

NEYM's Involvement in FWCC's *QuakerConnect*

Informational Report to Permanent Board

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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.