves
Disposition of South Pittsfield Meetinghouse
Disposition of, and new life for, North Fairfield meetinghouse
Engage and grow Development Advisory Group
Faith & Practice Revision: Support to finalize "Organization" chapter and other related content, plan for publication
Finalize standalone by-laws for NEYM
Finance Policies Review
Friends Camp land issue
FY2025 Budget Process
Implementing, shepherding, new recommendations for YM support of Ministry, Eldership, and the Spiritual Life of Local Meetings
Legacy Gift Review Process: Next Steps
NEYM Personnel Policy Review & Updating
Ongoing strengthening and support for Nominating
Programming supporting local meetings and meeting leaders
Proposal for New and Refocused Endowments as Carriers of Vision
Recommendation from Antiracism Consultation Working Group, Next Steps
Reflect, Review, and Strengthen: Youth Ministries Retreats & Programming
Reflection and Next Steps re: Noticing Patterns
Reframing and Discernment re: YM Support for Witness
FY2026 Funding Priorities, renew attention to how ongoing listening informs this annual process
Research into New England Friends' involvement in Indigenous boarding schools
Review and clarify role of Representatives to Friends Organizations
Review of Stipends supporting volunteer leadership
Review Statistical reporting process to support local meetings
Reviewing progress and any next steps re: Israel-Palestine Resource Group, Right Relationship Resource Group
Sessions Planning: Current Year
Sessions Site Search
Sessions Visioning & Design process
Strengthen C&A team: collaborate & build shared awareness of our global work, nurture intentions and practices, build trust, improve communication, deepen focus, foster a culture c
Updates on Meeting Accompaniment Group, and ongoing accompaniment for local meetings
Working Group on Contributions Supporting Other Organizations
Unexpected, Unknown, Urgent Needs and Issues

**Responding to Conflict in New England Yearly Meeting**  
**A Proposal from the Working Group to Create the Charge for a NEYM Conflict Response Team,**  
**May 11, 2024**

*“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34-35 (NIV)*

**From NEYM Annual Sessions Minute 2023:42**

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

*We need to transform conflict at every level of our body. In particular, we hear that there is a call for a clear structure or path that supports a healthy response to conflicts when they arise outside the structure of the monthly meeting. Friends heard a clear request for this concern to be taken up.*

**From the September 30, 2023 Permanent Board Minutes**

*[...]Permanent Board charges the Coordinating & Advisory Committee, in consultation with Nominating Committee...to bring forward...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.*

**Charge to this Working Group**

*To create a structure and process for responding to and helping to mediate situations of conflict that arise within the Yearly Meeting.*

*To identify the qualities and composition of a group to engage in that process.*

Over the span of four meetings this group of Friends: Melody Brazo, Susan Davies, clerk of Permanent Board, Darcy Drayton, Rebecca Leuchak, presiding clerk of the Yearly Meeting, Alysia Parkes, and Carl Williams, clerk of Ministry and Counsel, met to draft a charge for a Conflict Response Team of the Yearly Meeting.

**Background**

There are times in the life of our community when our differences create conflict. In fact, if we are an inclusive and welcoming community, meetings should experience conflict quite regularly yet Friends are often challenged to demonstrate the loving concern we have for one another by facing our differences squarely.

We affirm that there are many places in the Yearly Meeting where love, kindness, and gratitude are found and many Friends know something about conflict resolution. In addition our New England Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice (Interim Edition) is a rich resource for the work we have to do in this respect. We also affirm that there are many examples of interpersonal and/or community conflict that are carefully and lovingly worked through in our monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings. However there is a clear need for a path that supports a healthy response to conflicts when they arise outside the structure

of the monthly meeting; a response that answers the divine invitation to move closer to becoming a beloved community for all Friends.

Despite our best hopes and intentions, Quakers do not always act towards others with responsible care. We know that abuse occurs within all faith communities, and the Religious Society of Friends is no exception. We need to be forthright in acknowledging that we do, as individuals and as a body, create situations that harm and cause trauma. Conflict among us that interferes with our ability to be faithful is not a new problem. We need the long view of Friends with an awareness of how conflict has affected our Society through its history, and the ability to crack open fear in order to find the gift and opportunity that can be revealed by conflict, and can help us to experience the transformative power of forgiveness. We are neither angels nor demons; we are beautifully imperfect human beings and we all bring complex packages of great gifts as well as great flaws to our community. We have varying degrees of tolerance for the tension that is a natural state of all healthy communities. Addressing conflicts via the faithful application of Friends' testimonies, and in faithful obedience to God's guidance, provides our community with an opportunity for transformative growth.

#### **Proposed Charge and Structure of a Conflict Response Team of New England Yearly Meeting**

- A team of 4 to 5 Friends who have gifts and talents in the work of conflict response will accept requests from any individual Friend, monthly meeting, quarterly meeting, or representative of the Yearly Meeting for consultation with those parties involved in the conflict.
- They will consult with all parties involved in the conflict to establish that they are willing to engage in the work.
- They should attempt to establish an atmosphere of trust, respect, and truthfulness so Friends can hear the words of others in an open-hearted way. As appropriate, participants will affirm that confidentiality will be maintained by all involved.
- They will ask all parties for background information about the situation to be addressed and will prayerfully consider what steps might be taken to bring all to a table of deep listening and respect.
- If any of these conditions for working together are not possible, the project cannot proceed. In that case the team will inform the clerk of Permanent Board that the way forward is not clear and may recommend other action, including referral to outside consultants or other professionals beyond the Yearly Meeting.
- Their work together may conclude in a single meeting of the group, but more likely the number and manner of these meetings will be determined based on the wisdom of the group.

#### **Membership**

This team shall consist of 4-5 people, made up of Friends with gifts and talents in accordance with the requirements of the work, as enumerated by the Yearly Meeting Friends at Sessions 2023 (and listed herein under "Useful Resources"). The work may involve sensitive discussion and will need to be held with care that allows for open and honest responses, skillful empathy and at times, adherence to confidentiality.

#### **Supervision**



This team is under the care of the Permanent Board. Requests for additional insight from others should be sent to the Permanent Board Clerk, the Yearly Meeting Presiding Clerk, the Clerk of the Accompaniment Working Group, the Clerk of Ministry and Counsel, and/or the Yearly Meeting Secretary.

### **Reporting**

Report of engagement in the work of conflict response should be communicated to the Permanent Board meeting. At least two working group members should be available during those meetings to provide a brief summary of work and to respond to questions. In rare cases, a closed meeting of the Permanent Board may need to be called to ensure the welfare and confidentiality of those involved in the conflict. This shall be a shared discernment of the Conflict Response Team and the Permanent Board clerk.

### **Measures of success**

Team members will be asked to reflect prayerfully on the progress of their work and to consider the short and long term, as well as the individual and institutional impact of that work. Recommendations for ways we can corporately grow our skills in responding to conflict are encouraged.

### **Timeline**

This is on-going work, but the charge and process should be evaluated after a suitable period of implementation. The self-report should be delivered to the Permanent Board.

### **Continuation Process or Process for laying down**

Permanent Board shall review the self-assessment of the Team and invite evaluation from parties who have engaged with them in conflict response as it considers continuation of the Conflict Response Team.

### **Conclusion**

This work is intended to create a path for addressing conflict that all in our Yearly Meeting can access. We are reminded that the goal is to restore meaningful relationships through a process that supports and values all parties and reaches for shared understanding and goals. The community as a whole has a concern for recognizing systemic issues that lie below the moment's concerns, so that we may shift patterns and practices that perpetuate oppression. May we live into a bold commitment to learn to love each other because we are the same *and* because we are different. May the Spirit draw us into a communion of love, hearing each other fully, and working to heal ourselves and each other - together under God's infinite and abiding care.

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***Please see Useful Resources listed on following page***

## Useful Resources

### **New England Yearly Meeting's Interim Faith and Practice [2014 Interim edition] Chapters on:**

- Ministry and Counsel - especially subsections on:
  - Integrity of Worship
  - Safety in the Meeting Community
  - Welcome and Inclusion in Worship
  - Balance of Individual and Community Needs in the Meeting Community
  - Interpersonal Conflict
  - Addressing Tensions in the Meeting Community
  - Conflict Transformation in the Meeting Community
  - Corporate Discernment
  - Sections in Advices from John Woolman
  - Appendix 5F

### **Qualities needed by Friends engaging in the work of the Conflict Response Team as identified by Friends in worship sharing at Yearly Meeting Sessions 2023**

- Friends who hunger and thirst for righteousness.
- Friends who yield to the spirit of God.
- Friends who remember that grace comes with the work of our hands.
- Friends who are people of prayer, willing to pray out loud among us.
- Friends who inhabit liminal spaces, and whose identities place them on the margins, such that they can see dynamics that those of us in the center cannot.
- Friends who have some professional or other relevant training and experience in holding spaces for mediation, restorative justice, etc.
- Friends who have developed the gift and practical skills of holding space for transformation.
- Friends who are able to be present in a way that provides a level of safety and comfort in a difficult time.
- Friends who have the skill and grace to begin by listening, to honor and respect the pain, the words, the experiences of others.
- Friends who have done the work on themselves to be comfortable with situations of conflict, to have come to understand and manage their own trauma enough to be able to see others' need.
- Friends who bring a degree of humility and selflessness who are not tied to a particular outcome, with some experience in willingness to be wrong.
- Friends who understand the dynamics of power and privilege and how fear manifests as controlling behaviors among us.
- Friends who demonstrate the ability to understand how interpersonal conflict manifests values (what we believe, identity, systems and cultural patterns) and who are alert to the ways that the intersection of these informs how we move through conflict.
- Friends who are tuned in to somatic awareness -- ways of wisdom that are not just intellectual but connected to the body's way of knowing.

**Queries (2/10/24 Conflict Response Working Group Report to Permanent Board)**

- What is our common spiritual ground? How can we foster grounding in Spirit?
  - Are we actively building a spiritual community that supports truthfulness and forgiveness as spiritual disciplines?
  - What do we define as conflict?
  - How do we find a common ground to engage with each other to work through conflict? How do we test our personal understandings and identify where the disconnects are?
  - Do we know if there is cultural agreement about conflict among all partners who are engaged?
  - What do we mean by safety? How do we build safety and trust with each other? How do we call to mind for ourselves, and call each other into that larger place of safety that is available to accompany us, in which the Spirit holds all differences with love and care?
  - How do we balance the spiritual needs of the community with the spiritual needs of individuals?
  - How do our traditional practices of loving eldering fit into responding to conflict in the twenty-first century?
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**New England Yearly Meeting**  
**FY2025 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed**  
 version of 4/26/2024 - for PB 5/11/2024

Category	Actuals	FY2023	Budgets	FY2023	FY2024	Δ FY24 to FY25 Budgets	FY2025 Proposed Budget	Notes
	FY2019	Actuals	FY19 Budget	Budget	Budget			
<b>Income</b>								
4010 Individual Contributions Total	210,194	197,009	212,000	230,225	223,000	5,000	228,000	
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions Total	333,257	348,668	373,000	373,000	342,000	3,000	345,000	
4025 Unallocated Income		33,451			31,000	0	0	
4030 Organizations Contributions	1		0	0	0	-	0	
4050 Interest and Dividend Income	9,303	7,761	4,000	12,000	12,000	(1,000)	11,000	2
4070 Books & Other Sales Income	20,077	11,638	16,000	17,000	10,500	-	10,500	
4077 Consulting Fee Contribution		900						
4080 Retreat Program Fees	44,618	25,712	50,000	47,000	37,500	-	37,500	
4085 Sessions Program Fees	202,936	158,157	185,000	227,400	249,475	(34,580)	214,895	1
4090 Change in Fair Market Value	960	3,225	0	0	0	-	0	
4099 Net Assets Released To/From	660	0	8,500	30,000	5,000	(5,000)	0	3
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>822,005</b>	<b>786,521</b>	<b>848,500</b>	<b>967,625</b>	<b>879,475</b>	<b>(32,580)</b>	<b>\$ 846,895</b>	
<b>Expenses</b>								
Total 5000 Staff	379,198	462,754	363,915	493,684	503,842	12,472	\$ 516,314	4
Total 5100 General & Administration	89,142	109,827	133,511	93,615	87,449	-	\$ 87,449	
Total 5300 Travel & Conferences	32,007	30,899	36,000	35,300	22,300	-	\$ 22,300	
Total 6000 Programs	243,348	193,220	259,020	284,300	256,012	(42,162)	\$ 213,850	
Total 6140 Books & Other Sales Expense	17,447	10,043	14,500	14,500	8,000	-	\$ 8,000	
Total 6200-6590 Support of Other Organizations	43,471	42,807	45,975	45,975	0	-	\$ 0	
Total 6600 Publications	3,522		4,000	0	0	-		
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>808,137</b>	<b>849,549</b>	<b>856,921</b>	<b>967,374</b>	<b>877,603</b>	<b>(119,461)</b>	<b>\$ 847,913</b>	
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>13,868</b>	<b>(63,028)</b>	<b>-8,421</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>1,872</b>	<b>(1,269)</b>	<b>(1,018)</b>	
<b>Other Income</b>								
9940 Other Income - Transfers from other funds	32,072.22	36,639						
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<b>32,072.22</b>	<b>36,639</b>						
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
9950 Other Expense - Transfer to other funds		8,789						
<b>Total Other Expenses</b>		<b>8,789</b>						
<b>Net Other Income</b>	<b>32,072.22</b>	<b>27,850</b>						
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>45,940.46</b>	<b>(35,178)</b>						

- Sessions registration fee income: assumptions: 8% fee increase over 2024; 450 attenders (2023 was 419; increase of 31); seven people move to Traditional fee from Low Income; three people move to Complete Cost from Traditional; room usage roughly similar to 2023
- Sessions costs: increase 3.5% 2024+2025 135,569.95
- income from Quasi-Endowment declined \$4000 after Q-E balance reduced by Funds Recalculation; and, with 4.5% interest rates on new money market account, expecting \$2500-\$3000 of new interest income depending on cash-flow management
- No use of reserves in 4090 Net Assets Released to/from. The \$5000 for FY23 was per PB minute about Volunteer Leadership honoraria
- Staff salary/wage increase by cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) of 2.0%, CPI for Boston metro area January 2024.
- Recent previous COLAs have been: FY24 6.1%, FY23 6.3%, FY22 0.5%, FY21 2.22%
- Health insurance: rates actually went *down* 8.12% from 2023 to 2024; number of staff family members insured has gone up.

**New England Yearly Meeting**  
**FY2025 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed**  
 version of 4/26/2024 - for PB 5/11/2024

Category	Actuals	FY2023	Budgets	FY2023	FY2024	Δ FY24 to FY25 Budgets	FY2025 Proposed Budget	Notes
	FY2019	Actuals	FY19 Budget	Budget	Budget			
<b>Income</b>								
4010 Individual Contributions								
General Fund Contributions	188,088	171,080.76	191,000	204,225	198,000	3,000	201,000	1
Equalization Contributions	22,106	25,928.00	21,000	26,000	25,000	2,000	27,000	
Other Contributions			0	0	0	-		
4010 Individual Contributions Total	210,194	197,008.76	212,000	230,225	223,000	5,000	228,000	
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions								
General Fund Contributions	317,286	340,040.41	350,000	350,000	333,000	3,000	336,000	1
Equalization Contributions	15,971	8,627.50	23,000	23,000	9,000	-	9,000	
Other Contributions			0	0	0	-		
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions Total	333,257	348,667.91	373,000	373,000	342,000	3,000	345,000	
4025 Unallocated Income		33,451.27		31,000	0	-	0.00	
4030 Organizations Contributions	1		0	0	0	-	0.00	2
4050 Interest and Dividend Income	9,303	7,760.85	4,000	12,000	12,000	(1,000)	11,000	
4070 Books & Other Items Sales Income							10,500.00	
4072+4075 Sales - Books + Other Items	20,077	11,638.37	16,000			-	0.00	
4070 Books & Other Sales Income	20,077	11,638.37	16,000	17,000	10,500	-	10,500	
4077 Consulting Fee Contribution		900.00						
4080 Retreat Program Fees	44,618	25,711.65	50,000	47,000	37,500	-	37,500.00	
4085 Sessions Program Fees	202,936	158,157.17	185,000	227,400	249,475	(34,580)	214,895.00	1
4090 Change in Fair Market Value	960	3,225.27	0	0	0	-	0.00	
4099 Net Assets Released To/From	660	0.00	8,500	30,000	5,000	(5,000)	0	3
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>822,005</b>	<b>786,521.25</b>	<b>848,500</b>	<b>967,625</b>	<b>879,475</b>	<b>(32,580)</b>	<b>\$ 846,895.00</b>	
<b>Expenses</b>								
5000 Staff								
5010 Salaries & Wages	284,515	351,738.85	267,426	378,053	380,988	8,248	389,236.00	4
5020 Payroll Taxes	21,100	25,950.61	20,511	27,392	29,146	1,049	30,195.00	
5030 Benefits								
5033 Health Benefits	39,036	48,051.00	41,785	45,123	49,199	2,597	51,796.00	
5035 Retirements	30,106	34,829.84	26,743	35,806	38,099	825	38,924.00	
5040 Disability	1,402	1,116.36	1,800	1,100	1,100	(87)	1,013.00	
5045 Workers' Compensation	812	596.00	700	760	760	(160)	600.00	
5050 Spiritual Retreats			1,200	1,200	1,200	-	1,200.00	
5060 Staff Development	2,228	470.87	3,750	4,250	3,250	-	3,250.00	
5070 Sabbatical & Paid Leave					100	-	100.00	
Total 5030 Benefits	73,584	85,064.07	75,978	88,239	93,708	3,175	\$ 96,883.00	
Total 5000 Staff	379,198	462,753.53	363,915	493,684	503,842	12,472	\$ 516,314.00	4
5100 General & Administration								
5110 Administration								
5120 Bank Expense	7,280	8,395.84	6,000	7,000	7,000	-	7,000.00	
5130 Contracted Services	18,702	25,402.50	60,396	22,000	18,000	-	18,000.00	
5135 Accounting Services	4,000		4,000	0	0	-	0.00	
5140 Legal Services	7,771	2,500.00	7,750	2,500	2,500	-	2,500.00	
5145 Infrastructure		5,000.00		5,000	0	-	0.00	
5150 Liability Insurance	4,071	6,388.12	4,000	5,250	5,250	-	5,250.00	
5160 Payroll Service	5,229	5,624.16	4,500	5,500	5,500	-	5,500.00	
5170 Recruiting Expense			500	0	0	-	0.00	
5180 Rent	9,350	9,589.50	9,350	9,350	9,350	-	9,350.00	
5190 Misc. Expense	488	717.96	0	0	0	-	0.00	
Total 5110 Administration	56,890	63,618.08	96,496	56,600	47,600	-	\$ 47,600.00	
5200 Office								
5220 Archives Office Expenses			0	0	0	-	0.00	
5220 Cleaning Services	264	220.00	265	265	299	-	299.00	
5230 Maint - Equip & Hardware	0	10.51	1,250	1,250	500	-	500.00	
5240 Postage	3,218	3,186.90	3,750	3,750	3,750	-	3,750.00	
5250 Office Equipment	331	1,993.27	3,250	3,250	1,500	-	1,500.00	
5260 Office Supplies	1,376	1,702.70	2,500	2,500	1,600	-	1,600.00	
5270 Printing & Copying	14,614	13,724.28	14,500	14,500	9,500	-	9,500.00	
5280 Software & Updates	9,128	22,232.77	7,000	7,000	19,000	-	19,000.00	
5290 Telephone	3,179	3,006.01	4,500	4,500	3,700	-	3,700.00	
5295 Misc. Office	142	132.31	0	0	0	-	0.00	
Total 5200 Office	32,252	46,208.75	37,015	37,015	39,849	-	\$ 39,849.00	
Total 5100 General & Administration	89,142	109,826.83	133,511	93,615	87,449	-	\$ 87,449.00	

Category	FY2019 Actuals	FY2023 Actuals	FY2019 Budget	FY2023 Budget	FY2024 Budget		FY2025 Proposed Budget	Notes
<b>5300 Travel &amp; Conferences</b>								
5310 Travel - Committee	7,217	1,278.60	3,000	3,000	1,400	-	1,400.00	
5320 Travel - Clerk	3,552	3,027.86	5,000	4,500	2,500	-	2,500.00	
5330 Travel - Programs	1,460	5,792.90	4,600	3,700	3,100	1,000	4,100.00	
5335 Travel - Representatives Travel	4,746	13,421.87	5,000	6,700	2,000	-	2,000.00	
5350 Travel - Staff	15,032	7,377.35	18,000	17,000	12,900	(1,000)	11,900.00	
5360 Travel - Ministries			400	400	400	-	400.00	
<b>Total 5300 Travel &amp; Conferences</b>	<b>32,007</b>	<b>30,898.58</b>	<b>36,000</b>	<b>35,300</b>	<b>22,300</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$ 22,300.00</b>	
<b>6000 Programs</b>								
6110 Sessions Room & Board	173,649	126,566.25	170,000	192,950	169,442	(33,872)	135,570.00	1
6112 Retreats - Room & Board						-		
6114 Room Rental	17,625	8,632.35	20,000	13,550	10,000	-	10,000.00	
6150 Food Expense	15,130	13,161.07	18,000	15,930	10,000	-	10,000.00	
<b>Total 6112 Retreats - Room &amp; Board</b>	<b>32,754</b>	<b>21,793.42</b>	<b>38,000</b>	<b>29,480</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$ 20,000.00</b>	
6125 Program Expenses								
6105 Honoraria - Speakers/Wkshp Ldrs	15,814	15,672.00	16,500	22,000	24,000	(3,000)	21,000.00	
6107 Honoraria - Volunteer Leadership		11,250.00		15,000	15,000	-	15,000.00	3
6115 Equipment Rental	5,412	6,637.09	6,000	6,000	6,500	-	6,500.00	
6121 Supplies and Other Expenses	5,078	4,966.76	9,300	7,300	9,000	(4,000)	5,000.00	
6165 Pre-Sessions Expense	1,406	1,524.82	1,000	1,000	1,500	-	1,500.00	
<b>Total 6125 Program Expenses</b>	<b>27,710</b>	<b>40,050.67</b>	<b>32,800</b>	<b>51,300</b>	<b>56,000</b>	<b>(7,000)</b>	<b>\$ 49,000.00</b>	
6130 Committee Expenses - General	5,838	1,632.27	11,700	6,350	6,350	(1,950)	4,400.00	
6134 Childcare	788	297.00	2,000	2,000	2,000	-	2,000.00	
6137 Committee Day Expenses			500	0	0	-	0.00	
<b>Total 6130 Committee Expenses - General</b>	<b>6,626</b>	<b>1,929.27</b>	<b>14,200</b>	<b>8,350</b>	<b>8,350</b>	<b>(1,950)</b>	<b>\$ 6,400.00</b>	
6160 Program Support								
6163 Friends Camp	2,309	2,880.00	2,220	2,220	2,220	660	2,880.00	
6167 Religious Education & Outreach	300		1,800	0	0	-	0.00	
<b>Total 6160 Program Support</b>	<b>2,609</b>	<b>2,880.00</b>	<b>4,020</b>	<b>2,220</b>	<b>2,220</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>\$ 2,880.00</b>	
<b>Total 6000 Programs</b>	<b>243,348</b>	<b>193,219.61</b>	<b>259,020</b>	<b>284,300</b>	<b>256,012</b>	<b>(42,162)</b>	<b>\$ 213,850.00</b>	
6140 Books & Other Sales Expense			0	0	0	-		
6142 Books	10,068	2,696.87	14,500	14,500	8,000	-	8,000.00	
6145 Other Items for Sale	1,650	1,126.41	0	0	0	-	0.00	
6147 Consignment Sales	5,730	6,220.13	0	0	0	-	0.00	
<b>Total 6140 Books &amp; Other Sales Expense</b>	<b>17,447</b>	<b>10,043.41</b>	<b>14,500</b>	<b>14,500</b>	<b>8,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$ 8,000.00</b>	
6200 Support of Other Organizations								
<b>Total 6200-6590 Support of Other Organizations</b>	<b>43,471</b>	<b>42,806.86</b>	<b>45,975</b>	<b>45,975</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>	
6600 Publications								
<b>Total 6600 Publications</b>	<b>3,522</b>		<b>4,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>		
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>808,137</b>	<b>849,548.82</b>	<b>856,921</b>	<b>967,374</b>	<b>877,603</b>	<b>(119,461)</b>	<b>\$ 847,913.00</b>	
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>13,868</b>	<b>(63,027.57)</b>	<b>-8,421</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>1,872</b>	<b>(1,269)</b>	<b>(1,018.00)</b>	
<b>Other Income</b>								
9940 Other Income - Transfers from other funds	32,072.22	36,638.89						
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<b>32,072.22</b>	<b>36,638.89</b>					<b>-</b>	
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
9950 Other Expense - Transfer to other funds		8,789.03						
<b>Total Other Expenses</b>		<b>8,789.03</b>					<b>-</b>	
<b>Net Other Income</b>	<b>32,072.22</b>	<b>27,849.86</b>					<b>-</b>	
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>45,940.46</b>	<b>(35,177.71)</b>					<b>(1,018.00)</b>	

- Sessions registration fee income: assumptions: 8% fee increase over 2024; 450 attenders (2023 was 419; increase of 31); seven people move to Traditional fee from Low Income; three people move to Complete Cost from Traditional; room usage roughly similar to 2023
- Sessions costs: increase 3.5% 2024+2025 135,569.95
- income from Quasi-Endowment declined \$4000 after Q-E balance reduced by Funds Recalculation; and, with 4.5% interest rates on new money market account, expecting \$2500-\$3000 of new interest income depending on cash-flow management
- No use of reserves in 4090 Net Assets Released to/from. The \$5000 for FY23 was per PB minute about Volunteer Leadership honoraria
- Staff salary/wage increase by cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) of 2.0%, CPI for Boston metro area January 2024.
- Recent previous COLAs have been: FY24 6.1%, FY23 6.3%, FY22 0.5%, FY21 2.22%
- Health insurance: rates actually went *down* 8.12% from 2023 to 2024; number of staff family members insured has gone up.

To: Permanent Board

From: NEYM Finance Committee, Scot Drysdale, clerk

Date May 2, 2024

### **Statement from the Finance Committee to the Permanent Board**

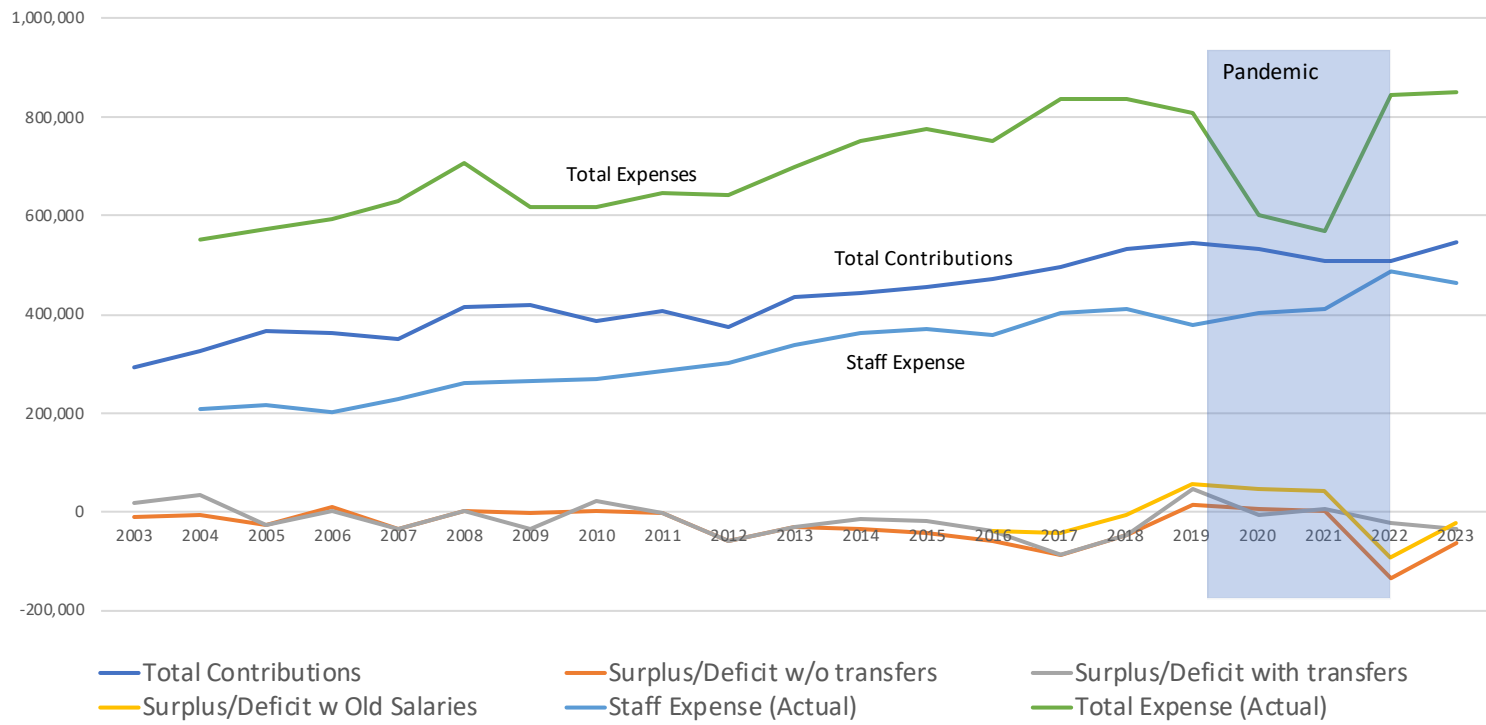
The Finance Committee proposes the accompanying FY25 budget, which once again budgets \$0 for Support of Other Organizations. However, we propose that this be accompanied by the following minute, which mirrors the FY24 contingency budget that Sessions approved last year:

We approve the budget as proposed with the following contingency. If at the end of FY25 there is a surplus, 50% of that surplus would be used to fund Support of Other Organizations, up to a limit of \$45,495. The remainder of the surplus would increase our reserves.

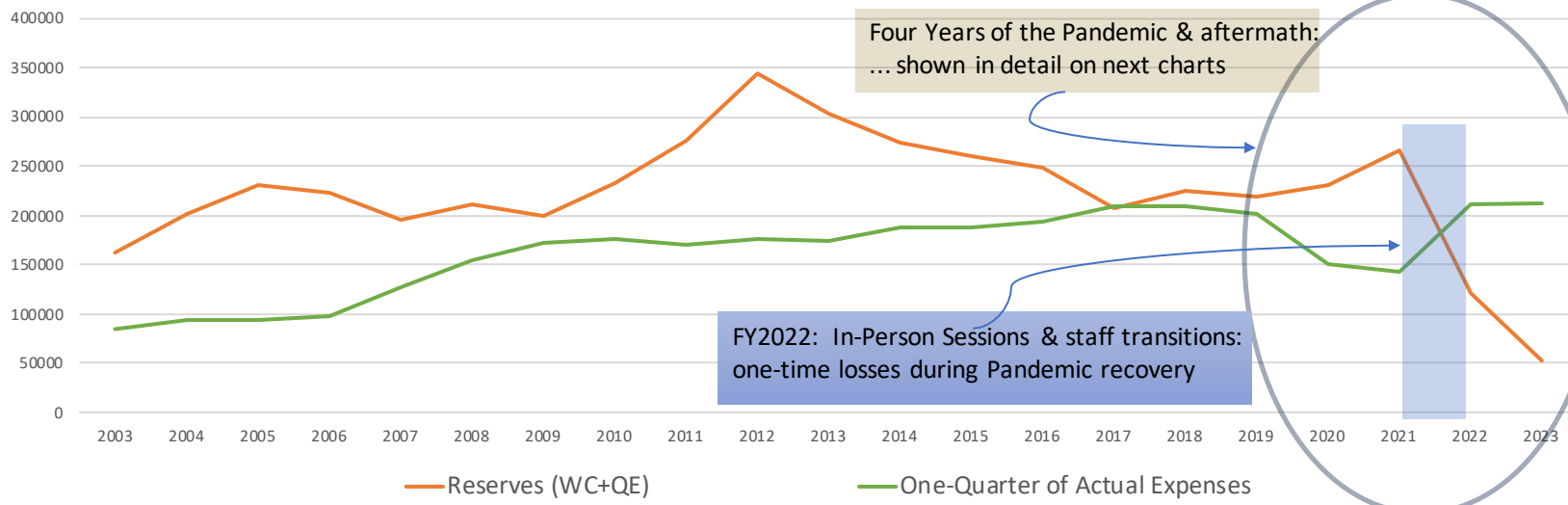
The budget does not specify which organizations will receive donations if money is available. A committee is working on a way of deciding which organizations should be funded and how our funding should be divided amongst them. If this committee recommends a distribution mechanism that is approved by Sessions before the end FY25 this mechanism will be used to distribute the funds. Otherwise they will be distributed proportionally to the same organizations that received contributions in FY23.

The budget approved at Sessions last year had 75% of the surplus go to fund Support of Other Organizations. When we approved the FY24 budget at Sessions our reserves were about 13% of expenses, when our policy says that we should have reserves of 25% of expenses. At the close of FY23, reserves were just over 5% of expenses, so we feel a more pressing need to increase reserves.

### Total Oper Expense, Total Contributions, Staff Expense, & Surplus/Deficit, FY2003-FY2023

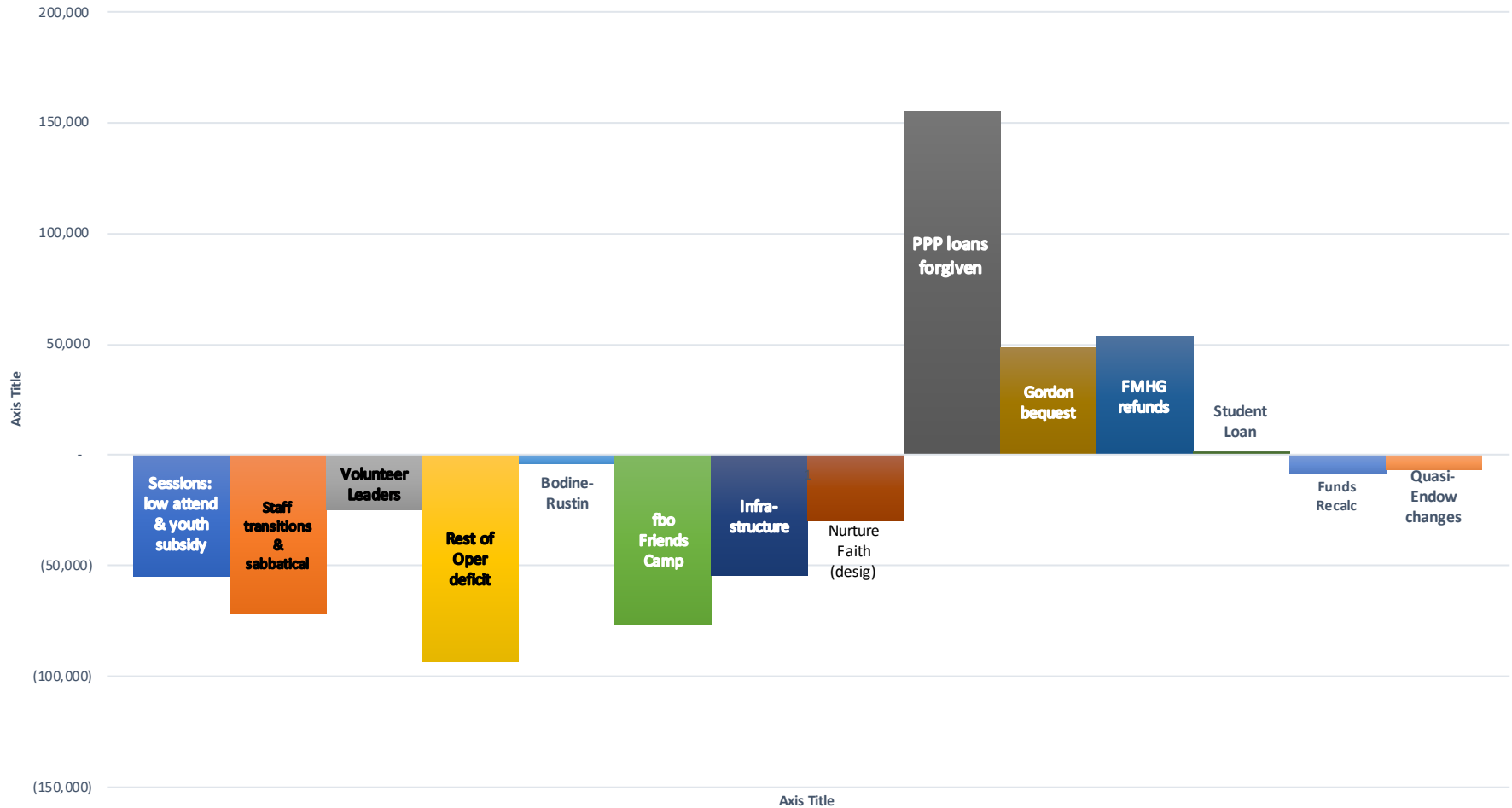


### Reserves vs 1/4 Actual Expenses





### Sources of Change in Reserves, summary FY2020-FY2023



**FY2021 changes in reserves:**

1,709	Net Operating Income per FY21 reports (including transfers from reserves)
9,721	Friends Mutual Health Group return of premium (Camp's part pass thru to Camp)
58,798	PPP 1st Draw loan forgiveness (cash converts from liability to equity)
9,000	PPP 1st Draw loan forgiveness of EIDL grant
1,772	Student Loan Fund closure remainder
<hr/>	
79,291	Total 9940 Other Income - Transfer In to unrestricted net assets
48,245	Martha Miles Gordon bequest (unrestricted); into Q-E Fund
12,592	Quasi-Endowment unrealized capital gain (CFMV)
<hr/>	
141,837	Total added to reserves
(9,721)	Transfer FMHG surplus to 708 Infrastructure Fund per FinCom
(30,000)	Designate unrestricted reserves for Nurturing Faithfulness per PB
(20,000)	Designate unrestricted reserves for Infrastructure per PB
(17,481)	Transfer unrestricted reserves to Friends Camp per PB
<hr/>	
(77,202)	Total 9950 Other Expense - Transfer Out
(377)	Quasi-Endowment: net of distribution & income
(30,000)	resolution of legal matter
<hr/>	
<b>34,258</b>	<b>Total increase in reserves</b>
34,258	Increase. Cross-check.

**FY2020 changes in reserves:**

3,716	Net Operating Income per FY20 reports
9,721	Friends Mutual Health Group return of premium (Camp portion passed through to Camp)
9,000	EIDL loan, pass thru to Camp
<hr/>	
18,721	Total 9940 Other Income - Transfer In to unrestricted net assets
(20,000)	Transfer to Friends Camp from unrestricted reserves per PB 20-44 6/6/20
(9,000)	Transfer EIDL loan to Friends Camp
<hr/>	
(29,000)	Total 9950 Other Expense - Transfer Out
18,635	Quasi-Endowment unrealized capital gain (CFMV)
(233)	Quasi-Endowment: net of distribution & income
<hr/>	
11,838	<b>Total increase in reserves</b>
11,838	Cross-check

**FY2022 changes in reserves:**

(134,761)	Net Operating Income per FY22 reports (including transfers from reserves)
	\$26K deficit planned in FY22 budget
	\$34K of excess deficit due to one-time staff overlaps (net of supports below)
	\$52K of excess due to low Sessions 2022 attendance
	\$22K of retreat fees and individual contributions lower than expected
	<u>Budgeted uses of reserves in 4099 Net Assets Released income:</u>
(15,000)	Volunteer Leadership stipend support per PB May 2021
(17,967)	Acting Secretaries support per PB May 2021
(20,000)	Free youth Sessions attendance (forgone fees) per PB spring 2022
<hr/>	
<b>(187,728)</b>	<b>Net Operating Income before transfers</b>
	<u>Non-Operating ("Other") unrestricted income and expense</u>
78,304	PPP 2nd Draw loan forgiven - NEYM portion (Camp's part pass thru to Camp)
31,622	Friends Mutual Health Group return of premium (Camp part pass thru to Camp)
2,360	Refund of Cheverus HS deposit LFG 2020
(2,123)	Transfer requested MM contributions to Bodine-Rustin Fund
(25,000)	Transfer to Infrastructure Fund per PB Dec 2021; spent on Sessions regis site
(1,022)	Quasi-Endowment: net of distribution & income
<hr/>	
<b>(103,587)</b>	<b>Change in unrestricted-and-undesignated reserves after transfers</b>
(42,067)	Quasi-Endowment unrealised capital loss (CFMV)
<hr/>	
<b>(145,654)</b>	<b>Total decrease in reserves</b>
145,654	Cross-check. Decrease

**FY2022 changes in reserves: planned vs. unplanned:****Planned changes:**

(26,757) Budgeted Operating deficit  
 (15,000) Volunteer Leadership stipend support **per PB May 2021**  
 (17,967) Acting Secretaries support **per PB May 2021**  
 (20,000) Free youth Sessions attendance (forgone fees) **per PB spring 2022**

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**(79,724) Planned Net Operating Income before transfers**  
Non-Operating ("Other") unrestricted income and expense  
 78,304 PPP 2nd Draw loan forgiven - NEYM portion (Camp's part pass thru to Camp)  
 31,622 Friends Mutual Health Group return of premium (Camp's part pass thru)  
 (2,123) Transfer requested MM contributions to Bodine-Rustin Fund  
 (25,000) Transfer to Infrastructure Fund **per PB Dec 2021** to spend on Sessions reg site  
 (1,022) Quasi-Endowment net of distribution & income

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**2,057 Planned change in unrestricted reserves after transfers****Unplanned changes:**

(108,004) Excess operating deficit  
     \$34K of excess deficit due to one-time staffing overlaps (net of supports)  
     \$52K of excess due to low Sessions 2022 attendance  
     \$22K of retreat fees and individual contributions lower than planned  
 2,360 Refund of Ceverus HS deposit LFG 2020  
 (42,067) Quasi-Endowment unrealised capital loss (CFMV)

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**(147,711) Unplanned change****(145,654) Total decrease in reserves****FY2023 changes in reserves**

(63,028) Net Operating Income per FY23 reports  
*Note change in practice to show uses of reserves after Net Operating Income*  
*Budgeted uses of reserves; now reported in 9940 Other Income - Transfers:*  
 10,000 Volunteer Leadership stipend support per PB May 2021  
 20,000 Increase staff support, per PB 21-89, from reserves per FY23 budget

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(33,028) **Net Operating Income after budgeted transfers**  
 Individual Contributions \$37K lower than expected, due to 2 major donors  
 Workshop/Retreat fee income \$20K lower than budgeted  
 Sessions (class 500 direct expense) net income \$17K surplus

(2,150) Transfer requested MM contributions to Bodine-Rustin Fund

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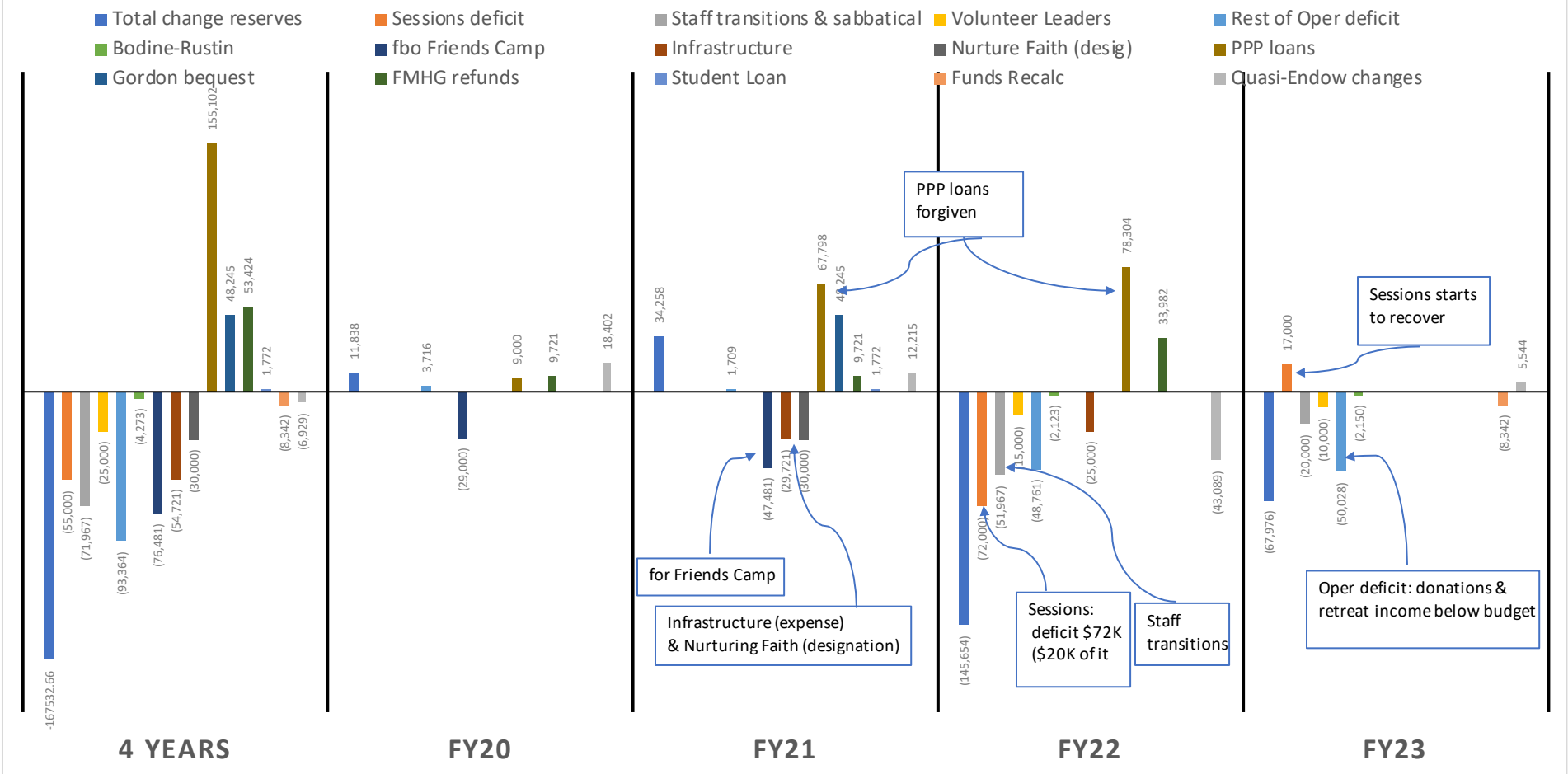
(65,178) **Change in unrestricted-and-undesignated reserves after transfers**

128,695 Funds Recalculation increase of unrestricted net assets (fka Working Capital)  
 (137,036) Funds Recalculation decrease of Quasi-Endowment  
 5,544 Quasi-Endowment unrealized capital gain (CFMV)

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**(67,976) Total decrease in reserves**67,975 *Cross-check*

## CHANGES IN RESERVES FY2020-FY2023: DETAILS BY YEAR



## Friends Camp Governance Review: An Update

May 3, 2024

Dear Friends,

This report is an update on the governance review for Friends Camp and the implementation of recommendations from [Phase II Visioning process](#) (Minute PB 23-21, Spring 2023). As a reminder, this governance review was begun in 2022 as stipulated in the governance document for Friends Camp. I have been on parental and sabbatical leave this past fall and winter, and I am returning to these recommendations with eagerness this spring. Please read this report as a reminder of the recommendations and an update on their progress; implementation of these recommendations will be a group effort for Friends Camp staff, New England Yearly Meeting staff, Friends Camp Committee, and Friends of NEYM more widely. [A number of important questions](#) still remain about the most appropriate organizational structure for Friends Camp as a part of New England Yearly Meeting; when and how to resolve these questions should be considered by NEYM as time and space allows in the coming years.

We are looking forward to another summer full of energy, connection, community, and learning at Friends Camp. Thank you, as always, for your support of Friends Camp as a vital youth ministry of NEYM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Anna Hopkins (Friends Camp Director)

***Recommendation 1: Empower Friends Camp to sustain itself financially and invest in its long-term physical property and buildings. In alignment with the overall financial stewardship of NEYM, find ways to support Friends Camp in benefiting from fundraising opportunities. Identify practical ways that Friends Camp and NEYM can act in a coordinated fashion as both embark on new development efforts.***

Recommendation 1 Progress and Priorities:

- The Friends Camp Committee has discussed and is strongly in favor of creating an endowment for Friends Camp to fund camperships going forward. Friends Camp Director is working with NEYM Secretary on how to bring this forward to the wider NEYM.
- The Friends Camp Finance Committee continues to explore the cost of maintaining buildings and property over time, aiming to budget at least a \$15k surplus annually to cover the cost of aging buildings, property improvements, furniture, and equipment.
- In Fiscal Year 2023, Friends Camp was able to meet the operating budget goals as well as the goal of building reserves. Reserves are available in order to support the camp through all seasons of the fiscal year and in case of major operational disruptions or surprises.

**Recommendation 2: *In light of Camp's current size, complexity, organizational ability, and liability exposure, seek counsel on the most appropriate relationship between Friends Camp and NEYM in regards to legal status, liability, and operations.***

Recommendation 2 Progress and Priorities:

- The Friends Camp Committee had a lively discussion about this important topic at our April 2024 meeting and the possible creation of a working group or advisory committee to address the question of legal organizational structure.
- Friends Camp Director is in conversation with NEYM Secretary, Program Director, and members of Coordinating & Advisory about ways that this work could move forward. Due to the importance and complexity of these questions, NEYM as a whole will need space to prioritize this work in order to fully take it on.

**Recommendation 3: *Prioritize tending to the on-going spiritual and programmatic relationship between Friends Camp and the wider Yearly Meeting in order to ensure consistent, integrated, age appropriate, and invitational programming in spiritual development and Quaker practice. Saying that Friends Camp is a ministry of our Yearly Meeting is not enough to make it so. Commit to regularly bringing together camp leadership and Yearly Meeting leadership, especially those serving in youth ministry contexts in both the Yearly Meeting and local meetings in New England, to tend the spiritual fire at camp.***

Recommendation 3 Progress and Priorities:

- Friends Camp Director offered an intergenerational play workshop at Living Faith in April.
- Teen & Outreach Ministries Coordinator Collee Williams will visit Friends Camp this summer to spend time with our Rising Leaders. We are excited to welcome Collee!

**Recommendation 4: *Ensure that Friends Camp can be a potential entry point or stepping stone for those called to the Quaker path. Offer more navigational assistance that meets these individuals and families where they are in their spiritual journey. For those interested in exploring Quakerism further, build bridges between Friends Camp and wider participation among Friends. These bridges can only be built from "both sides" beginning both at Camp and also in our Yearly Meeting programs and local meetings where we hope to effectively and intentionally receive and nurture Quaker-curious seekers of all ages and backgrounds. These efforts will, by necessity, be experimental and emergent and will require on-going commitment, communication, and attention. Another component of ensuring that Camp can serve as an entry point into the Quaker faith, is maintaining the presence of Friends at Camp, thus making it possible for those at Camp to build personal connections and worship with Quakers. Continue to prioritize the presence of those***

*grounded in Quaker faith and practice at Camp. While campers and staff of any or no faith background bring richness and spiritual wisdom to Camp, exposure to Quakers and Quakerism is an essential part of both the Camp experience and the potential role Camp can play for Quaker-curious seekers. In regards to composition of the camp population, it is currently true that all Quaker campers whose families have identified that they want to go to camp by the fall are able to enroll in camp. This past summer, about 17% of campers were members or attenders at Quaker Meetings. 15% of staff grew up Quaker, and an additional 13% identify as “Quaker-ish” (exploring the Quaker path). Beyond Quaker campers and counselors, seek ways to include individuals with a depth of understanding of Quaker faith and the spiritual development of children and youth, as well as gifts of teaching and spiritual nurture. Seek ways for New England Friends with a call to youth ministry to participate in the spiritual life at camp including outside of the typical role of counselor.*

Recommendation 4 Progress and Priorities:

- We are trying out a new position of “chaplain” for 4 weeks at camp this summer, held by Maggie Fiori (former Young Friends Coordinator of NEYM). After the summer, we will evaluate the impact of this position on spiritual development and Quaker practices at camp and explore ways to continue it and extend the invitation to be a chaplain more widely.
- Again this summer, our entire camp staff will share Worship and lunch with Friends at Vassalboro Meeting during our orientation, at Vassalboro Friends Meeting. Groups of teen campers also share worship at Vassalboro 3 times throughout the summer.
- We are collaborating with the NEYM Archives Committee to preserve and share important records and memories about the founding of Friends Camp in the summer of 2024. It is our hope to share these at NEYM Sessions in August (and at other times) as a way for Friends more widely to connect with Friends Camp as a longstanding and rich ministry of Quakers in New England. We hope this will create the opportunity to foster connections with Friends who have not otherwise been acquainted with Friends Camp.
- Friends Camp Director is collaborating with the NEYM Israel / Palestine working group to prepare for difficult conversations that may arise at camp this summer. We agree that camp is the place for campers and young adults to learn skills of difficult conversations.

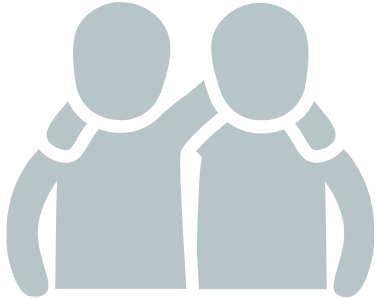




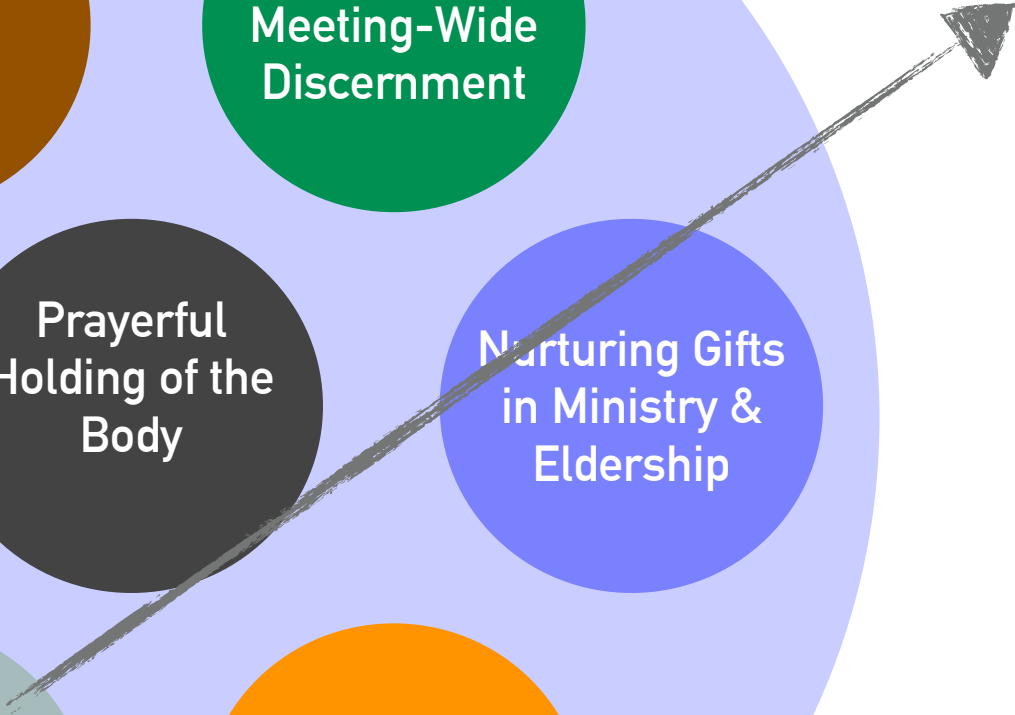


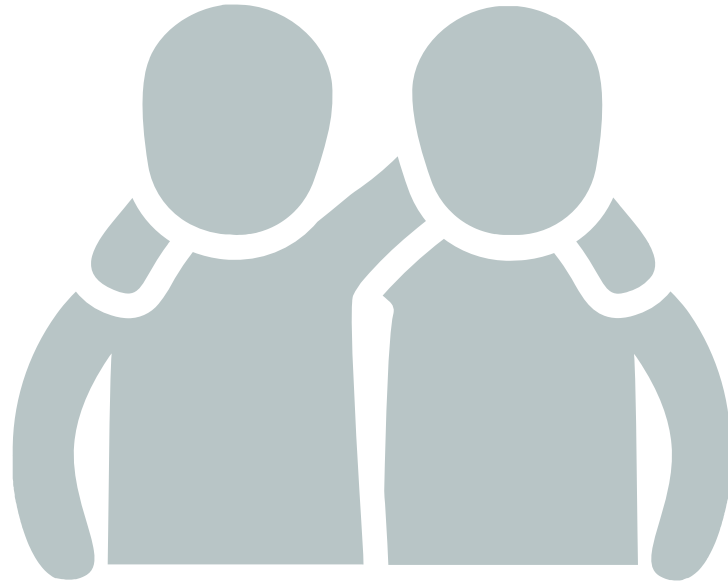
*Further recommendations  
presented to and approved by  
Sessions 2022*



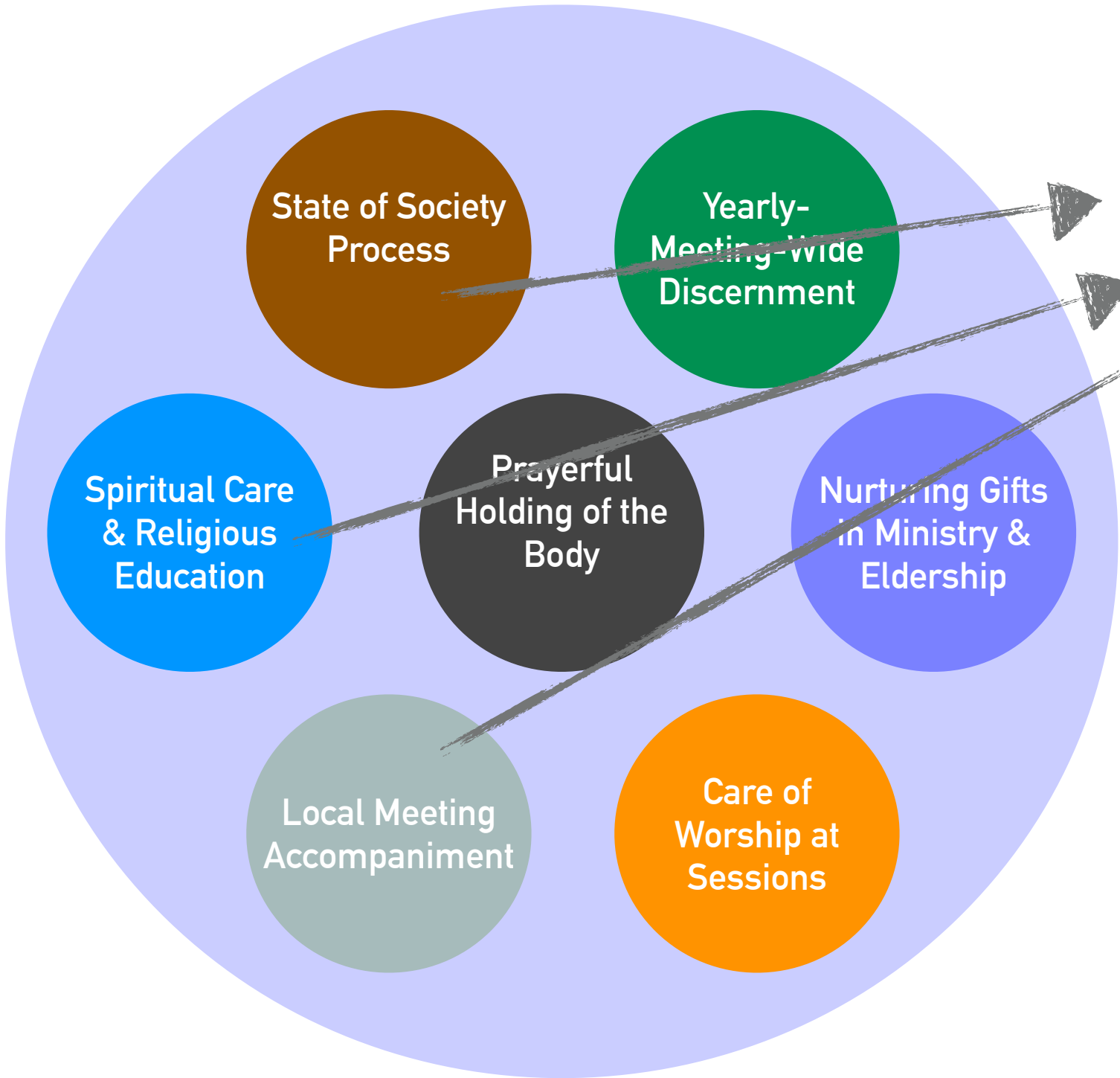


#1





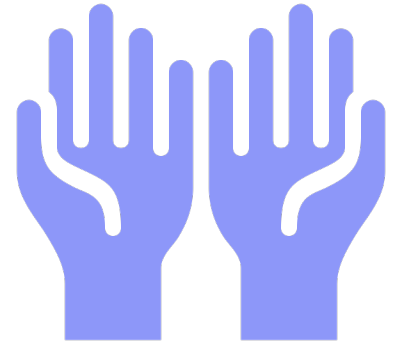
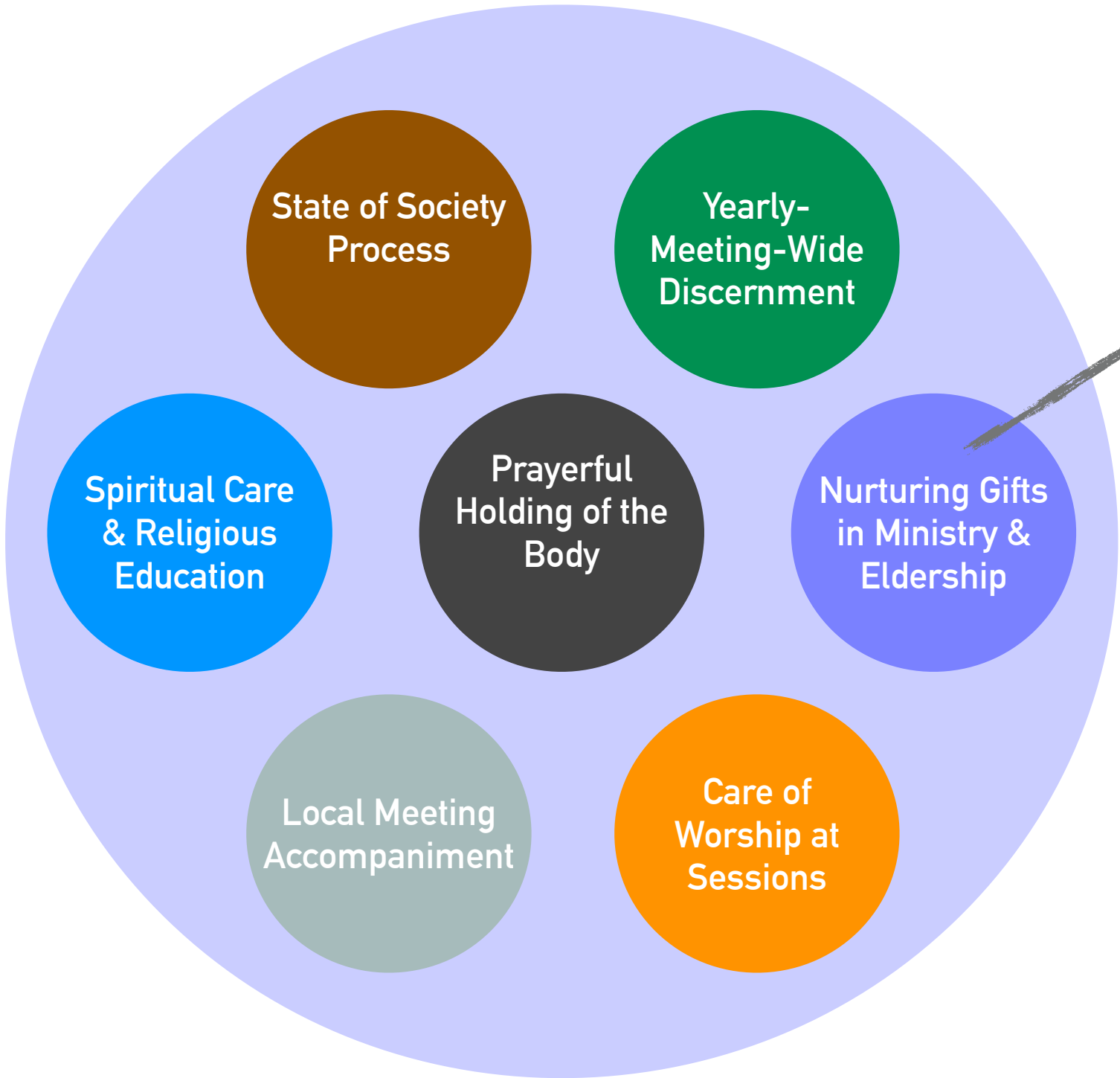
*1. Gather a small body of Friends to accompany local meetings*



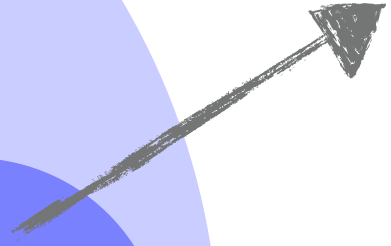
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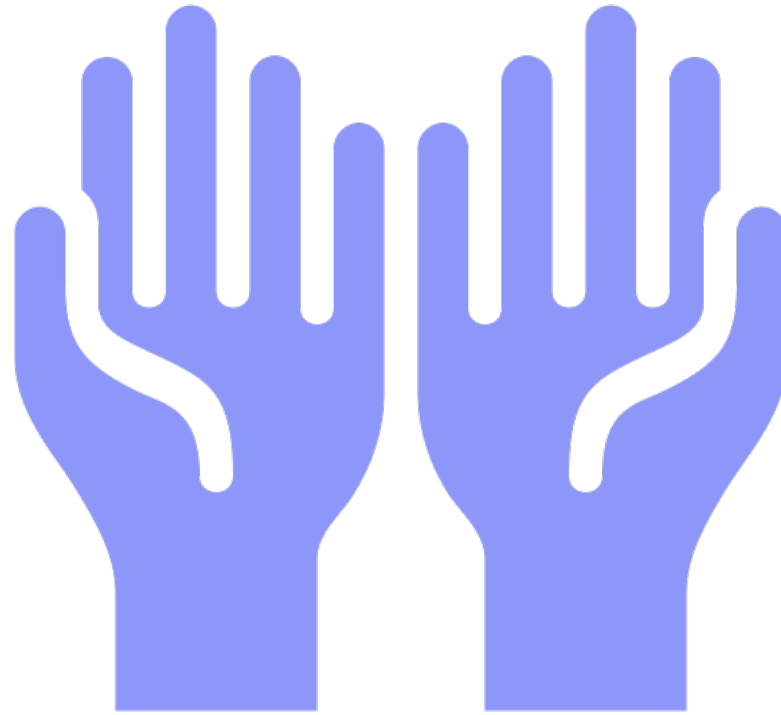


*2. Hold a Meeting for Listening for the Life in local meetings*



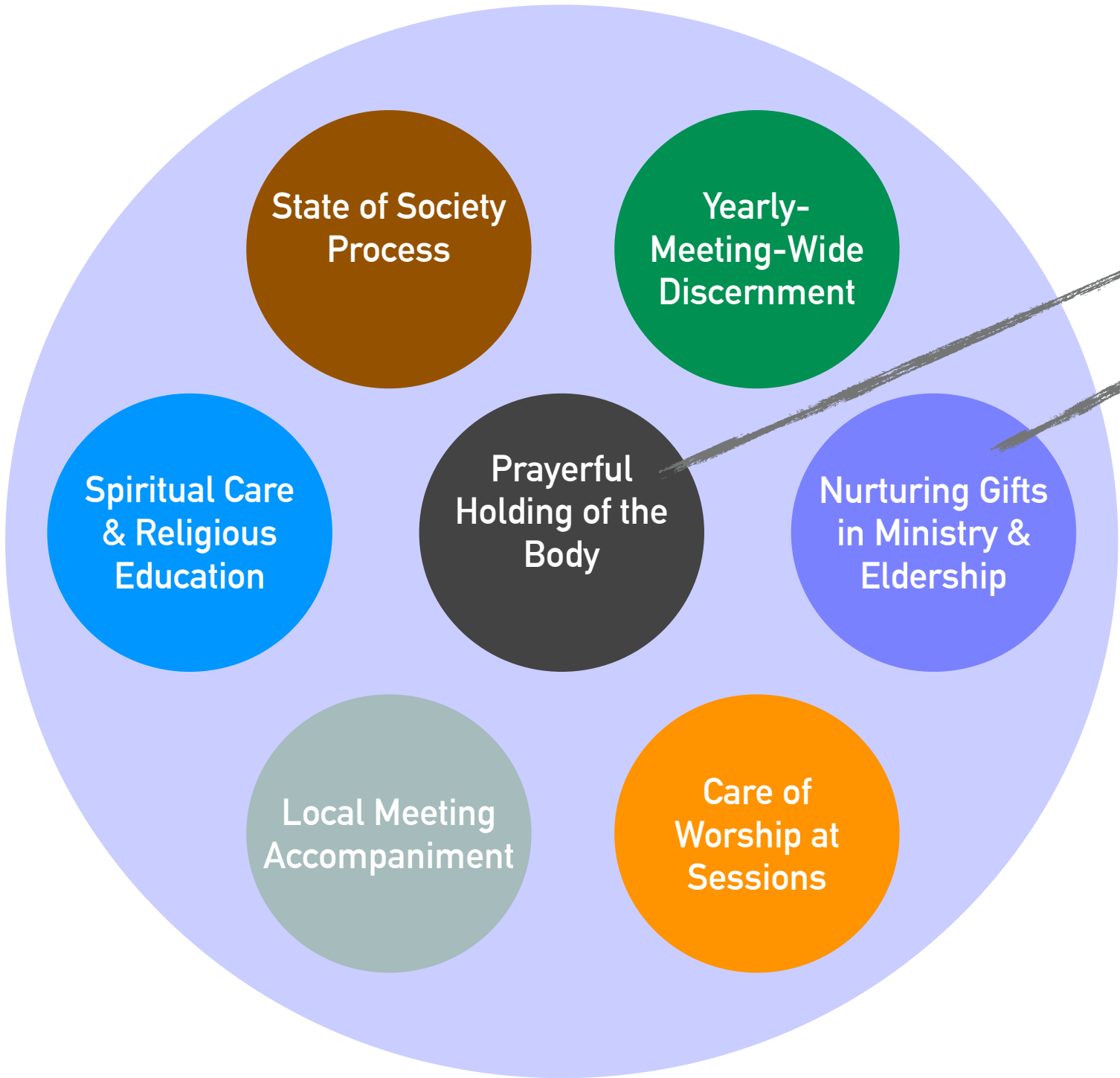
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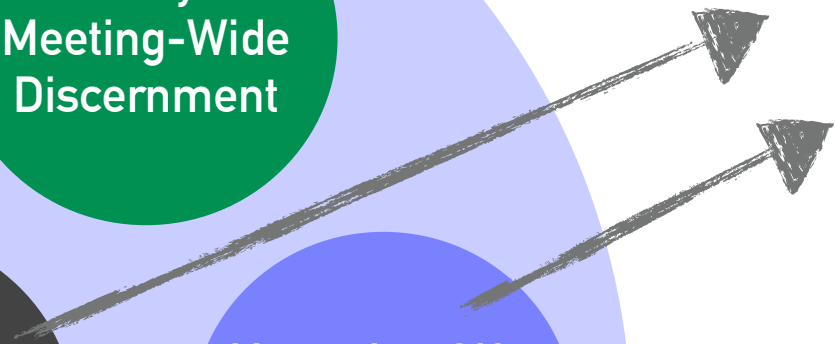


*3. Host opportunities to learn about and celebrate Friends in public ministry*





#4





*4. Offer regular opportunities for prayerful holding of the wider body of Friends*



State of Society  
Process

Yearly-  
Meeting-Wide  
Discernment

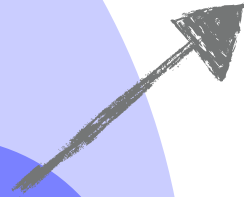
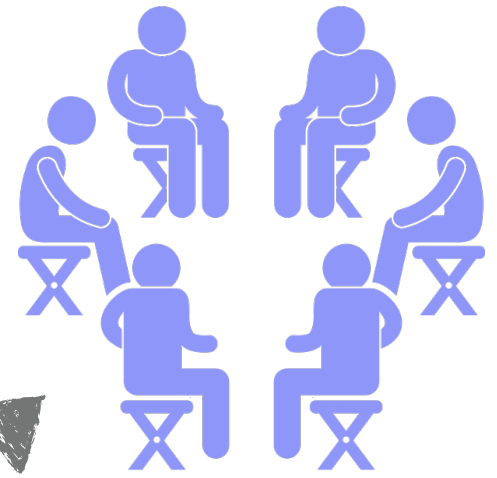
Spiritual Care  
& Religious  
Education

Prayerful  
Holding of the  
Body

Nurturing Gifts  
in Ministry &  
Eldership

Local Meeting  
Accompaniment

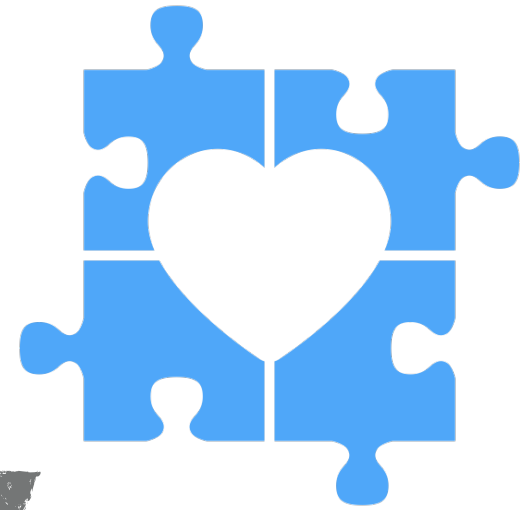
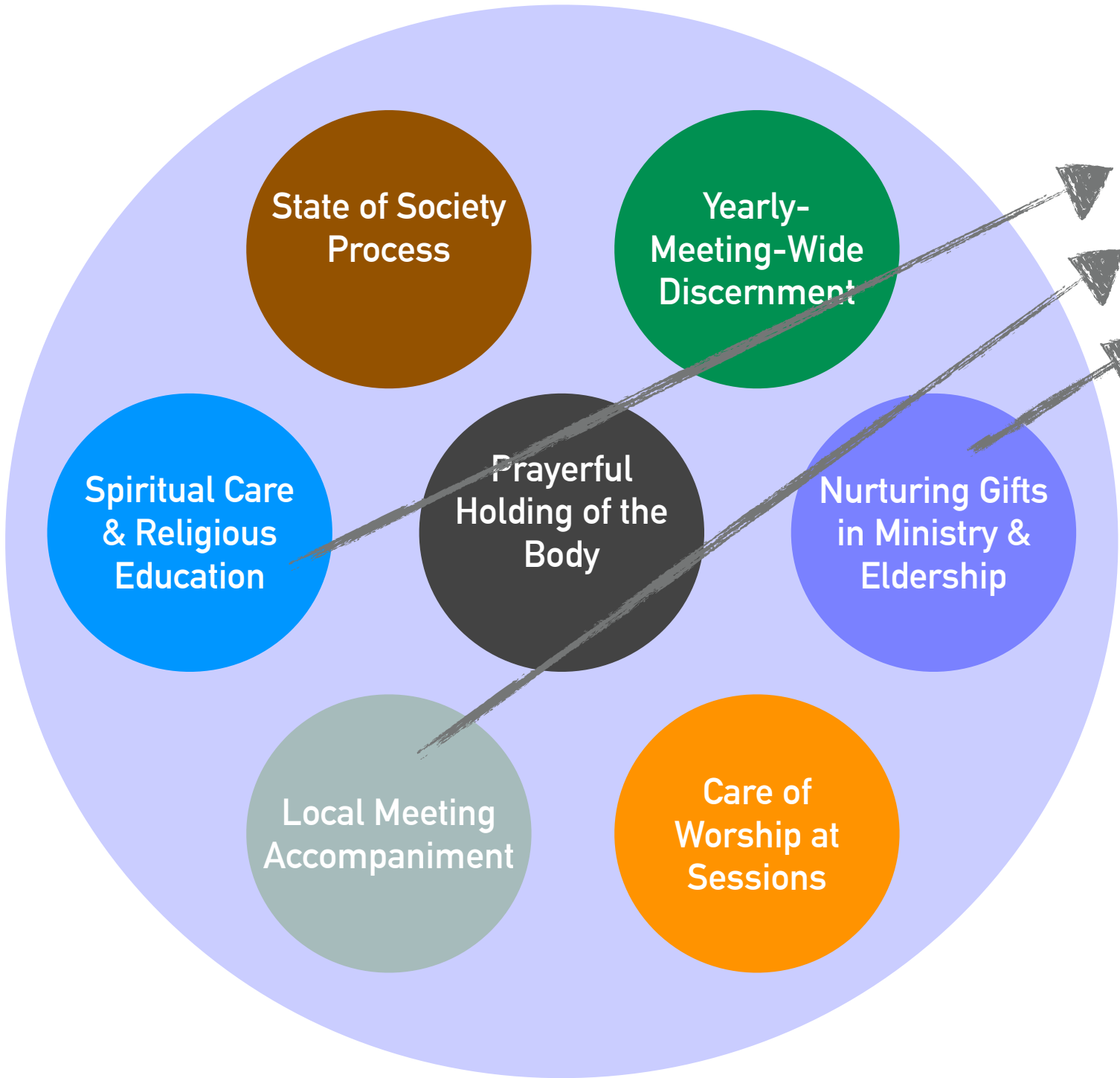
Care of  
Worship at  
Sessions



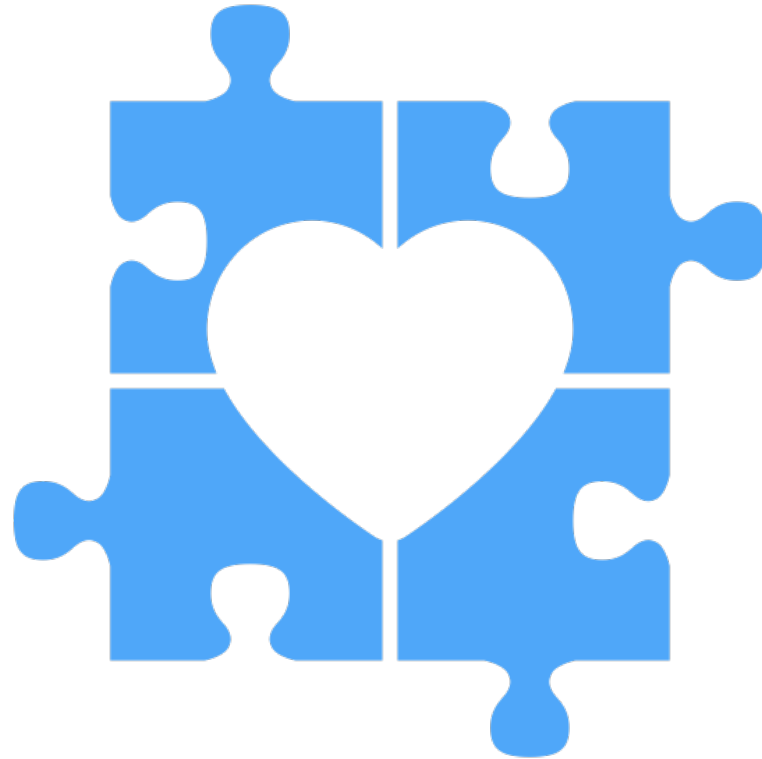
#5



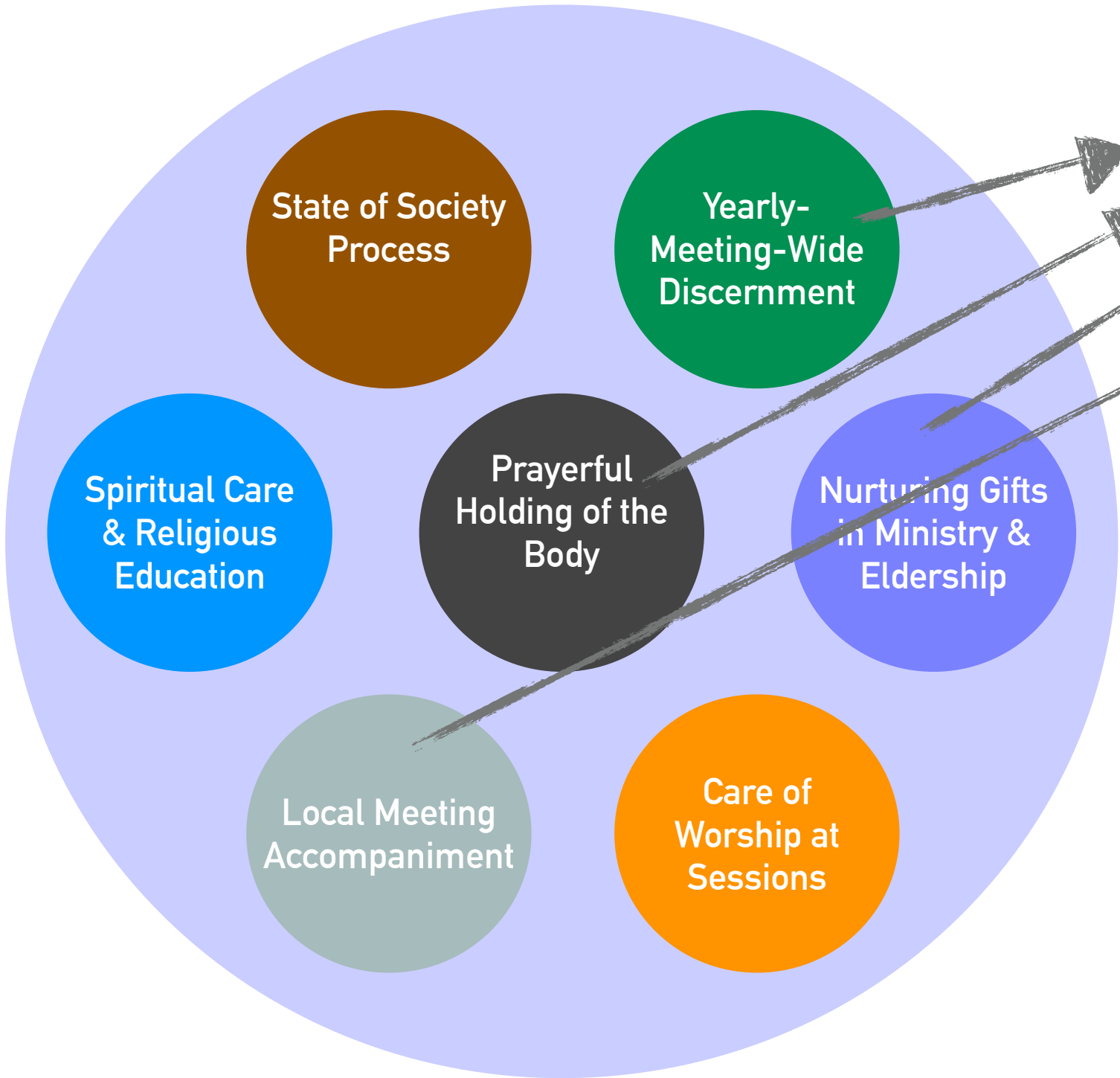
*5. Recognize the need—and offer support for—ministry & eldership “shop talk”*



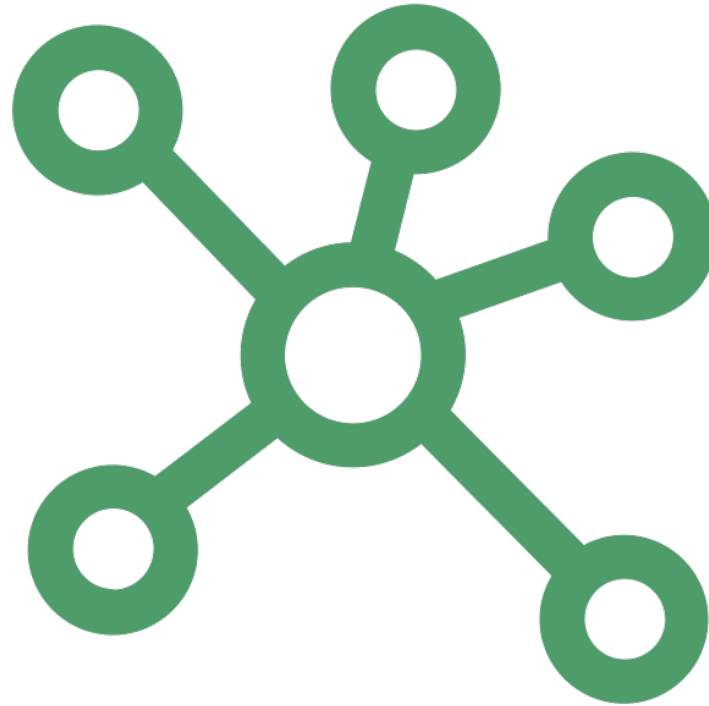
#6



*6. Increase awareness and capacity for spiritual formation and religious education*

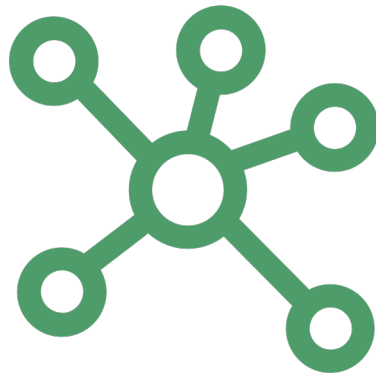
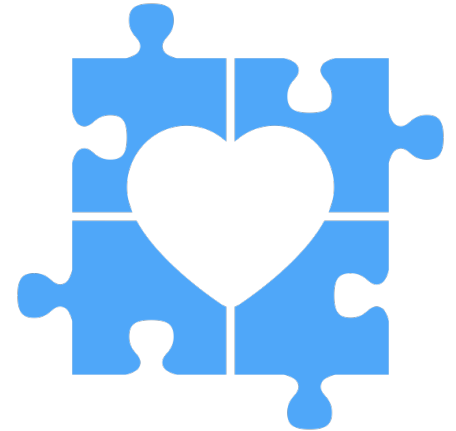
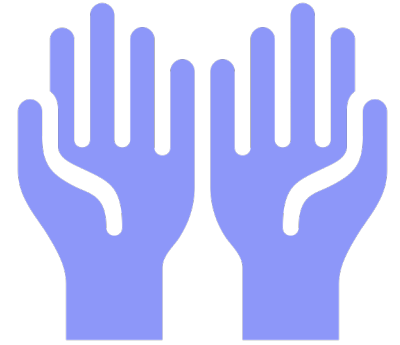
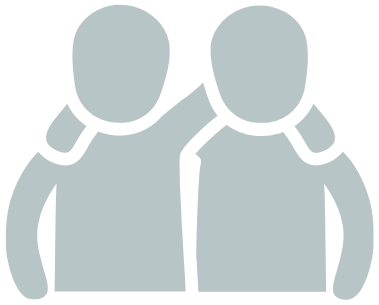


#7



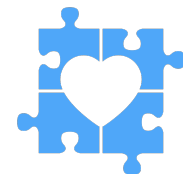
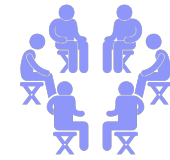
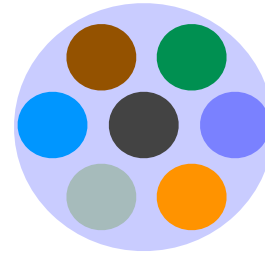
*7. Consider a review of purpose, care, and oversight for quarterly meetings*

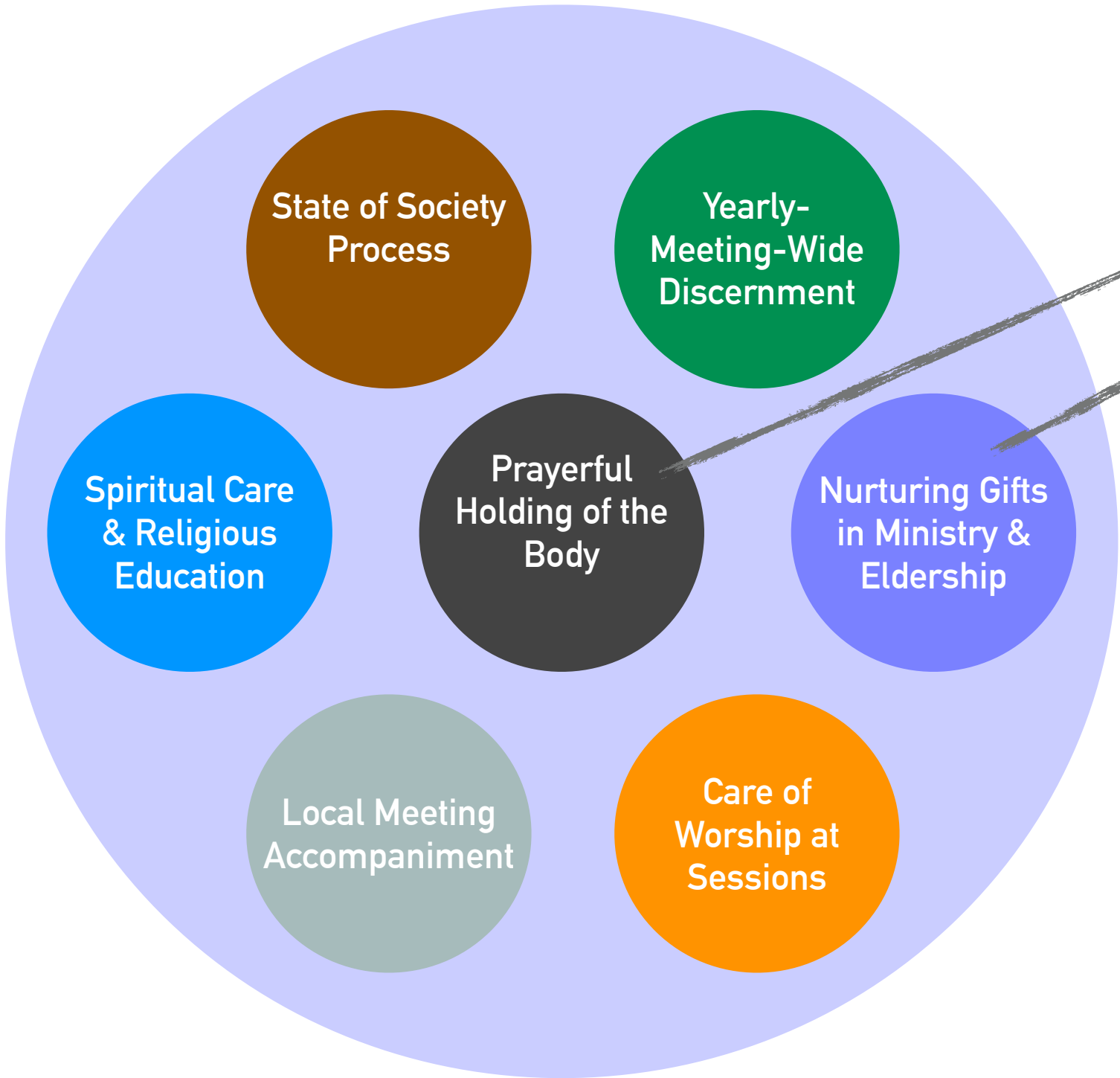




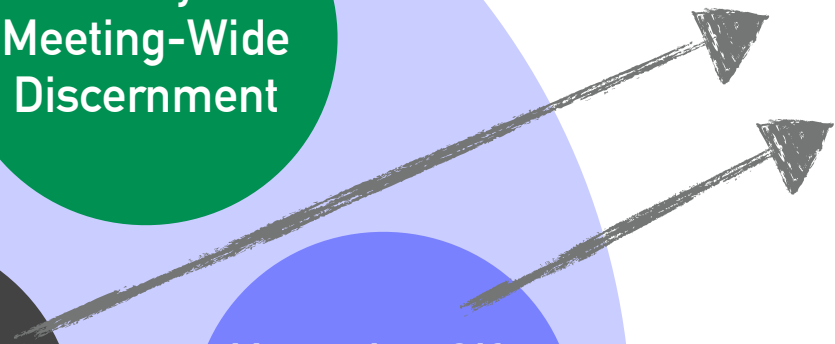
## *Where we are now, since 2022:*

- *The new Meeting Accompaniment group has engaged with 50+ local meetings and groups since its establishment in early 2023*
- *On June 1, Friends from across our region will gather for the second annual Meeting for Listening, lifting up the life in our local meetings, informing our attention, programs, and funding priorities*
- *A prayer list has been established, moderated by the Clerk of Ministry & Counsel, regularly sharing prayer requests and pastoral care concerns with Friends throughout our region—email [mc-clerk@neym.org](mailto:mc-clerk@neym.org)*
- *The yearly meeting has hosted several spiritual formation opportunities, including a third offering of the Nurturing Faithfulness program; these opportunities are regularly featured in monthly email newsletters, as well as highlighted in monthly calls supporting servant leaders in local meetings and elsewhere*
- *Friends have informally gathered many times for extended worship, and to encourage those with a sustained concern for vocal ministry*
- ***Still needed from approved recommendations:***
  - *Review of quarterly meetings*
  - *Periodic opportunities to gather to hold the Yearly Meeting in prayer*





#1



*Renewed attention*



*1. Offer regular opportunities for prayerful holding of the wider body of Friends*

Q1

Q2

December

January

November

February

October

March

September

April

August

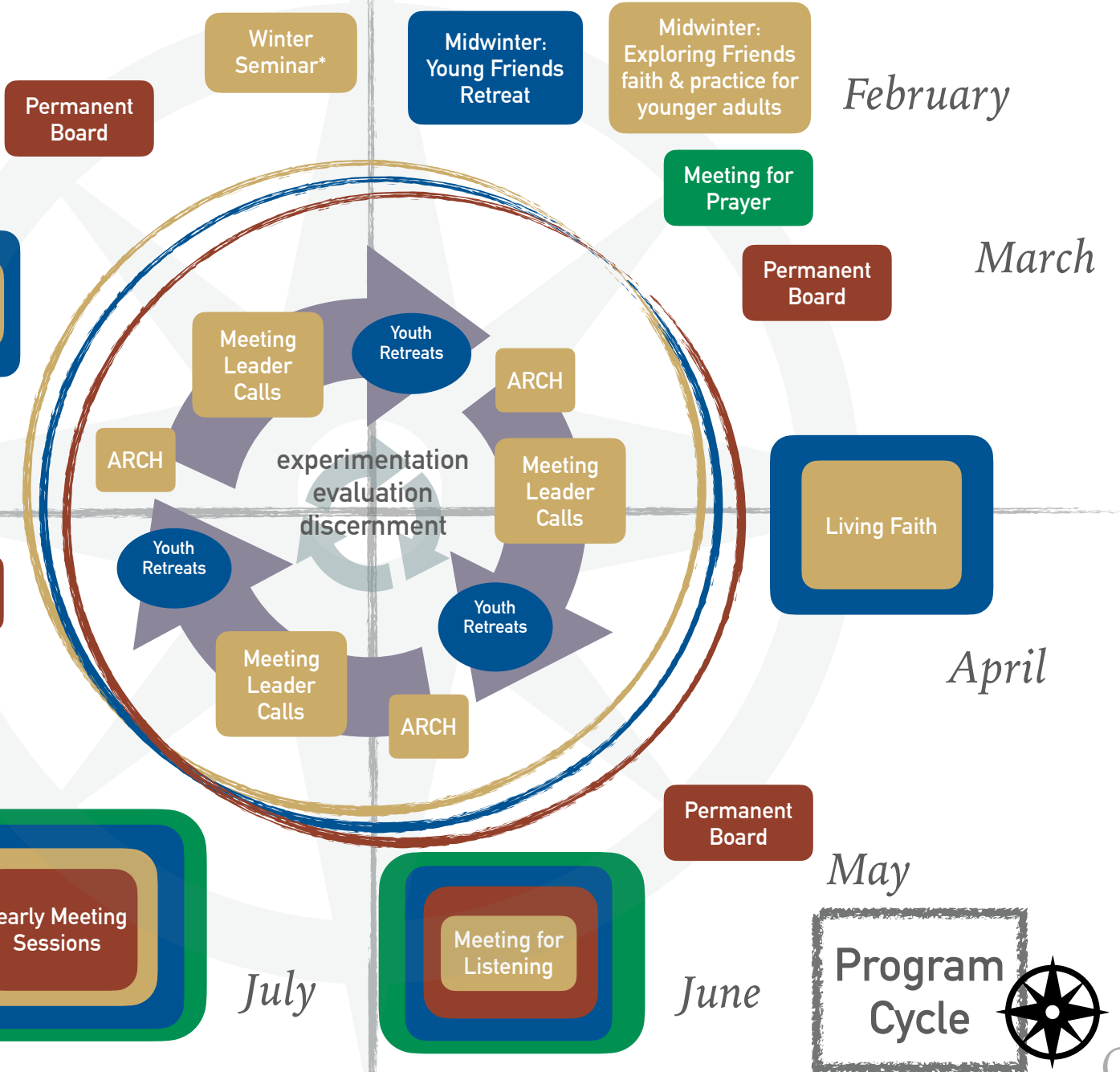
May

July

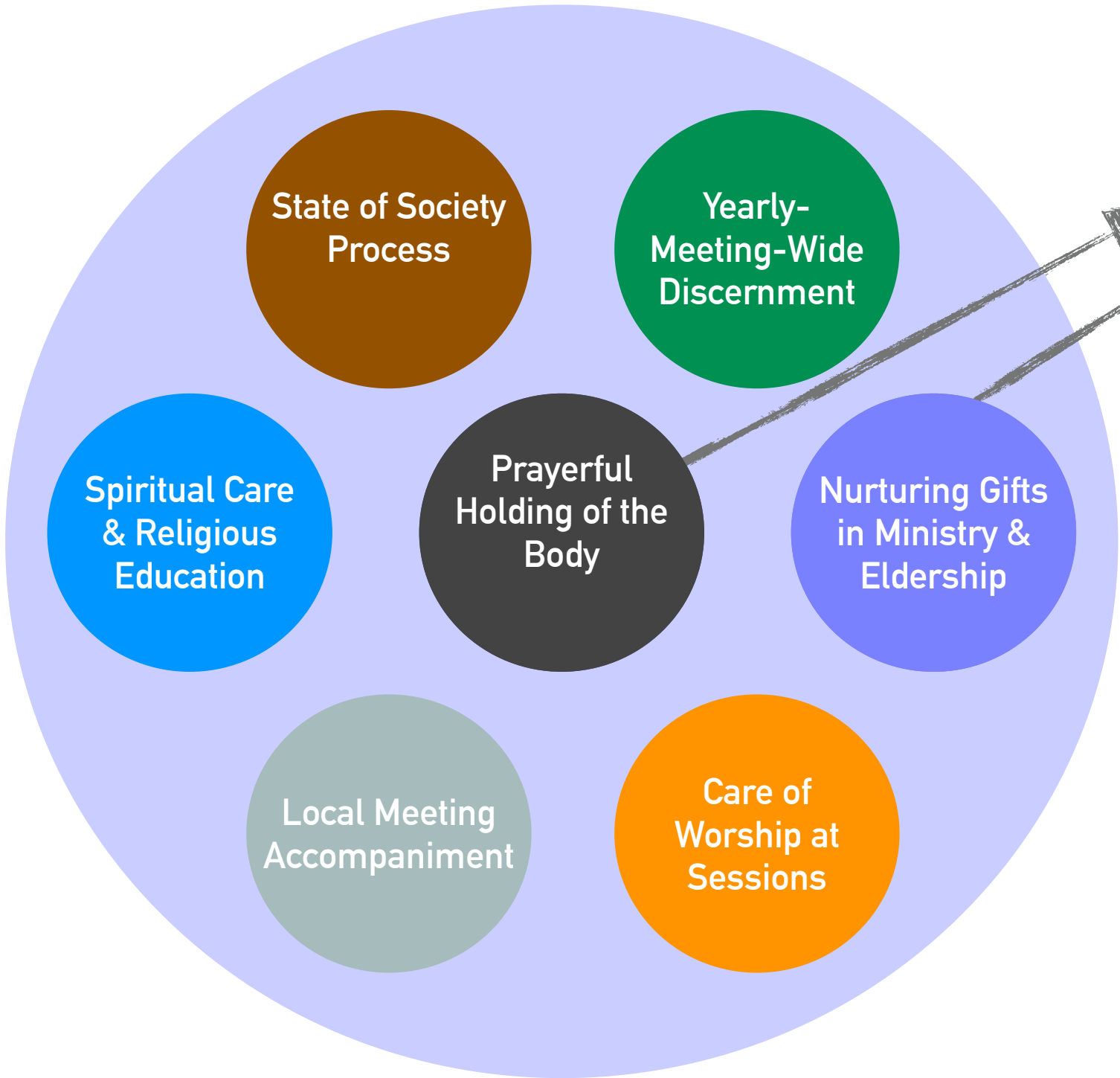
June

Q4

Q3



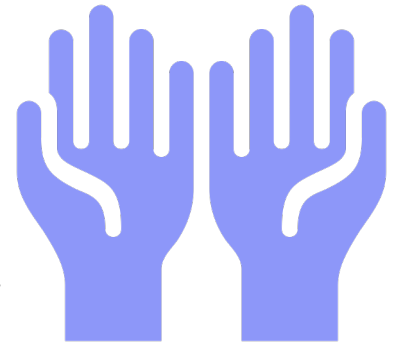
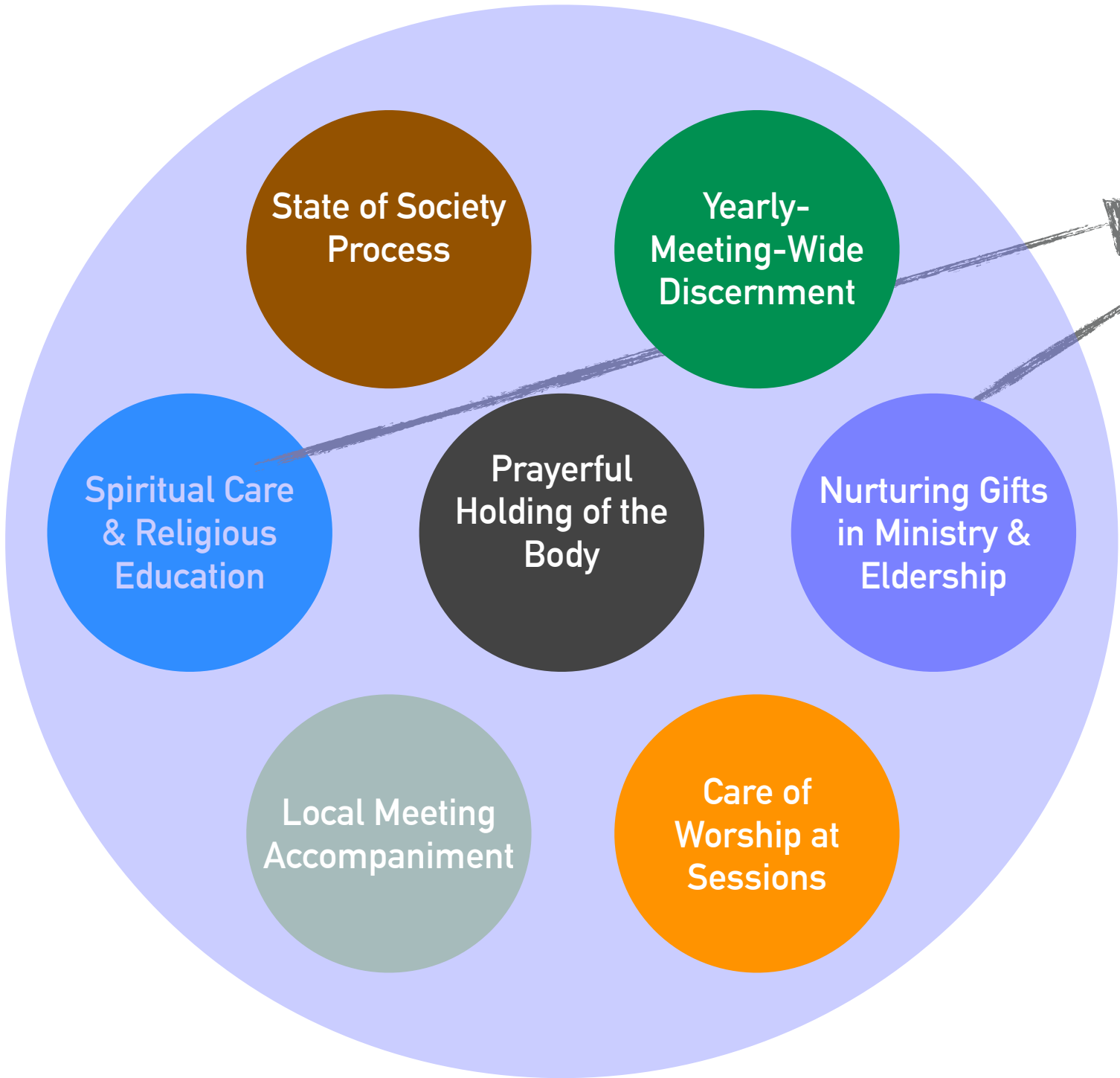
Adult faith formation
Youth & multigenerational faith formation
Corporate discernment
Prayer and Holding



#2

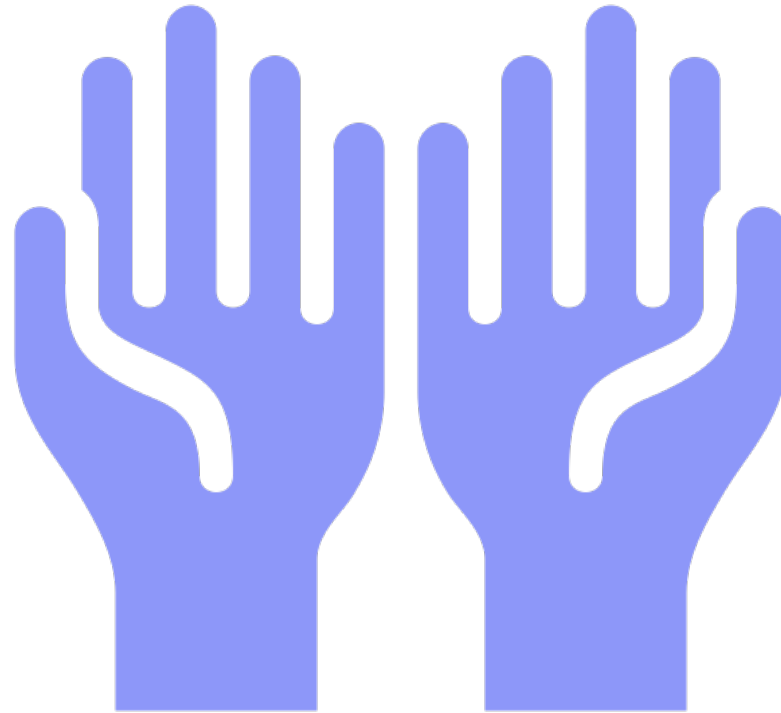


*2. Appoint a discerned small group of Friends with active, recognized gifts of ministry and eldership, in a relationship of oversight with their local meeting, to hold the spiritual health and condition of the wider body in prayer, to advise and assist the Clerk of Ministry & Counsel*



#3





*3. Gather a group of Friends to support local meetings' exercise of oversight and nurture of those stewarding gifts of ministry*

## **Report on Debrief of 02/10/24 Permanent Board Meeting, Conducted on 02/19/24 on Zoom**

**Present:** Polly Attwood, Fran Brokaw, Susan Davies, JT Dorr, Melissa Foster, Chris Gant, Janet Hough, Kristina Keefe-Perry, Rebecca Leuchak, Mary Link, Carole Rein, Willa Taber, Pamela Terrien, Eleanor Warnock, Carl Williams.

*Worship sharing clerked by Willa Taber; note-taker, Carole Rein; review and edits, Polly Attwood and Susan Davies*

### ***Spirit of the Meeting***

The meeting was held in a worship-sharing format making space for any present to share noticings and/or questions about noticings from the PB meeting on Feb 10 and/or related questions about the noticing practice.

### ***Accessibility – both time and Zoom related***

- Scheduling of debrief meetings – “6:30 pm on a weeknight is not conducive to those Friends with children at home to be able to attend.”
- The all-day length of PB meetings is difficult for those with less stamina or capacity to stay attentive in front of a Zoom screen for 6 or more hours.
- Wondered if there are ways to take attendance that don't take up precious time? (even as this last round was smoother).
- Concern that structures in place do not make it easy for NEYM Friends to participate in PB meetings where concerns relevant to them are taken up.

### ***Faithfulness Noticings***

- The beginning of the meeting was powerful and affirmed Friends' relationship with the Divine and each other. This felt encouraging.
- Appreciated that the clerk re-ordered the agenda to have discernments early on agenda (related to accessibility and bringing fresher energy to discernment items).
- PB and the clerk moved a contentious issue forward and PB united on approving Three Rivers as a monthly meeting
- Also noted was the faithfulness of the process used by the Legacy Gift Committee in reflecting on how its work has gone over a 10-year period

### ***Three Rivers approval process and patterns of harm/oppression***

#### **Intent vs. impact**

- While stated intention was not to single out any one person in considering Three Rivers monthly meeting status, a single person (not present) was named repeatedly and with damaging implications made.

- Criticism was expressed about the slowness of the process, with frustration that simple approval of MM status was not given, though it was recommended by the sponsoring monthly meeting for 3 Rivers wg.
- One Friend who interrupted the clerk was then silenced by another Friend. This felt jarring.

### Digging Deeper:

Wondering: Why was the consideration of Three Rivers application to be a monthly meeting so contentious? Let's examine it, not dismiss it too quickly.

- Why was one individual Friend named repeatedly when Friends' faith and practice aspires to take care for the reputation of others?
- Were we seeing evidence of (unconscious) patterns of internalized homophobia expressed in the focus on this individual, and 3 Rivers, due to their commitment to Queer friends?
- A Friend expressed uneasiness that we were falling into speculation and generalizations beyond the February 10<sup>th</sup> PB meeting. They stated their understanding that debrief meetings are intended to examine the actual events within PB meeting, with reflections on what happened there, and why, but advised caution about unrestrained generalizing or speculating without facts. Hold uncertainty when there is not certain proof. This feels uneasy, queasy.

### ***Yearning for Healing***

- A Friend expressed desire to take up the early Friends use of Meeting for Confession where Friends would gather to share what was on their hearts that kept them separated from the Spirit.
- A quote offered: "Shame left unattended becomes disconnection".
- A Friend expressed weariness with the months of infighting, and lack of trust and generosity experienced; and a deep longing for us to become a community of faith where healing can happen. A desire was expressed that we arrive at a place where we listen for how God is calling us to be, both as an organization and as people, recognizable as Christians by our love for each other.

### ***Wonderings:***

- Might it be useful to send PB minutes out sooner?
- Growing out of hearing about the Legacy Gift reflection process:
  - How might this reflection process be applied to other aspects of the work of PB and NEYM?
  - Where is the right place for these kinds of concerns to be held?
  - Where is the right place to hold the grief we feel when we don't live up to the best of what we want to believe we can be? Where is the right place to hold healing?

- I wonder, while some kinds of business that PB has been asked to care for is appropriate (finance, plus more), if too much has been added. Perhaps some things could go to ministry and council. Or, maybe, similar to Legacy Gift, take it on for 10 years, then reflect on how it went. These are **big** questions.
- When will Friends join with the faithful labor of working groups, committees, and individuals laboring to bring witness to NEYM Friends and not be caught up in internal processes that distract us?
- How do we move from noticing patterns of oppression to transforming them? In some instances, noticing something in oneself can lead to immediate change; in other instances, deeper work is needed. Where does that work happen?
- Quoting an influential teacher from another faith tradition speaking to the challenges of anti-oppression learning and practice, one Friend shared their teacher's query: "Do you love me enough to show me what I don't see?"



**collabyrinth**

finding the way together

# New England Yearly Meeting

Equity Systems Change Proposal

**Collabyrinth, LLC**, is a full-service EDI design partner. We coordinate teams that help you clarify and collaboratively solve systems problems in a manner that keeps equity at the center of the work.

When it comes to equity/systems/change issues, we can figure them out for you (**design**); we can help you as a leader figure them out (**advisory**); or we can help your stakeholders figure them out together so that neither the problem nor the solution is left to be owned by only one person (**facilitation**). Most importantly, we can also help your team, organization, or community incorporate what has been figured out into all your dealings (**strategy**). These constitute our 4 areas of service.



## Design Services

Built-to-order responses to discretely identified equity challenges.

## Advisory Services

Informed perspective that leaders need to make transformative decisions. Advisory services most often include discussions of strategy, interpretation of data, and planning of interventions. For some, it also serves as much needed spiritual care. Wherever you are in your analysis, our coaching helps you discern how to live it.

## Facilitation Services

Skilled event moderation or facilitation of 2-4 day [collaborative problem-solving forums](#) that leverage the expertise of stakeholders, prototype new processes, stress test proposed solutions, and iterate on findings. Extended collaborative design process that guides teams to breakthrough improvements on their internal systems by gathering intelligence, interpreting disruption and emergence at play, and committing to the necessary adaptations.

## Strategy Services

Often a combination of all the other services, strategy focuses on communal enculturation. Strategy also includes deployment of standardized tools such as the *UnLearn Inequity* curriculum, which includes the [Truth & Transformation Model](#), the [accountability circle methodology](#), [community provisioning workshops](#), and now [a self-paced, experiential, digital course](#) for transformative learning—learning that changes the conditions under which particular problems occur.



Our goal is to help **your team, organization, or community** collaboratively design a future in which each member can flourish. "A future by design, not by default," as one member of our community of practice puts it. "A vision of a shared future, not [necessarily] a shared vision of the future," as another is apt to note.

**Collabyrinth** does transformative, mainly systems, work. Transformative, systems work happens over time. Even single day events are collaboratively designed over 2 - 4 months time. We help you take the time to "be transformed in the doing of the work."

# Proposition

In furtherance of initial conversations with Secretary of the Permanent Board, Noah Merrill, and other Friends leading the organization's equity work, the New England Yearly Meeting would engage Collabyrinth to provide equity support services over the next 24 months.

The three phases of the work set forth herein can be found detailed in the [NEYM Scope and Sequence](#) companion document.

# Phase 1

## *Marking an Equity Beat*

We begin our journey together with four service components:

- 3 **Witnessing Visits** for the Collabyrinth team
- 30 **Equity Advisory** hours, made available to staff and Permanent Board members
- 30 **Unlearn Inequity course** subscriptions, subsidized for leaders on all levels who want to embody equity as an example to their fellow quakers
- 18 **Accountability Circle** host trainings

In order to help NEYM dig into "the spiritual roots of racism and white supremacy that underlie some Quaker traditions and practices, let go of what harms others, make amends for harms done, and address any resistance to doing so" as its RFP describes, the Collabyrinth team has to become more intimately acquainted with the tradition. As we do so, we want to create space for administrative stakeholders to practice processing through equity concerns both 1-on-1 and in small groups. At the same time, we want to expand the circle of equity practice to as many Quaker leaders as will take advantage of the opportunity to engage. If the goal of all three phases is for the community to cultivate a shared language, memory, inquiry, care, and sense of mission related to equity, Phase 1 focuses primarily on the first three of these aspects of communal cohesion.

## Phase 1 Fees

### *Marking an Equity Beat*

Fees for Phase 1 initially total **\$81,488** for the quantities listed, with expenses projected at approximately **\$15,400**:

- 3 **Witnessing Visits** for the Collabyrinth team (i.e., Spring Youth Retreat, Annual Sessions, and Meeting Care Day)
- 30 **Equity Advisory** hours (initial batch), made available to staff and Permanent Board members
- 30 **UnLearn Inequity** self-paced course subscriptions, subsidized for leaders on all levels who want to embody equity as an example to their fellow quakers (which will include customizations discussed)
- 18 **Accountability Circle** host trainings

Additional advisory hours may be purchased in blocks of 10 (\$4.6k), 20 (\$8.2k), or 30 (\$10k), to be used over the course of 2, 4, or 6 months respectively.

Additional *UnLearn InEquity* (beta) subscriptions may be purchased \$400 per. Addition Accountability Circle trainings, \$1800 per.

The investment for said services can be paid 50% up-front, with the balance due in two installments. Expenses can be paid directly or reimbursement received within 30 days of receipt of invoice.



## Phase 2

### *Getting in Rhythm*

Depending upon scheduling, the Accountability Circle training of Phase 1 may coincide with the **Community Conversations** of Phase 2. Community Conversations are intended to provide a process for pursuing equity that is consistent with Quaker theology and practice. We define racial equity as correcting power imbalances related to race built into constructed systems like our denominations, society, economies, government, education, or any other organization/institution of which we are a part. The need to correct power imbalances will be taken as a given from conversation to conversation. However, what may change is how equity is best embodied in a particular community.

Again, if the goal of all three phases is for the NEYM to cultivate a shared language, memory, inquiry, care, and sense of mission related to equity across its eight quarters, Phase 2 is meant to further those ends most broadly.

## Phase 2 Fees

Investment for Phase 2, as currently conceived, totals **\$71,280**, with expenses projected at approximately **\$12,600**.

## Phase 3

### *Making Music Together*

All the work over the first 12 months is about building broadly within NEYM an equity culture that can follow through on collective structural commitments. Beginning next June, we would work with NEYM staff, permanent board members, select stakeholders, including those outside the Society of Friends, to develop **a Structural Intervention Map and subsequent action plan** for the organization to continue to implement over the next 5 years. Normally we would provide this particular facilitation over the course of two or more 3-day design forums. NEYM is opting to accomplish this work over 12 monthly 4-hour sessions. Preparation for the process would need to begin 3 months before sessions begin, with the assembling of a Sponsor Design Team whose role is to help inform, organize, and shape interactions. This is where the cultivation of a shared equity mission takes form.

## Phase 3 Fees

Investment for Phase 3, as currently conceived, totals **\$80,000** for up to 30 participants at a time or **\$95,000** for up to 45 participants at a time. Expenses, if any, to be calculated closer to the process.

# Rationale & Benefits

The benefits of engaging **Collabyrinth** to support the NEYM on its journey of truth and transformation include:

- Collabyrinth is familiar with and supportive of the best intuitions of the history, mission and culture of the church universal and is willing to take time to understand and to honor the specific contextual dynamics of your tradition.
- Collabyrinth consultants are skilled working intersectionally across differences in identity—race, gender, age, sexual orientation, faith, class, education, and other forms of status.
- The NEYM would have the advantage of learning from stakeholders what they need rather than imposing on stakeholders its best intentions.
- This collaborative problem-solving and creative process would bring the NEYM into profoundly meaningful engagement with both current and potential stakeholders.



# Endorsements

**Collabyrinth's "work with us has helped us to keep this conversation [about diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging] ongoing, and it's obvious to me that our general trajectory has been affected in a positive way."**

~Carol Steele, VP of Programs, [Montreat Conference Center](#)

**"Melvin Bray is an exceptional [social justice] movement facilitator and strategic thinker who breaks new ground in the field** with his powerful combination of gifts as a storyteller, organizer and ritual leader. He holds space with compassion, spirit and a commitment to love and justice that is palpable. We are all nudged just a bit closer to a vision and action toward a world made right and whole by his work."

~Lisa Anderson, VP of Embodied Justice, [Auburn Theological Seminary](#)

"Melvin Bray facilitated an intensive designshop for a new project we are launching.... It was **a fun filled, music filled, joyful and insightful week of work** together. **We now have a solid plan** for our new project and we are moving full steam ahead. Melvin's faithful leadership was a key component to a successful week."

~Lisa Weiner-Mahfuz, former Co-Executive Director, [Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice](#)

## **Draft Request for Proposal**

New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (NEYM), the organization of Quakers in the northeastern United States, seeks a consultant to guide us in a process for becoming a more welcoming, anti-racist organization. We seek to develop a multi-year plan for action, a roadmap that can be used at many levels of the organization (yearly, quarterly, monthly meetings, committees) through the development of common goals, language, and processes that will guide us in living into our intention to challenge and dismantle white supremacy in ourselves and in our faith community. Our goal is to bring the perspectives and insights offered by antiracist theory and practice into the Yearly Meeting's discernment and action as an institution, and to support and encourage local Friends meetings (monthly and quarterly) across our region, to bring these perspectives and insights into their discernment and actions as worshipping communities.

### **Who we are**

New England Yearly Meeting of Friends is the denominational association of Quaker congregations (*meetings* or *churches*) in the six New England states: Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Uniting more than 90 local worshipping groups, in 2022 an estimated 5000 people are regularly involved in worship and service as part of these local meetings in the Friends tradition. These local congregations (many of which have fewer than 20 members) are organized under eight *quarterly meetings*, which meet for business four times per year, and finally in a *yearly meeting*, which meets annually to share information, strengthen connections, make decisions, and offer guidance and support for Quakers throughout New England.

The Yearly Meeting is also a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, offering programs and services supporting and strengthening the Quaker movement and related outreach and ministries across New England and beyond. Some of these programs include a large annual religious conference, a summer camp in Maine, year-round youth retreat programs, legal and financial support for local congregations, religious education courses and workshops, and supporting advocacy and organizing by Quakers on issues of public interest. More information is available at [neym.org](http://neym.org).

### **Core beliefs/practices**

Quaker religious structure and church government are rooted in the worshipping community of the local meeting/church, also called a “monthly meeting” because it meets monthly for communal decision making. The relationships among these smaller bodies are nested in their scope of care: the smallest “worship groups” are under the care and accountability of their local monthly meetings, quarterly meetings exercise care and accountability for monthly meetings that make them up, the yearly meeting exercises care and accountability for its constituent quarterly meetings. While this web of wider relationships is real and vital (and carries legal and other authority when needed), in most aspects of their common life and decision-making, local meetings act with significant autonomy. While the Yearly Meeting, both as a decision making body and an organization, can exercise substantive influence and encouragement in the context of local meetings—based primarily on the extent of established, trusting

relationships—it does not dictate the actions, priorities, or positions of local meetings and the people who make them up.

Most Quaker congregations in New England do not employ a pastor or other paid staff and when they do hire staff, authority is distributed within the meeting. Leadership roles often change regularly, and power dynamics within the community can be difficult to explicitly identify. While many Quakers active in meetings today grew up in the tradition, or come from multigenerational Quaker families, the majority of New England Quakers did not grow up in the Friends tradition, and bring a variety of theological understandings and experiences of religious life to their engagement with their local meetings and the yearly meeting.

Quaker culture (in our context) demonstrates significant conflict avoidance. Often difficult decisions or painful truths are not expressed out of a fear of hurting feelings or creating division in the community. The widespread commitment to Quakers' established identity as a "peace church" can lead to a misunderstanding or confusion that the naming or acknowledgement of conflict is creating the conflict itself. There is a tendency to avoid conflict, or to see unresolved conflict as a failure; many Friends shut down or walk away in the face of overt conflict.

### **Quaker decision making process**

While often described as "consensus-based" or "hyper-democratic", Quaker decision-making is in fact based on an understanding that the community is engaged in collectively discerning the the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, what is sought in decision making is not unanimity, but a felt sense that the action being proposed or the direction to be taken aligns most clearly with the will (the particularity or direction) and way (the "how", the means or approach) of God, both as affirmed in Friends tradition and in the present prayerful experience of those gathered.

### **What we've done so far**

[Insert 2-3 sentence history of anti-racism work here] In 2016 at our annual summer gathering we committed to the following:

*We are complicit in white supremacy. We at New England Yearly Meeting have been "colonized" by our white supremacist culture and fall short of our full potential as a gathered body of Quaker Meetings because of this colonization. We commit to engaging in interrupting white supremacy in ourselves: within individuals, interpersonally, in our meetings, and at all system levels of NEYM. To start this, we ask Permanent Board to explore an external cultural competency audit of New England Yearly Meeting. (Minute 2016-64)*

Since then we have named a working group which is charged with noticing and lifting up patterns of oppression and faithfulness. This group has regularly attended our annual summer gathering and has

### **Specific outcomes we are seeking:**

- Develop common vision for the future (where are we going?)
- Develop common definitions of terms (what is oppression; what is faithfulness)

- Develop common framework for recognizing and addressing patterns of oppression
  - How to deal with harm when it arises
  - How to recognize who/what is being centered
  - How to respond to resistance
- Develop common measure of progress (how will we know we're on the right track?)

# Update on Recruiting for Sessions

Elizabeth Hacala, Events Coordinator

NiaDwynwen Thomas, Program Director

May 2024

One of the challenges many organizations face is recruitment of volunteers. Between shifting demographics, economic changes and changing patterns during the pandemic, finding volunteers for key roles has become more challenging for all organizations, and even a faith community like ours is not immune. Over the last decade, reports of recruitment challenges, especially from our youth program coordinators, have increased. Last year was particularly straining.

To ensure volunteer recruiting is at the forefront of our planning this Sessions season, Phil Veatch, Sessions Planning Clerk, has convened three “Recruiting Deep Dives” to identify what volunteer roles are filled, which are vacant, and where the most critical need is. These meetings have also been an opportunity for those in recruiting roles to share support needs, ideas, and insights learned from previous efforts. Included in these conversations have been Sessions staff/coordinators, year-round Yearly Meeting staff, and the Presiding Clerk. In addition to these meetings, Sessions planners have focused on earlier and broader outreach (such as via our general newsletter and focused email lists as well as in person at Living Faith). We’ve also worked together in coordinating internal communication systems about conversations with individuals or other recruitment efforts. Since September, Sessions planners have been working together to find the volunteers we need to make Sessions possible this August.

Despite these efforts, **at this time we still have less than 50% of the volunteers needed to offer our youth programs in their traditional form.** A number of Friends are actively in discernment about service and a few are in the application process, with coordinators following up with references. Still, the need continues to be great. Approximately 40 volunteers are needed for youth programs assuming the attendance we had last year. Historically, the “ask to yes” percentage is under 10%, so over 400 Friends would likely need to be asked to fully staff the programs.

**Sessions Planners will meet in late June to assess if we can offer Sessions as planned or if volunteer levels require the restriction of registration or significant modifications to our programmatic offerings and schedule. At the end of this report are a list of ways you can help prevent this outcome none of us want.**

Like in previous years, there continues to be particular challenges in recruiting volunteers to serve with Young Friends, as that program involves staying in a dorm with teens and applicants must be at least 22 years old and not a parent of a current Young Friend.

Although the Yearly Meeting has limited resources and faces some financial challenges presently, offering Sessions and its youth programs are an important commitment that we have made as a Yearly Meeting. This year, we are putting more fiscal resources towards support for essential volunteer roles. Although fee waivers do offset some of the burden of staffing at Sessions, one area where we have consistently heard feedback is that even with waivers, barriers remain for those who lose needed income during their service or have significant direct costs which their personal resources do not easily absorb. We have established an experimental fund for this year which can be used to help offset lost income for people for whom serving at Sessions disrupts income needed to cover basic expenses such as rent. These funds can be also used for travel expenses to Sessions that would otherwise result in financial difficulty. As you share about volunteer opportunities at Sessions with Friends in your meetings and circles, please help more Friends to know that support is available in removing barriers to service. Please also let Friends know that many youth program roles are possible on a part-time basis. If you or someone you know are curious about serving as a youth program volunteer at Sessions this year, we encourage you to begin a conversation directly with the coordinator (see contact information at [neym.org/sessions-volunteer](http://neym.org/sessions-volunteer)).

Beyond youth programs, there are still several other significant roles that are not yet filled for Sessions that Elizabeth and others are actively working on. These include an assistant to the Events Coordinator and a shadow for the Tech Team Lead David Coletta is in the process of handing that work off to others and we are looking for someone to shadow him this year. So far time off from work is the biggest barrier to filling that role. We are also hoping for the right Friends to apply as Young Adult Friends Coordinator (or Coordinators) and additional Spanish language interpreters.

While we want to express the need for help, we also want to lift up encouraging signs we have seen so far. Volunteer announcements have been running in the Yearly Meeting Newsletter since January resulting in a handful of leads including a Friend who agreed to round out the bookstore team. Recruitment efforts at Living Faith led to fruitful conversations matching new-to-Sessions Friends to potential roles. The bookstore and consignments team have been identified and the hand-off is in process. This has been a model we hope to repeat for future transitions.

In summary, volunteer recruitment continues to be a challenge and occupies a great deal of both Yearly Meeting staff and Sessions planners time that cannot be dedicated to the other aspects of Sessions. In addition, we risk burning out the volunteers we do have if there are not enough people to carry the work forward with a reasonable ask. Please help!

**Things you can do:**

1. Share the recruiting flyer with your local meeting (you can find the flyer in the Advance Documents for this meeting and at [neym.org/volunteer-sessions](http://neym.org/volunteer-sessions))
2. Personally encourage individuals who would be a great fit for Sessions roles, including youth program roles, to contact the coordinator to apply or discuss.
3. Offer to help Friends from your area carpool to Sessions. Sometimes, transportation is a barrier to service.
4. Using the coordinator contacts on volunteer opportunities webpage ([neym.org/volunteer-sessions](http://neym.org/volunteer-sessions)), make suggestions of Friends you think would be excellent for specific roles so that coordinators can follow up directly.
5. Hold Friends in prayer as they discern their participation at Sessions and as they serve.





It's more fun to jump in to the water, these are just some of the key needs.

## Help Make Annual Sessions Happen!

2024 ANNUAL SESSIONS  
AUGUST 2ND - 7TH

NEW ENGLAND  
QUAKERS

### Volunteers are needed for:

- Childcare
- Junior Yearly Meeting
- Junior High Yearly Meeting
- Young Friends (high school)
  
- Spanish language interpretation
- Tech Team - remote and in person
- Young Adult Friends coordination
- and more...

Volunteering at New England Yearly Meeting Sessions is a great way to meet new people, be a part of the gathering, and learn a bit more about all that Sessions has to offer. Join us this August 2-7 in Castleton, VT!

Pass this along to Friends with the right gifts too!



Annual Sessions gathers Friends across New England and depends on the work of dozens upon dozens of Friends. It simply cannot happen without the work of Friends in all types of roles.

Learn more at: [neym.org/volunteer-sessions](https://neym.org/volunteer-sessions)

**To:** Permanent Board

**From:** Susan Davies, Permanent Board Clerk

**Subject:** PB Clerk's recommendations for service

**First Reading\* in May 3 Advance Documents**, for approval May 11, 2024

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*\* The process for bringing recommendations by the PB clerk, for approval of Permanent Board during the year, is to send first readings in a written report a week or so in advance of the Permanent Board meeting. Any concerns, questions or affirmations should be communicated immediately to the Permanent Board 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.*

**The Naming Committee:** Annually, or as needed to allow for intentional transitions in service, the Presiding Clerk and the Permanent Board Clerk shall appoint a 3- to 5-person Naming Committee who shall name the Nominating Committee members to be approved by the Yearly Meeting

Gifts, Skills, Experience:

- Knowledge of the various aspects of nominating work
- Awareness of and commitment to inclusive leadership development
- Care for how the nominating work of the Yearly Meeting can strengthen the life of local meetings

Current Situation: the Naming Committee currently has three members

Recommended for PB **Approval** of service on the **NEYM Naming Committee**, which nominates members to serve on the NEYM Nominating Committee:

**Jay O'Hara** is a member of Portland Friends Meeting, with membership transferred from Sandwich Monthly Meeting. Jay is currently serving on the Sessions Theme and Speakers Team and has served on the NEYM Epistle Committee, among other forms of service to the Yearly Meeting. He has a recognized gift for vocal ministry and has initiated and deepened spiritual opportunities and friendships from diverse demographics across, and beyond the Yearly Meeting. He is an excellent and perceptive listener and a persuasive agent for good.

**Evaluation of Volunteer Stipends Experiment Working Group:** Permanent Board [Minute 21-43](#) approved an [implementation plan](#) for a three year experiment with offering stipends

to volunteers serving in five leadership positions in the Yearly Meeting. As part of that plan, Permanent Board committed to appointing a Working Group in 2024 to evaluate the experiment so far. The Charge for the evaluation of stipends working group was approved by Permanent Board at the March 19 meeting in PB Minute 24-40.

**Gifts, Skills, Experience:** This group shall consist of 3-4 people, made up of Friends not currently receiving honoraria. The working group will include Friends who bring insights and experience from the perspectives of finance, nominating, equity & inclusion, and pastoral care. The evaluation may involve some sensitive discussions, and so will need to be conducted with skillful empathy.

**Roger Jasaitis**, has been a member of Putney Friends since the 1990's. Roger has served as clerk, and as recording clerk of the monthly meeting, and is a member of the Permanent Board. He has also offered his service to many monthly meeting committees and clearness committees. He is a gifted listener and currently serves as clerk of the Putney Communications and Technology Committee.

**Doug Armstrong** is member of Monadnock Friends and reports he has attended YM Sessions for 50 of the last 57 years. Doug attends carefully to details and through his service on Faith & Practice Revision Committee he has demonstrated his commitment to a thriving Yearly Meeting, grounded in tradition, but open and receptive to the promptings of new Life, as guided by the Spirit. Doug said he has found he can be most helpful as part of a process of talking through what to do in a difficult or unusual situation. He has especially enjoyed working on Permanent Board and the Faith & Practice Revision committee because they provide so many opportunities for doing that.

**Eleanor Warnock**, has been a member of Northampton Friends since 1991 and served as clerk of the monthly meeting and clerk of the Northampton Nominating Committee, and member of Ministry and Counsel. She spent a year at Earlham School of Religion and at Pendle Hill. Eleanor has also served on NEYM Ministry and Counsel and is currently a member of Permanent Board. She is a careful listener and is willing to ask searching questions in pursuit of carefully discerned decisions.

**Bre-anne Brown** is a member of East Sandwich Preparative Meeting on Cape Cod and also a regular attender at Three Rivers Monthly Meeting!). She serves on the Planning Group for the Quaker Spring gatherings, and has assisted on the tech team for New England Yearly Meeting Sessions. Bre-anne welcomes the opportunity to be of service to NEYM.

May 2024

**Nomination for the Sessions Vision Planning Working Group:**

**Maggie Fiori** (Portland, ME). Reasons: Maggie's years-long concern for how younger and newer voices are brought into meaningful participation within the Yearly Meeting; her keen awareness of group dynamics; her deep interest in emergent facilitation; her experience with multigenerational relationship building; willingness to ask curious questions and ability to set others at ease; her strength as a communicator; her enthusiasm for the rich possibility the Quaker faith offers us; her awareness of many of the challenges and opportunities before Friends, Friends Meetings, and Friends Organizations now; her experience participating in Sessions as a youth, young adult, and youth program coordinator.

Please share any comments or concerns with PB Clerk Susan Davies ([pbclerk@neym.org](mailto:pbclerk@neym.org)) or Program Director Nia Thomas ([nia@neym.org](mailto:nia@neym.org)).

## NEYM Nominating Committee Report to Permanent Board

11 May 2024

Thank you for the prayers, care and support you all share with nominating. We are a vibrant team and recognize there are limitations on how much the 6 of us can accomplish. In order to do this work faithfully, we take time to check with those currently serving, cast a broad net, do reference checks, discernment and then follow up on concerns. There are currently 9 openings on the committee, so if you or someone you know is called to serve, please let Jeremiah Dickinson, Clerk of the Naming Committee know ([DACHA@comcast.net](mailto:DACHA@comcast.net)). We are eager to have more Friends join us in this exciting endeavor.

Several first readings were shared in the March Nominating report to PB. Please refer to the March report for the full committee description and details on each nomination. We held those nominations over for this meeting because there was not adequate time between the report and the actual PB meeting to receive your feedback. Since then, Nominating has received affirmations with no concerns for the following names which we bring now for:

### Second Reading

Finance Committee – Stefan Walker, to begin immediately, class 2027

Youth Ministries – Melissa Becca, Hartford Meeting, to begin immediately, class 2027

### First Reading\*

#### Interim Sessions Recording Clerk

**Current situation:** *This year we have a situation that calls us to find new ways to support someone who is called to serve. Susanna McCandless is serving her second year as Sessions Recording Clerk. Her family situation may require that she will not be available for the entire time during sessions in August 2024. Having a back-up Interim Recording Clerk would allow her to continue serving and care for her family as needed. The Interim Clerk would serve this year to support sessions recording.*

#### **Description of Service for the Sessions Recording Clerk:**

*The heart of the recording clerk's job is to write minutes which record the sense of the meeting on items considered in meetings for business at Yearly Meeting. First and foremost, this means recording decisions clearly and accurately, with enough background and detail to make the decision and its implications intelligible to a Friend not present — including Friends in the future. The recording clerk should be comfortable with word-processing and telecommunications (email and using the Web). This person should know Faith and Practice well, and be experienced with Friends' business practices; it is best that this person have some experience with Yearly Meeting committees, and have attended Yearly Meeting business sessions for several years.*

See the approved **Role Description** [here](#).

#### **Gifts and Skills hoped for in the Friend serving in this role:**

- Experience with recording in a meeting for business in Friends tradition

- *The ability to listen beyond the words that have been said, and to move from summarizing what individuals have shared to the crafting of a minute that conveys the sense of the body.*
- *The ability to work as part of a team, and openness to feedback and discussion as part of the minute writing process.*
- *Depth of knowledge of the current state of the Yearly Meeting (including recent business, and decisions that have been made) and a willingness to contribute to the clerk's discernment about the agenda for Annual Sessions.*
- *Willingness to communicate with the clerk and to ask for help (from the clerk or from the body) when needed while writing the minutes.*
- *Comfort with pausing to listen for how the Spirit is moving, and the ability to stay grounded when difficult issues arise, when Friends express strong emotions, or when things feel tense.*

**Interim Recording Clerk - Brian Drayton, Souhegan Friends Meeting (Preparative) to begin immediately**

Brian is a spiritually grounded and well-seasoned Friend, familiar with the yearly meeting at many levels, and an excellent former Sessions Recording Clerk.

Faithfully,  
 Jacqueline Stillwell  
 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 Hansen (Westerly), Chris Gant (Beacon Hill), Tim Lamm (Worcester), Martha Schwope (Wellesley)

\* The process for approving nominations by Permanent Board during the year is to send *first readings* in a 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.

## Useful Resources

### **New England Yearly Meeting's Interim Faith and Practice [2014 Interim edition] Chapters on:**

- Ministry and Counsel - especially subsections on:
  - Integrity of Worship
  - Safety in the Meeting Community
  - Welcome and Inclusion in Worship
  - Balance of Individual and Community Needs in the Meeting Community
  - Interpersonal Conflict
  - Addressing Tensions in the Meeting Community
  - Conflict Transformation in the Meeting Community
  - Corporate Discernment
  - Sections in Advices from John Woolman
  - Appendix 5F

### **Qualities needed by Friends engaging in the work of the Conflict Response Team as identified by Friends in worship sharing at Yearly Meeting Sessions 2023**

- Friends who hunger and thirst for righteousness.
- Friends who yield to the spirit of God.
- Friends who remember that grace comes with the work of our hands.
- Friends who are people of prayer, willing to pray out loud among us.
- Friends who inhabit liminal spaces, and whose identities place them on the margins, such that they can see dynamics that those of us in the center cannot.
- Friends who have some professional or other relevant training and experience in holding spaces for mediation, restorative justice, etc.
- Friends who have developed the gift and practical skills of holding space for transformation.
- Friends who are able to be present in a way that provides a level of safety and comfort in a difficult time.
- Friends who have the skill and grace to begin by listening, to honor and respect the pain, the words, the experiences of others.
- Friends who have done the work on themselves to be comfortable with situations of conflict, to have come to understand and manage their own trauma enough to be able to see others' need.
- Friends who bring a degree of humility and selflessness who are not tied to a particular outcome, with some experience in willingness to be wrong.
- Friends who understand the dynamics of power and privilege and how fear manifests as controlling behaviors among us.
- Friends who demonstrate the ability to understand how interpersonal conflict manifests values (what we believe, identity, systems and cultural patterns) and who are alert to the ways that the intersection of these informs how we move through conflict.
- Friends who are tuned in to somatic awareness -- ways of wisdom that are not just intellectual but connected to the body's way of knowing.

**Queries (2/10/24 Conflict Response Working Group Report to Permanent Board)**

- What is our common spiritual ground? How can we foster grounding in Spirit?
  - Are we actively building a spiritual community that supports truthfulness and forgiveness as spiritual disciplines?
  - What do we define as conflict?
  - How do we find a common ground to engage with each other to work through conflict? How do we test our personal understandings and identify where the disconnects are?
  - Do we know if there is cultural agreement about conflict among all partners who are engaged?
  - What do we mean by safety? How do we build safety and trust with each other? How do we call to mind for ourselves, and call each other into that larger place of safety that is available to accompany us, in which the Spirit holds all differences with love and care?
  - How do we balance the spiritual needs of the community with the spiritual needs of individuals?
  - How do our traditional practices of loving eldering fit into responding to conflict in the twenty-first century?
-



## **NEYM's Involvement in FWCC's *QuakerConnect***

### Informational Report to Permanent Board

Submitted by: NiaDwynwen Thomas, Program Director ([nia@neym.org](mailto:nia@neym.org))  
April 30, 2024

Good news! FWCC (the Friends World Committee for Consultation) Section of the Americas recently was awarded two large grants, totalling \$1,375,000) from the Lilly Endowment and Shoemaker Fund to launch a program called *QuakerConnect* over the next five years.

#### **What's *QuakerConnect*?**

*QuakerConnect* will be a program that helps Quaker meetings and churches to try new experiments and learn from each other how to connect the depths of our Quaker tradition and the breadth of our Quaker community with the living reality of our local context under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It's a cohort-based model where interested meetings apply to be part of the program.

#### **Why is this good news for New England Friends?**

Friends from New England have been part of the visioning conversations that lead to the development of *QuakerConnect*. The letter of support Yearly Meeting Secretary Noah Merrill and I submitted last June in support of FWCC's proposal explains some of the reasons why this program is exciting:

*"[QuakerConnect] identified much-needed gaps in providing meaningful faith formation that we alone do not have the resources to offer. Because our organization only encompasses the New England region, without wider partnership we lack the resources to provide Friends with a fuller sense of being part of "something bigger", a part of the global Quaker Movement and wider Church. And yet, we know that Friends who have had the opportunity to meaningfully engage with Friends in diverse cultural and theological contexts find a deepened and strengthened sense of this belonging.*

*By participating in FWCC's proposed project, "Quaker Connect", our Quaker meetings would have a special opportunity to be held, coached, and guided in their congregational renewal, but also to do so in a way that would meaningfully connect them to the diverse fellowship of Friends across the country and beyond.*

*Further, because conversations about the implications of changing cultural contexts, mission, the core of our faith tradition, and the need for shifting practices can be outside the comfort zones of much of our local congregational leadership, FWCC's proposed project's*

*promise to bring participants into a national cohort of others engaged in this challenging spiritual work, we strongly believe, would create the conditions for the kind of generative, supported discomfort that brings Growth..”*

In addition to this general enthusiasm and support, the approved proposals also identify me (Nia) as the Evaluation Lead for the program, designing the overall evaluation and developing the evaluation instruments in consultation with other program leaders. NEYM will make space for a small portion of my staff time to serve in this way, and, in exchange, FWCC will pay the Yearly Meeting at an hourly rate from their awarded funds. The income from this is expected to be approximately \$25,000 over the next five years.

**Want to learn more and participate?**

Is your meeting energized and led towards renewal-focused initiatives? If so, you may wish to read more about QuakerConnect on the webpage here:

<https://fwccamericas.org/connections/quaker-connect.shtml>. On that webpage, you can also subscribe to receive program updates (like when applications will be accepted) and attend the information session on May 7th. If you/your meeting are considering this program, I would also love to speak with you. I would love to see NEYM meetings be able to take full advantage of this very promising program.

To: Salem Quarterly Meeting and NEYM Permanent Board

From: Wellesley Friends Meeting, Anne Nydam, Clerk

RE: Statement on Gaza, Israel, and the West Bank by Wellesley Friends (Quaker) Meeting

May 11, 2024

Statement on Gaza, Israel, and the West Bank by Wellesley Friends (Quaker)  
Meeting

Eleventh Month 19, 2023

*“There is a Spirit that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty.”*

James Nayler, 17th century Quaker

Wellesley Friends are deeply grieved by the ongoing tragedy in Gaza, Israel, and the West Bank. We bear witness to the suffering, and urgently call for a ceasefire, ending the siege of Gaza, and the release of all people held as hostages.

As an historic peace church we envision a world where our emphasis is on a God of Love who instructs us to love one another, including those who do us ill. We know that violence begets more violence. We reject as false the mythology of “redemptive violence”, that “good violence” will somehow end “bad violence”.

We urge our nation to find a policy that promotes the well-being of all.

**Durham Friends Meeting**  
**Memorial Minute for Helen Cornelia Pratt Clarkson**  
**August 21, 1925- July 16, 2022**

Helen is especially remembered for her warm, loving, generous spirit. She had deep roots in our Meeting, being in the 4<sup>th</sup> generation of her family to be part of us. She grew up not far from the meetinghouse, and remembered going to the auction where the parsonage was purchased in 1938.

During college she met Vernon Albert Clarkson and they were married on August 2, 1947, at Durham Friends Meeting.

After Helen retired from a career in various locations as a social worker, professor of sociology, and Dean of Admissions, Helen and Vernon moved back to Maine. They did travel to Arizona for winters, but were active at our Meeting when here. Helen was especially active in the Woman's Society and had the gift of hospitality. We loved meeting at her home by the ocean in Freeport.

Helen was a creative, prolific quilter, who made hundreds of quilts for babies and children. She organized others to make quilts also.

Helen was born on August 21, 1925, in Somerville, MA, the oldest child of Albert Pratt and Marion Cornelia Pratt (Dwelley). She attended Bates College in Lewiston, ME, graduating in 1946 with a Bachelor of Science degree in sociology. Helen continued her studies at Washington State University, where she met her husband-to-be on the first day, and graduated in 1947 with a Master's degree in sociology. Helen was predeceased by her husband Vernon, sister Katharine, and grandson Lee Vernon Clarkson. She is survived by her three children- Bruce, Robert, and Joyce, four grandchildren, and four great grandchildren.

Approved at Durham Friends Monthly Meeting April 21, 2024  
Falmouth Quarter , 4/27/24

Durham Monthly Meeting of Friends Memorial Minute for  
**CHARLOTTE ANNE CURTIS**  
**June 15, 1941- Oct. 14, 2022**

We remember Charlotte Anne (Char) with warmth and smiles. She loved Durham Meeting, uplifted and supported by knowing her family had been part of the meeting community for generations, which helped her feel close to God. She was especially welcoming to new attenders and paid attention to everyone's needs.

Char brought messages to our worship services, which were serious but also full of humor. She could make us laugh and also feel deeply about an issue or problem. Char reminded us to always leave something better than when we found it. She was humble, willing to share her human failings. She served as volunteer custodian for years and was a Trustee. She helped with Meeting and Woman's Society events.

Char loved the desert southwest and traveled there many times. She said her perfect world would be if Durham Meeting would move there. She was dedicated to family, friends, and her faithful companion dog Annie. She loved horses and shared her horse adventures with us. She also was an adept clog dancer, entertaining us at Meeting talent shows with this skill.

Her depth of spirit, infectious laughter and sincere compassion were evidence of her spiritual connection

Durham Meeting, March 17 2024

Falmouth Quarter, April 27, 2024

Mattapoisett Friends Meeting  
Memorial Minute for our Friend James Dexter

James Dexter was born in Mattapoisett in 1944. Around the age of nine, he and his cousins started attending meeting in Mattapoisett, shepherded by a neighbor. He was a faithful member until his death in September of 2023.

When James was a youngster, there was a divider between the men's and women's sections (men on the right, women on the left), and a pot belly stove that someone would have gotten fired up earlier in the morning on cold days. James used to sit with the men and hear the sermon before leaving for first day school. He remembered playing in a sandbox and he remembered the two outhouses that were donated to the Boy Scouts once the meeting got indoor plumbing. When James was old enough, he and his cousins walked to meeting on their own. If they got there early, they would walk on the stone wall that surrounds the property. He and his wife Dana got married in the meeting house in 1992.

For years and years, James took it upon himself to make sure the building and grounds were well taken care of. Toward the end of his life, Friends had to plead with him not to mow the lawn, as that kind of exertion was against doctor's orders. He told us he would rather die mowing the meeting house lawn than sit at home. We loved James and we miss him. It is fitting that the pink granite stone that will mark his buried ashes in the meeting cemetery comes from the original foundation of the meeting house. It says: A Friend to Everyone.

Approved by Mattapoisett Friends on January 28, 2024

**Memorial Minute for Lynn Johnson**  
**Hartford Monthly Meeting**  
**Revised-April 21, 2024**  
**Lessons from the Holy**

*We are never alone.*

*We are one with all creation.*

*Heaven is true.*

*We are loved for who we are.*

*Love is the heart of our being.*

*Seen and unseen, the beloved community  
surrounds us.*

*- From Holy Adventure: A Spiritual Memoir*

By Lynn Johnson

Lynn Johnson lived her life in pursuit of the Holy. Throughout her daily travels she spread messages regarding the unity of all of creation and the power of love to heal our wounds. Though challenged by multiple sclerosis from her thirties until her death at seventy-five, Lynn always exhibited a radiant smile reflecting her steadfast belief that God's Light shines within us all.

Lynn was born in Cincinnati in January, 1949. Due to her father's employment, her family moved around quite a bit; consequently, she considered Louisville, KY, her grandparent's permanent residence, as her hometown; always maintaining a love of Louisville, Churchill Downs and the Kentucky Derby.

Lynn attended Ohio Wesleyan University as an undergraduate theater major, before moving to Boston with her first husband, Tom Tritton, when he began graduate school. Their daughter, Lara and Lara's three children (Anna, Lilli and Ava) became central joys of Lynn's life. In Boston, while attending Cambridge Meeting, Lynn became a "convinced" Friend. She subsequently became clerk of New Haven Friends Meeting, as well as clerk of Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting. Later, at Hartford Monthly Meeting, Lynn had a profound impact on the religious education program. As reported by current HMM Religious Education clerk, Melissa Becce:

*Lynn cared deeply for the children and families of Hartford Meeting. She served as Clerk of Religious Education for many years, sharing her Quaker faith, care for the Earth, and heart for the community with dozens of HMM children. With her leadership, First Day School raised money for Knox Inc. and planted trees, vegetables, and flowers on the Meetinghouse grounds. She organized children and families to participate in the Walk Against Hunger as the Friends for Food team, gather supplies for the Hands on Hartford Backpack Nutrition Program, and collect for Trick or Treat for UNICEF. She oversaw the Christmas pageant and Easter celebration each year, involving Friends of all ages in the preparations.*

Lynn also shared her love of music with Hartford Friends. Whether leading singing during holiday celebrations or Meeting retreats; Lynn brought great joy to songs. Her enthusiasm was infectious.

Lynn travelled widely in Quaker service. In the late 1980's, she journeyed with New England Friends, Jonathan Vogel Borne and Marian Baker, to Guatemala to attend an international Friends Conference on the *Message of Quakers for the World*, arranged by Evangelical Friends International Alliance. In addition to learning more about Evangelical Friends and sharing about themselves, they travelled into the dump of Guatemala City where a young Guatemalan Friends pastor was helping people - living in the dump - by teaching them to collect parts of discarded shoes in order to cobble together inexpensive shoes to sell. Lynn never forgot such instances of compassion.

Also in the late 1980's, Lynn and her husband, Bruce Martin, toured the Soviet Union, during its *glasnost* (openness) period as informal Quaker peace ambassadors. In her spiritual memoir, *Holy Adventure*, Lynn describes how she and Bruce broke away from their scheduled activities, set by the Soviet Peace Committee, to worship among everyday Soviet people in a Russian Orthodox church. This was one of the great, sacred experiences of her life.

Lynn's professional life achieved tremendous fulfillment once she completed her master's degree in Counseling Psychology from Southern Connecticut State University. As a skilled pastoral counselor and creative arts therapist, Lynn helped countless individuals over the years, through individual and group therapy sessions, as well as through the addiction counseling classes that she taught at Saint Joseph College (now the University of Saint Joseph). Much of her good work was accomplished through the nonprofit Center for Serenity, which she founded and directed for twenty years.

Lynn subsequently transitioned into tireless volunteer efforts promoting environmental healing; working on the board of the Interreligious Eco Justice Network, chairing the Green Committee of the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association (AHNA), and striving with others to transform her area of the city of Hartford into a garden- and tree-filled community. She wrote the monthly "*Earthkeepers Corner*" for IREJN's churches, synagogues and mosques, and served as the Program Director of the Environmental Action Committee of Hartford's Immanuel Congregational Church (Lynn's second spiritual home in the Hartford Region.) There she advised the "Eco Kids", middle and high school youth in their efforts to save the Earth; all while maintaining her commitment to Hartford Meeting's Carbon Tax Witness group.

As Lynn's MS progressed, increasingly limiting her mobility, she maintained all of these commitments, and more, without complaint; only requesting our prayers as her conditions worsened. She insisted that she not go to the hospital, and blessedly, as she wished, she died at home, supported by her loving caregivers. Lynn's "Light" continues to shine in all those she touched throughout her life.

Submitted by Donn Weinholtz (with assistance from Melissa Becce and Marian Baker.)





# FRESH POND MONTHLY MEETING

OF THE

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)

5 CADBURY ROAD, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02140

## Memorial Minute

### Nancy Lloyd Shippen

Nancy Lloyd Shippen was a steadfast gardener of the nascent. She nurtured her family, her dyslexic grade school students, the men she served in prisons, and the seeds of peace around the world. Where others might see rocky soil, Nancy saw fertile ground and tended it fearlessly.

Nancy died peacefully on January 20, 2022, from light chain amyloidosis, which had affected her heart. She succumbed after a 2-year struggle which deeply affected her freedom and independence.

She was born in Washington, D.C., on April 5, 1949. She grew up in Old Greenwich, Connecticut, the middle of three daughters of Natalie Brooks Sears Shippen and Edward Shippen.

She attended Greenwich's elementary and middle schools, and went to high school and graduated from Rosemary Hall, where she was active in drama and gymnastics.

As a girl she had many interests, including ballet, choral music, youth theater, and horses. She loved animals. She always had a dog, a cat, or sometimes, both. She was frequently involved in a craft, be it needlepoint, making mobiles, macrame, or origami.

She graduated from Goucher College, after majoring in psychology and child development. After graduation she spent a year in Europe, working for and living with the Sisters of St Joseph at their school in Edinburgh. During this time she searched for a spiritual home, and found her life's home in the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), which she joined upon her return to the US.

Her childhood struggles with dyslexia, at a time when it was little understood, left a lifelong imprint. She was imbued with an interest in and empathy for children with learning disabilities. After teaching in private schools and at the St Anne's School in Arlington, Massachusetts, for several years, she obtained a master's degree in special education from Lesley University, in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

While at St Anne's, she met her husband William (Bill)How, with whom she shared an attraction to the wilderness, folk music, folk dancing, and social justice. They were married at Cambridge Friends Meeting, Cambridge, MA., on August 7, 1982.

Nancy and Bill settled in Acton, MA, and there raised their two children, Bharat Seth and Pauravi Brooks. Nancy and Bill, with their children, were founding members of Fresh Pond Meeting in January, 1989, and were faithful attenders and servants of the meeting until both of their deaths. (Bill preceded Nancy in death in June, 2009.)

Nancy taught literacy, particularly to children with difficulties reading, in the towns surrounding Acton while her children were growing up. In the early 2000s, she began to be "disturbed" by a profound leading to love her neighbors. The family lived at the end of a cul-de-sac with many neighbors with children, which provided her kids with street playmates for years. However, the leading did not leave her.

After driving past the Concord prison daily for years, Nancy had a profound realization that the inmates there were her neighbors. This led to her founding the 501c3 which she entitled "Our Prison

Neighbors”. The drive to growing the organization, and doing its work-- spending time with incarcerated people--eventually led her to leave teaching children. She sought and received a support committee from Fresh Pond Meeting. She found and used the tenets of the Quaker-founded Alternative to Violence Program as the backbone of her work. She organized weekends with “outside” volunteers participating with those “inside” to learn and unlearn the emotions and experiences underlying violent behavior. She organized book discussion groups on spiritual and personal growth and taught basic personal finance in prisons. She was always recruiting and extolling the benefits of extending oneself to people whose lives had been intertwined with trauma, and landed in prison.

Nancy was ultimately involved with the Alternatives to Violence Program at the executive level nationally. After losing Bill to brain cancer in 2009, Nancy became further involved internationally. She reveled in spending time with people from all sorts of cultures, doing healing work in prisons and elsewhere. She traveled several countries including Kenya, Guatemala, and Nepal. Her preferred professional title, when asked, was Professional Peace Maker.

Nancy is survived by her son, Bharat Seth Shippen-How, his wife Sarah Shippen-How, and their sons Cobi William Shippen-How and Kabir James Shippen-How, her daughter Pauravi Brooks Shippen-How, her older sister Suzanne Zimmermann and her younger sister Nina Brooks Shippen. She is also survived by numerous nieces and nephews and their children, with whom she remained influentially involved as they grew and reached adulthood.

Nancy's celebration of life was held on June 18, 2022, at Framingham Friends Meeting in Framingham, MA. It was a rich event, with messages from many, including a former inmate, testifying to her positive effect on the trajectory of their lives. We cherish the breadth of her gifts to us.

## MARGARET WENTWORTH Memorial Minute

November 2, 1934 - November 2, 2022

Margaret was a dear Friend and friend who is missed. She was a life-long member of Durham Monthly Meeting of Friends and a reliable presence at Meeting activities. She was a spiritual leader, who mentored and taught others, including clerks and pastors. She knew how to pray and constantly prayed for individuals, the Meeting, and wider concerns. She encouraged us all to pray for the same every day.

Margaret reached out to people within and outside of Meeting activities. She was a great listener; even teenagers felt comfortable sharing with her. She was a teacher and librarian, and brought skills and knowledge from those vocations, putting life and character into the children's stories she told and captivating young and old alike. She taught Sunday School, helped organize and teach Vacation Bible School, and was a major force in organizing our Meeting library. She loved to sing and was in our choir whenever the choir was active.

Margaret was good-humored and optimistic. When difficult decisions had to be made in Monthly Meetings, people felt more willing to try new ways with her encouragement. Margaret served Durham Friends Meeting in many capacities, including being on the Library, Christian Education, and Nominating Committees, on Ministry and Counsel, and as a Trustee. She served for many years as our representative on the board of the Lisbon Area Christian Outreach, especially active in supporting their food pantry. For the Woman's Society, she organized our card ministry as well as a giant book sale, with proceeds going to support our own library. She kept up-to-date on the projects and programs of world-wide Friends organizations, especially Friends United Meeting, and brought prayer requests for many of those programs and workers.

Margaret attended Woodbrooke College in Birmingham, England, for a year, and this broadened her perspective of Friends beliefs and practices world-wide. She was active with Falmouth Quarterly Meeting, serving as its clerk for a time. She served the wider world of Friends, including as a cook at China Camp (now Friends Camp in China, Maine), and serving on various New England Yearly Meeting committees, as well as being its Presiding Clerk for several years.

Margaret's deep faith, generosity of spirit, and willingness to share her time and gifts remain an inspiration to all.

Margaret was born in Durham, Maine, and earned a Masters degree at Gorham State Teacher's College. She taught in local schools and was a librarian in Lewiston. She served the wider community by serving on the Durham Select Board and volunteering in many ways. Margaret is survived by her brother James Wentworth (Vera) of Ashburn, Virginia, and her niece Alexandra Wentworth, also of Ashburn. Margaret was predeceased by her parents, Horace and Lida Wentworth.

Durham Meeting, 2/18/24

Falmouth Quarter 4/27/24

Durham Monthly Meeting of Friends: Susan Wood Memorial Minute

**Susan Jane McIntire Wood**  
**March 4, 1944-September 2, 2022**

As we reflect on the life of our friend and Friend Sue Wood, we remember her love and care for us. Her peaceful presence among us was characterized by her sweetness, humility, and depth of spirit. She gave generously of her gift for music, both in playing the piano and singing. She was patient playing and replaying parts as choir members learned new pieces, and she played with beauty and style. Sometimes she would adjust the pace of a hymn so that it became a prayer as well as song.

We loved to hear her bubbly giggle and appreciated her zingy wit and humor. She was often quiet, but when she spoke she could be very firm. Her incisive views were often shared in monthly meetings, as she might have a different perspective from others that had not been brought out. She served as co-clerk of the Meeting for a time and always held the Meeting in prayer.

Sue had friendships that were long lasting and deep. When she first came to Durham Meeting, in many ways it was still much like it had been for two hundred years. She found her way to becoming part of the community and then, as the meeting changed, she helped steady the change.

Sue was active on the Music Committee and with the Woman's Society. We always enjoyed meeting at her home, a dairy farm on Lunt Road where we were greeted by a variety of animals. She demonstrated quiet strength when suffering from cancer.

Sue's peaceful presence is missed by everyone who knew her.

Sue's parents were Ruth and Wilbur McIntire and she grew up in New Philadelphia, Ohio. She graduated from the University of Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, then worked as a school chorus director. After moving to Maine, she met and married Richard Wood in 1978. Sue was busy raising their sons and working at the Brunswick Veterinary Clinic. The family moved to New York in 1991, where they operated a dairy farm, and Sue played piano at several churches, becoming the regular organist at one. They returned to Maine in 2002. She was predeceased by her husband, Richard Wood, and is survived by their sons Isaac and Reeve Wood (wife Hannah Burroughs) and three grandsons.

Durham Meeting, March 17, 2024

Falmouth Quarter, April 27, 2024