

Advance Documents — 2024 New England Yearly Meeting

Let us faithfully tend the seed

Friends,

Let us faithfully tend the seed!

Wherever the starting point for your journey, or your home base from which you are connecting, I invite us all to gather once again from across Turtle Island and beyond for our annual Yearly Meeting Sessions. This time together comes amidst a world of swirling currents of concern where many of us feel overwhelmed, confused, and fragile. In the midst of that turbulence, may we create together a space this week, through our faith, love, and hope, where divine Light shines bright within and among us. May we remind ourselves of that which is forever and essential and life giving. That eternal seed.

Give over thine own willing, give over thine own running, give over thine own desiring, to know or to be anything, and sink down to the seed, which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in thee, and be in thee, and breathe in thee, and act in thee, and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that, and loves and owns that and will lead it to the inheritance of Life, which is its portion.

Isaac Pennington's mystical imagery published more than 300 years ago holds great import. It offers inspiration, solace, and guidance for our own time. His metaphor speaks to our current condition and the need to return in our personal and corporate devotion to that which is essential in Friends' practice of our faith. Our theme this year, drawn from his words, is a call to renounce the worldly self and to return to foundations—the fundamental core of our being—that may guide us in the ways of being together and show the path for seeking divine assistance. Reaffirming trust in the power of the stillness, our gathered ring of light, the still small voice that will lead us, if we listen, to deeper understanding and faithful discernment, connecting us to that which is truly vital.

These Advance Documents contain reports from the committees, boards, representatives, and staff sharing the good work that they have done. The reports provide much of the context for the business that is before us this week; they deserve close attention. The agenda is full. We will consider the Yearly Meeting budget for the fiscal year 2025 and hear a report on the current financial health of our Yearly Meeting. We will hear from the Legacy Gift Fund Committee on the experience of ten years of supporting ministry in the Yearly Meeting. We will hear about new initiatives for fundraising. The Faith and Practice Revision Committee is bringing a draft introductory chapter of the new *Faith and Practice* for our consideration. The Quaker Indian Board Schools Research Group is presenting a report of work in progress and a request to be renewed in their charge. The Sessions Visioning group will introduce a broadly consultative process for determining the model of future Yearly Meeting gatherings. There will be presentation of minutes from monthly meetings and quarters concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and an invitation for local meetings to engage with this issue. These are some highlights of the matters that call for our discernment.

So, dear Friends,

Though the storms that buffet us are real, the inexhaustible love and care of Spirit is planted deep within us.

In order to do our work in disciplined and Spirit-led manner, Friends, let us return to the seed!

Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk

Table of Contents

2024 Sessions Coordinators, Officers, Speakers and YM Staff	5
2024 Youth Program Coordinators and Staff	5
Elders serving to support ministry at Sessions this year	6
Guide to Business at Yearly Meeting Sessions	6
2024 Sessions Business Agenda	8
Unity Agenda	9
2024 Sessions Business Materials for Gathered Discernment	9
Treasurer’s Report	9
Budget Commentary	10
Unity Agenda Materials	11
Yearly Meeting Nominating Report.....	13
Bank Resolutions.....	13
Minute to Authorize Edits and Corrections.....	14
Progress Report and Recommendations to Annual Sessions on Yearly Meeting Support for Ministry, Eldership, and Spiritual Life of Local Meetings	14
Faith and Practice Revision Committee	17
Quaker Indian Boarding School Research Group Recommendations	17
2024 Legacy Gift Review Committee Report and Recommendations	18
Israel-Palestine Resource Group	22
Plan: Sessions Visioning 2025+	22
Budget	29
Nominating Slate	32
Staff Reports	36
Secretary	36
ARCH Coordinator	36
Children and Family Ministries Coordinator	36
Events Coordinator	37
Friends Camp Director	37
Office Manager	38
Program Director	38
Teen and Outreach Ministries Coordinator	40
Committee and Board Reports	41
Permanent Board	41
Archives & Historical Records	41
Coordinating and Advisory	42
Faith & Practice Revision	43
Finance	43
Legacy Gift	43
Meeting Accompaniment Group	44
Ministry & Counsel	45
Moses Brown School Report	45
Nominating	46
Sessions	46
Reports of Representatives to Other Quaker Organizations	47
American Friends Service Committee	47
Friends Committee on National Legislation	47
Friends Peace Teams	47
Friends General Conference	48

**DRAFT Schedule (check the *Yearly Meeting News* daily for last-minute changes)
2024 Annual Sessions – Let us faithfully tend the Seed**

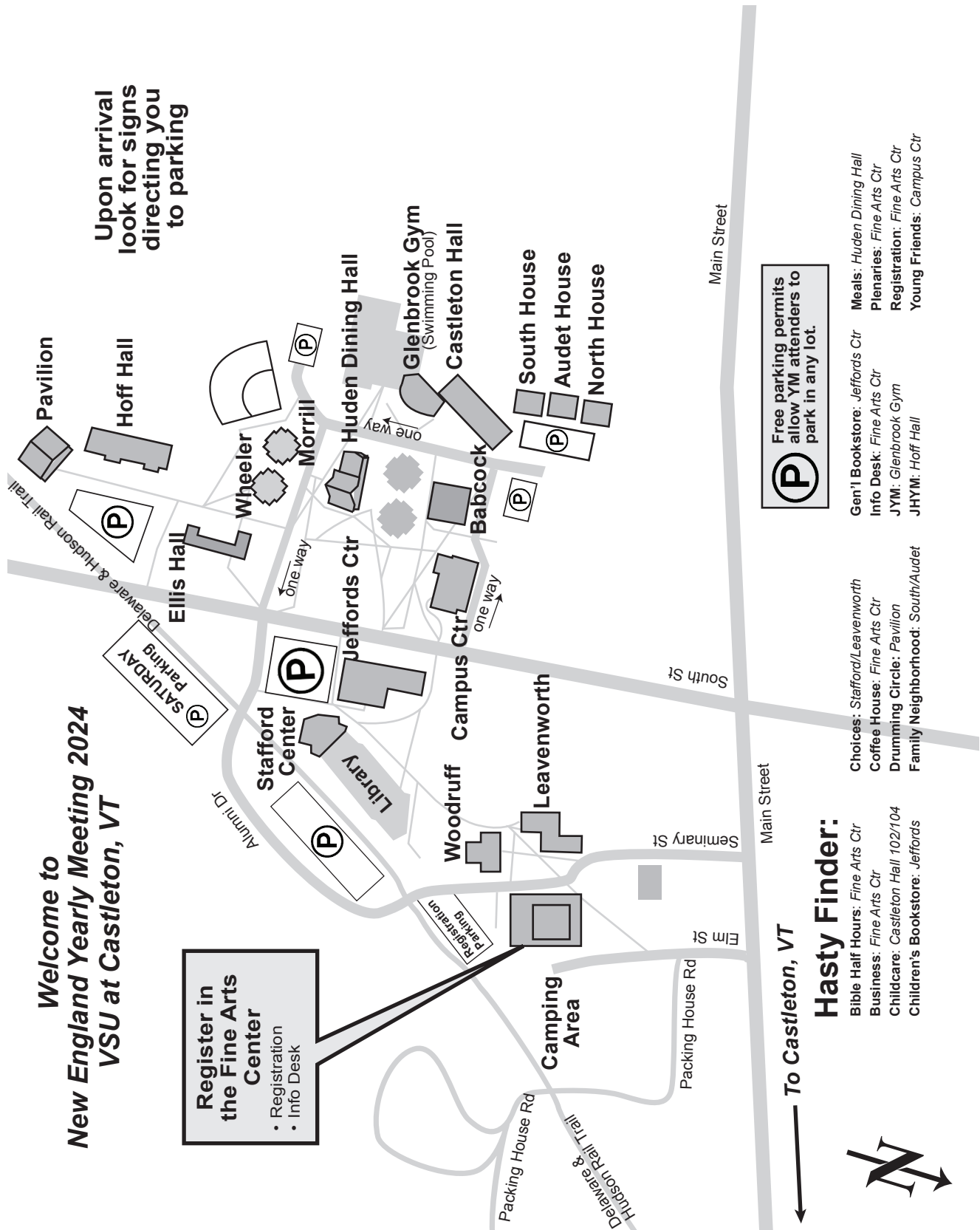
	Friday 8/2	Saturday 8/3	Sunday 8/4	Monday 8/5	Tuesday 8/6	Wednesday 8/7
6:30 to noon				6:30–7 Early Morning Worship 6:45–8:45 Breakfast		
	8:00–11:00 Check-in	9:00 All-Ages Worship*	8:30 Bible Half Hour*	8:30 Bible Half Hour*	8:30 Bible Half Hour*	8:30 Bible Half Hour*
	9:00 Bible Half Hour*	10:30 Bible Half Hour*	9:15–11:15 Meeting for Business*	9:15–11:15 Meeting for Business*	9:15–11:15 Meeting for Business*	9:15 Meeting for Business*
	10:00–11:30 Choices ¹	10:30–noon Check-in				10:15 Final closing, youth epistles, and celebration*
			11:15–1:30 Lunch			
Noon to 3:00		12:45 Lyman Fund Celebration	1:15 Plenary*	1:15–2:45 Choices	1:15–2:45 Choices	All dorms must be vacated by 1 p.m.
		1:00–4:00 Check-in				
		1:45 Opening Celebration*				
3:00 to 7:00	3:00–5:30 Check-in	3:00–5:00 Meeting for Business*	3:00–5:00 Meeting for Business*	3:00–5:00 Meeting for Business*	3:00–5:00 Meeting for Business*	
			4:45–6:45 Dinner			
		6:00–6:20 Vespers		6:00–6:45 Vespers	6:00–6:45 Vespers	
		6:30–8:00 Memorial Meeting*			6:00–7:00 FWCC worship	
7:00 to 10:00	7:00–10:00 Check-in 7:00 Welcome activities	7:00–10:00 Check-in	7:00 Meeting for Business*	7:00 Drumming Circle Choices	7:00 Coffee House* Choices	

Items marked with * will be hybrid events held in the Casella Theater (Fine Arts Center). Locations of other events will be posted in the *Yearly Meeting News*.

¹Choices is a period for workshops and reflection groups at Sessions. These 90-minute offerings provide an opportunity for Friends to explore our Quaker faith and make meaningful connections.

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

Campus Map



2024 Sessions Coordinators, Officers, Speakers and YM Staff

Accounts Manager	Frederick Martin*
Bible Half Hour Speaker	Genna Ulrich
Children & Family Ministries Coordinator	Kara Price*
Clerks	Rebecca Leuchak (presiding), Megan Jensen and Susannah McCandless (recording), Michelle Wright (reading)
Covid Safety Coordinator	Ginny Kristl
Events Coordinator	Elizabeth Hacala*
Housing Coordinator	Kristin Wilson
Office Manager	Sara Hubner*
Office Assistant	Maille Wooten
Pastoral Care Team Leader	Abigail Matchette
Plenary Musician	Toussaint the Liberator
Plenary Speakers	Lloyd Lee Wilson
Registrar	Martha Hinshaw Sheldon
Sessions Committee Clerk	Phillip Veatch
Tech Team Coordinator	David Coletta
Yearly Meeting Treasurer	Marian Dalton
Worship Coordinator	Kristina Keefe-Perry
Yearly Meeting News Editor	Liz Yeats
Yearly Meeting Secretary	Noah Merrill*

* = YM Staff

2024 Youth Program Coordinators and Staff

Child Care

Coord: Rainer Humphries

Abigail Adams
 Carol Baker
 Brooke Burkett
 Jerry Carson
 Peter Colby
 Pamela Drouin
 Pat Hall
 Jennifer Hogue
 Mary Lee Morrison

Junior Yearly Meeting

Coord: Kenzie Burpee

Annie Bingham
 Issac Bingham
 Luke Coletta
 Mary Chenille
 Rebecca Edwards
 Tyler Green
 Craig Jensen
 Sophie Jones
 Leah Kelley

Joli Reynolds
 Martha Schwope
 Emily Smith
 Elizabeth Szanton

Junior High Yearly Meeting

Coord: Emily Edwards
 Buddy Baker-Smith
 Dave Baxter
 Merritt Bussiere-Nichols
 Chris Fitze
 Amy Greene
 Chloe Grubbs-Saleem
 Brennon Schifman
 Ari Schifman

Young Friends

Coord: Drew Chasse
 Mosie Burke
 Isaiah Grace
 Emma Kay
 Laura Sawyer
 Izzy Thorndike

Elders serving to support ministry at Sessions this year

In Friends tradition, an Elder supports, encourages, and challenges the minister and helps them to be faithful. During preparation and during our week together, these individuals are holding and grounding specific Friends in their work and ministry.

Elders for Noah Merrill: Viv Woodland, John Leppman, Julie Forsythe, Sadie Forsythe, and Sarah Gant

Elders for Rebecca Leuchak: Deana Chase, Mark Conley, and Evan McManamy

Elders for Genna Ulrich: Anne Pomeroy, Fritz Weiss, Jennie Isbell Shinn, and Maggie Fiori

Elders for Lloyd Lee Wilson: Mark Wutka

Guide to Business at Yearly Meeting Sessions

NEYM Sessions are larger than our other experiences of discernment, and again we will be hybrid, so a few reminders may help us proceed gracefully.

We encourage Friends who are joining us online to become familiar with Zoom before Sessions; you can find an instruction video on the Yearly Meeting website at <https://neym.org/zoom-how-tos>.

The physical room and the Zoom “room” will open for worship about 15 minutes early. Friends are asked to enter silently, to confirm that you are muted if you are on Zoom, and to sit in worship with the Friends gathered.

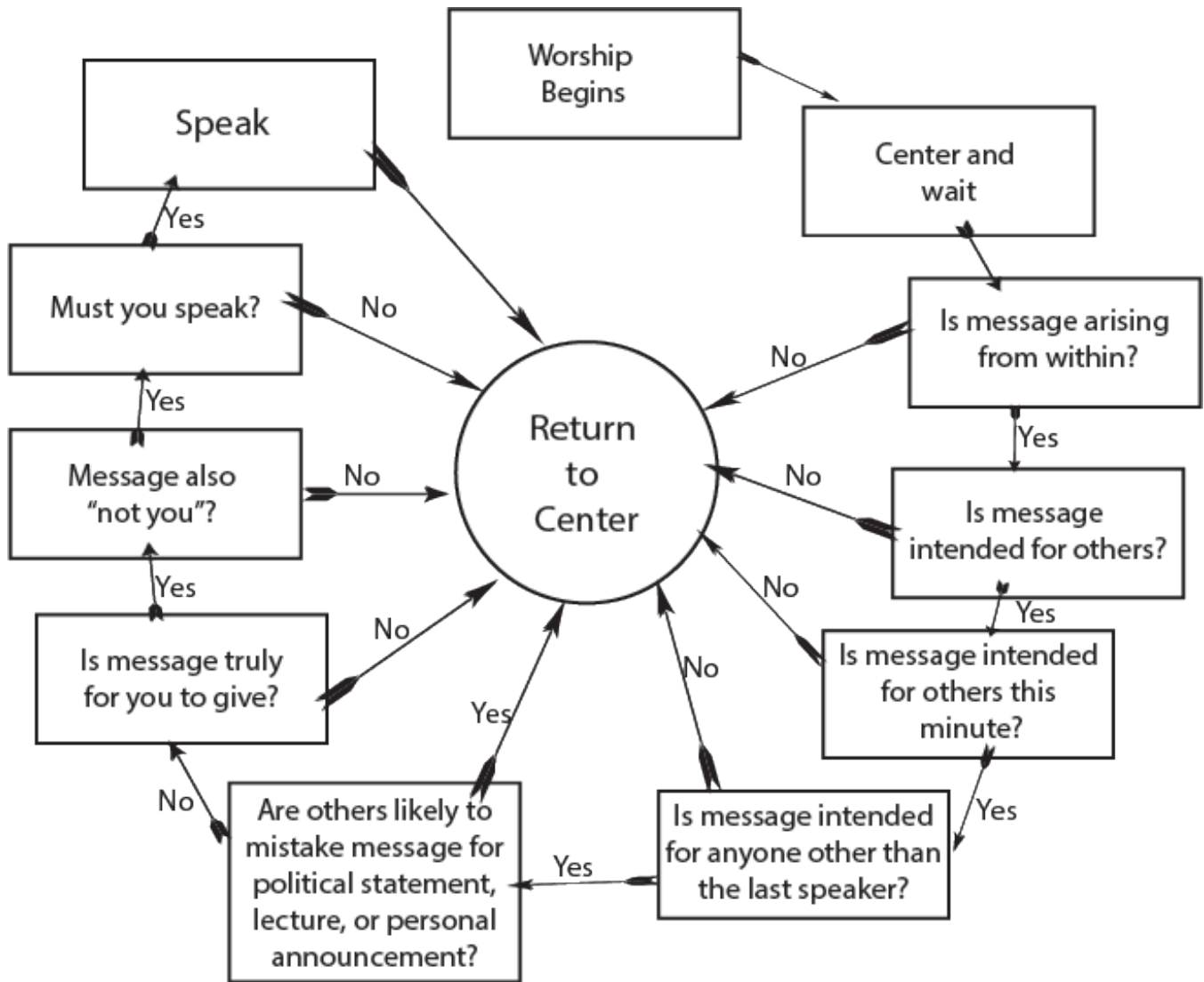
Worship with a concern for business:

- The Spirit may speak through a less familiar voice if our oft-heard Friends refrain from the urge to speak too quickly.
- The order of business items is subject to change, depending on the Holy Spirit and Friends’ self-discipline.
- We seek not compromise nor a grumbling “well, OK,” but clarity on what God calls us to do here and now, knowing that we may be led later to some further action, understanding, and love.
- Please look for text being presented. If it was ready by press time, look in these Advance Documents. Otherwise, it will be displayed on screen
- The doors to the physical room will be closed to late-comers for 5 to 10 minutes while Friends settle into worship. Please wait quietly outside the plenary room. Please silence your cellphone. If you are on Zoom, please silence your cellphone, landline, and any other potential disruptions.
- For those joining worship with a concern for business in person:
 - Enter quietly!
 - Sit toward the front and center of the hall.
 - Leave room on the ends of the rows for late arrivals.
 - Reserve the wheelchair-accessible space for those who need it.

During worship with a concern for business:

- Stand (or raise your hand high) to be recognized. Use “Raise Hand” in Zoom (on the Reactions menu) to be recognized (on the phone, press *9).
- Remember that the clerk does not always call on people in the order in which their hands appeared.
- When the clerk has called on you, wait for the wireless microphone to come to you. For those on Zoom, unmute yourself (on the phone, *6).
- Say your name and meeting.
- Speak slowly and briefly, limiting your remarks to the question at hand.
- For those in person, please be seated while someone else is speaking. For those on Zoom, consider lowering your hand—the person speaking may address your concern.

- Ordinarily a person should speak only once to an item of business, unless to answer a direct question or to signal a significant change of heart.
- If you are a Friend who does not speak easily, be bold if called. Your leading may be the way the Spirit has chosen to speak to us.
- Please do not try to argue the clerks (or anyone else) into your position.
- While the clerks are trying to formulate a minute, help by holding them in prayer. Remember that the minute will rarely be worded precisely as you would have said it.



2024 Sessions Business Agenda

Saturday afternoon, August 3

3:00–5:00 p.m.

- Preparation for the Business of these Sessions
- Welcome/Introductions
- Housekeeping
- Message on our theme, Jay O'Hara
- Reflection on Spiritual Condition, from the Clerk of Ministry & Counsel
- Treasurer's Report
- Finance Committee Report
- "Generations Together" Invitation
- Budget Presentation
- Preview of the Unity Agenda

Sunday Afternoon

3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

- Housekeeping
- Program Reflection
- Permanent Board Report
- Worship on the theme: Let Us Faithfully Tend the Seed

Sunday Evening

7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

- Yearly Meeting Secretary Report to Sessions
- Nominating Committee
- Ministry & Spiritual Life: Report & Recommendations
- Faith and Practice: Introduction

Monday Morning

9:15 to 11:15 a.m.

- Staff Reflection
- Quaker Indigenous Boarding School Research Group
- Earthcare Ministries

Monday Afternoon

3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

- Staff Reflections
- Legacy Gift Report
- Legacy Gift Ten Year Review
- Minutes from Meetings on Israel Palestine
- Unity Agenda Approval

Tuesday Morning

9:15 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.

- Staff Reflection
- Sessions Visioning
- Development Update
- Budget for Approval

Tuesday Afternoon

3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

- Cuba Greetings
- Ministry Reflection: Marian Baker
- Faith and Practice: Introduction for Preliminary Approval
- Noticing Patterns
- Reports from Visitors to Youth Programs
- Epistle First Reading

Wednesday 9:15 to 10:15 a.m.

- Report on Choices/Reflection Groups
- Report on Worship
- Reflection by Events Coordinator on Sessions 2024
- Welcome in children and youth for Closing Celebration

Unity Agenda

The items on the Unity Agenda are proposed for consideration on Monday afternoon. Before then, Friends are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Unity Agenda, to read the information pertaining to each item, and to consult with the Friends named for each matter, if need be. General questions can be brought to the presiding clerk, Rebecca Leuchak. If there are significant concerns that remain, items can be removed from the Unity Agenda for further corporate discernment earlier in the week.

Decisions and Actions Concerning...	See	Friends Available for Consultation
Accepting staff reports	page 36	Staff
Accepting board, committee, working & resource groups, and representative reports	page 41	Report authors
Accepting Memorial Minutes	booklet	Carl Williams, Ministry & Counsel clerk
Accepting the Approved Charge and Structure for the Yearly Meeting Conflict-Response Team	page 11	Susan Davies, Permanent Board clerk
Approving nominations from YM Nominating Committee	page 32	Jackie Stillwell, Nominating clerk
Approving bank resolutions	page 13	Scot Drysdale, Finance clerk
Approving clerks' authorization to make edits and corrections	page 9	Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk

2024 Sessions Business Materials for Gathered Discernment

Treasurer's Report

For the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, NEYM approved an operational budget for the general fund which estimated a surplus of \$1,872, essentially a balanced budget. This was only possible by putting a hold on all contributions to "Other Organizations" (e.g. FGC, FUM, AFSC, FCNL). These organizations mean a lot to members of NEYM, so Sessions approved a "contingency" clause, providing that *if* we were to meet the FY24 budget, 75% of any surplus would be used to make these donations happen. As I write this (in mid-June) we still need to raise significant funds in order to end the year with a surplus.

You may remember that our FY22 was a difficult year financially for a variety of reasons, not least of which was the lingering effects of Covid. The end result of that year was a reduction in our operational reserves to approximately 13% of the following year's budget, about half of that suggested by Yearly Meeting's policy. FY23 was better in some ways—the value of our pooled funds increased again, attendance at Sessions improved, a ground swell of support at Sessions contributed significantly to our budgeted income—but we still had an operational deficit of some \$35,000, and ended the year with even fewer reserves, down to just over 5%. (The full set of FY23 closing reports are available on the Yearly Meeting's website in the section Who we are/How we're doing/Financial statements.)

Although it is certainly true that our income and expenses ebb and flow over the year, and that a substantial amount of our income arrives with Sessions, as of the end of May we are still running a significant operational deficit.

Friends, we are at a turning point. Note that we have been here before, and have turned the boat around, but the boat needs some assistance to make the turn.

Recognizing that unless we want to reduce NEYM programming, we have to work to increase our income, a team has been working on development. Do you remember receiving a letter asking for your support this year? This group planned and executed that campaign, reminding us of the benefits we as individuals and as meetings have access to through the Yearly Meeting.

The other thing to recognize is that I've been speaking here of our operational budget. Overall the Yearly Meeting has other fiscal resources, some of which, if need, be could be reallocated. However, this begs the question of what do we want our Yearly Meeting to be and do? The non-operational ("designated") funds, if used merely to plug a budget gap, would be a temporary solution to a long-term question, and would mean the purposes they were designated for would no longer be supported. If we want to turn the boat around, we need to focus our attention on the essential role our operational income plays in carrying out the mission of Yearly Meeting.

MARIAN DALTON

Budget Commentary

To put this budget in context, then-NEYM Treasurer Bob Murray reported that at the end of FY22 our reserves were about 13% of expenses. Our policy is a target of 25% of annual operating expenses. At the end of FY23 our reserves had dropped to just over 5% of expenses. Part of this drop was due to the fact that \$30,000 of what were thought to be reserves in excess of the 25% level when the FY 23 budget was approved were committed to cover specific expenditures in the FY23 budget. Other factors included less income from individual contributions and retreat fees than had been budgeted. As a result, our operating reserves are perilously low.

The accompanying preliminary budget for FY25 is, for all practical purposes, balanced (\$1,018 deficit on an almost \$850,000 budget). However, to accomplish this:

1. For a second year, Support of Other Organizations is budgeted at \$0.
2. The budget assumes a \$30,000 increase in individual contributions over what we received in FY 23. There are reasons for making this optimistic assumption. At Sessions there will be a report on our development efforts and how Friends can support them.
3. We funded line 5070, which supports planning to meet our commitment of future sabbaticals for the Yearly Meeting Secretary, at a token amount of \$100, rather than what would be needed to accumulate the amount needed to pay for the next sabbatical.
4. This budget does nothing to increase our reserves.

On the other hand, in trying to meet the guidelines set by Permanent board:

1. We continued staffing at the current levels and added the cost-of-living adjustment for staff that the Personnel Manual says that we should "strive to provide."
2. We continued to budget \$15,000 for honoraria for five time-consuming volunteer positions (Yearly Meeting Presiding Clerk, clerk of the Permanent Board, Treasurer, clerk of Ministry & Counsel, and clerk of the Nominating Committee). This appears in line 6107. A committee is currently evaluating the effectiveness of these honoraria. It is possible that the Permanent Board will change their guidelines based on the report of this committee, and if the Permanent Board were to recommend not spending this money, it would not be spent.

In short, we want to do more than our current operating income allows. The solutions are either to increase income through development and other efforts, or to find things that we have been doing that we are willing to stop doing. The first solution is more appealing, if it can be done. If not, we need to grapple with the painful question of what we are willing to reduce or do without.

Last year we approved a budget with \$0 allocated to Support of Other Organizations. The deliberations when the budget was presented at Sessions and at a Listening Session for the budget led to a minute that said that if there was a surplus at the end of FY 24 that 75% would be used to fund

the line for Support of Other Organizations and 25% would be used to increase reserves. Finance Committee proposes a similar minute to accompany the FY 25 budget:

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 minute approved at Sessions last year had 75% of any 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.

SCOT DRYSDALE, CLERK OF FINANCE

The budget appears on **page 29**

Unity Agenda Materials

Approved Charge and Structure for the Yearly Meeting Conflict-Response Team

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 to 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 & 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 ongoing 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.

Useful Resources

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

- Ministry & 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, and 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 21st century?

Yearly Meeting Nominating Report

The nominating slate appears on **page 32**

Bank Resolutions

The following resolutions are brought by the Finance Committee:

1. That Marian L. Dalton be appointed New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (NEYM) Treasurer until a successor is appointed and qualified.
2. That Marian L. Dalton, NEYM Treasurer; and Noah Merrill, NEYM Secretary, be individually authorized to open and close bank accounts in the name of NEYM as needed.
3. That Noah Merrill, NEYM Secretary; Marian L. Dalton, NEYM Treasurer; and Rebecca Leuchak, NEYM Presiding Clerk; be designated as alternate signers, individually, of all bank accounts in the name of NEYM.

4. That Kate Thornburg Monahan be appointed Friends Camp Treasurer until a successor is appointed and qualified.
5. That Kate Thornburg Monahan, Friends Camp Treasurer; and Anna Hopkins Buller, Friends Camp Director, be individually authorized to open and close bank accounts in the name of NEYM for the benefit of Friends Camp as needed.
6. That Anna Hopkins Buller, Friends Camp Director; Kate Thornburg Monahan, Friends Camp Treasurer; and Natalie Bornstein, Friends Camp Committee clerk, be authorized, individually, as signers of accounts held in the name of NEYM for the benefit of Friends Camp.

Minute to Authorize Edits and Corrections

Friends authorize the presiding, recording, and reading clerks to make and approve edits, clarifications, and corrections to the minutes of NEYM Sessions 2024.

Progress Report and Recommendations to Annual Sessions on Yearly Meeting Support for Ministry, Eldership, and Spiritual Life of Local Meetings

Background

In 2022, Sessions approved a set of recommendations for next steps arising from recent years' ongoing listening and experimentation in how the Yearly Meeting supports ministry, eldership, and the spiritual life of local meetings. The updates below include the title only for the approved recommendations, followed by brief updates from the past year.

The full report and approved recommendations to Sessions 2022, including further context on the process in recent years, can be found on page 36 of the 2022 Minute Book (<https://neym.org/annual-sessions/minutes/2022-08>). In 2023, Friends gathered for Sessions received an additional update on further steps, discernment, and learning.

Report and Recommendations in 2024

What follows is a further report and reflection on progress in implementing these recommendations in the past year, organized in the order of the approved recommendations from 2022. It notes aspects of the previously approved recommendations where further attention seems needed.

This report also contains three new recommendations, which arise from ongoing learning and experience of Friends seeking to nurture the spiritual life of our meetings in recent years.

As previously, consistent with guidance from Sessions 2022 in approving these steps, this report is being offered by Friends charged to constellate a “spiritual life listening group”, consisting of the clerk of Ministry & Counsel, the clerk of the Permanent Board, the clerk of the Meeting Accompaniment Group, the Yearly Meeting Secretary, and the Program Director. The Presiding Clerk and many other Friends also made meaningful contributions to these efforts. For questions, suggestions, or comments about this report, please contact Carl Williams, clerk of Ministry & Counsel at mc-clerk@neym.org.

Updates from the past year

Each of these activities represents further steps in what are intended to be multi-year and ongoing practices or processes, and so while much work has begun, we know these efforts will continue to unfold, and learning will continue, in the coming months and years.

1. Gather a small body to accompany and support local meetings

The Meeting Accompaniment Group, a nominated group with a charge approved by Sessions, was formed in the fall of 2022 and has met regularly since that time.

Completing its second full year, the Accompaniment Group has engaged meaningfully with more than fifty Friends groups—meetings, worship groups, and others—seeking support and accompani-

ment in a variety of situations. This intentional, tender work has been the source of nourishing connections and substantial learning, for local meetings and for those participating in the work of the Accompaniment Group in the past year.

Sarah Gant (Beacon Hill) clerks this group, and can be reached at accompaniment@neym.org.

2. Hold an annual “meeting for listening” for the Life in local meetings

In June 2024, Friends from across New England and beyond gathered for the second Meeting for Listening, organized by the Program Director, clerk of Ministry & Counsel, and clerk of the Meeting Accompaniment Group. Friends gathered both on site at the Concord (NH) Meetinghouse, and from many other locations via videoconference. In worship, worship sharing, fellowship, and large- and small-group conversation, Friends considered the state of society and statistical reports received from local meetings in our region, and together looked and listened for how the themes emerging from these reflections could inform and align programmatic priorities for the work supported by the Yearly Meeting in the coming months.

A key reflection lifted up by Friends as part of this gathering was a hope that the Yearly Meeting might support opportunities for Friends and meetings to grow in their understanding and exercise of gifts in life-giving practices of eldership, as traditionally understood by Friends—including spiritual nurture, prayerful grounding, and tender guidance.

3. As a regular part of Permanent Board meetings, and at Annual Sessions, host opportunities for the wider body of Friends in New England to learn about and celebrate Friends active in public ministry

Advance documents for Permanent Board meetings have included reports on travel minutes that have been endorsed by the Yearly Meeting, and the clerk of the Permanent Board has begun a process of outreach and invitation to Friends carrying travel minutes to report to future meetings of the Permanent Board. Sessions planning has included awareness of the ministries being carried by Friends in our region, with attention to how this service can be highlighted at Sessions.

4. Offer regular opportunities for prayerful holding of the wider body of Friends in New England, for those led, and invite Friends to this discipline

The clerk of Ministry & Counsel and clerk of Meeting Accompaniment have worked with the Office Manager and the Meeting Accompaniment Group to establish and energize an email prayer list for distribution throughout the Yearly Meeting, to invite Friends into prayer for particular concerns in local meetings, for particular needs of Friends, and for wider concerns. This list is moderated by, and under the overall care of, the clerk of Ministry & Counsel. Interested in being added to the prayer list? Contact Carl Williams (Plainfield), clerk of Ministry & Counsel, at mc-clerk@neym.org, or contact the Yearly Meeting Office.

5. The Yearly Meeting recognizes the expressed desire for opportunities for Friends serving in ministry and eldership to gather as led for “shop talk,” mentoring, mutual accountability, and learning

Informal opportunities for Friends carrying a concern for vocal ministry in meetings for worship continued with several gatherings in the past year, as did opportunities for extended worship. While this acknowledgment does not commit the Yearly Meeting to a leadership role in specific work, we want to recognize and lift up some of the ongoing ways the Spirit is leading Friends to invite one another to nourishing opportunities such as these.

While these and other such opportunities are being publicized in a variety of ways, as word is shared they will also be publicized through the Yearly Meeting.

6. Increase awareness of (and as able, increase capacity to offer) formal programming to support adult religious education, spiritual formation, and training in Quaker practices and disciplines

Please refer to the Program Director’s report in these Advance Documents for an extensive update on formal programming offered by the Yearly Meeting this year, including many activities responding to this charge.

We want to especially draw attention to the emergence in recent years of an ongoing cycle of programming through the year, including Meeting Care Day in the autumn, midwinter retreats in the winter, Living Faith in the spring, Meeting for Listening in the early summer, and Sessions in the late summer. Response to these diverse opportunities has been strong and wide-ranging, and we believe continuing with this rhythm of communal practice offers great promise for ongoing spiritual nurture and support for the life of our local meetings.

In addition to the programmatic opportunities offered directly by the Yearly Meeting, a major focus has been increasing the Yearly Meeting's capacity to communicate effectively about high-quality and relevant opportunities offered by local and quarterly meetings, individual Friends, and other Quaker organizations. The monthly email newsletter, sharing and resources provided through monthly meeting video calls with Friends in servant leadership roles in their local meetings, the Yearly Meeting's website at *neym.org*, and other channels have proven to be effective and fruitful ways to get the word out about meaningful opportunities—and help from local meetings in spreading the word among their own members and attenders is invaluable.

7. The Yearly Meeting consider a searching review with attention to purpose, care, and oversight for quarterly meetings

While charging the Permanent Board with this consideration was part of the recommendations approved in 2022, the press of other challenges and priorities has meant that this recommendation has not moved forward in the past two years.

We believe this may be a case of the urgent outpacing the important, and hope that further attention from the Permanent Board can now be given to carrying forward this recommendation in ways that are supportive of and in partnership with the quarterly meetings, and energizing and connecting for local meetings and the wider body of Friends as a whole.

For the 2024–2025 service year, the Coordinating & Advisory Committee has affirmed the intention that promoting this engagement and strengthening of the quarterly meetings, in partnership with those serving on behalf of quarterly meetings and local meetings, will be a key priority for their attention, and a matter of substantive attention for the Permanent Board.

New and further recommendations

A. Building on No. 4 above, we hope the Yearly Meeting will encourage the clerk of Ministry & Counsel to convene one or more simple opportunities for Friends to gather to hold the Yearly Meeting in prayer in the course of the coming year, perhaps in the fall, winter, and spring. At least one of these meetings would be intended to be held in person, though others could be held via videoconference, as the clerk of Ministry & Counsel is led.

The clerk of Ministry & Counsel, supported by staff or other Friends they may invite as needed, would invite local meetings to discern and recommend to participate a Friend currently clerking or serving as part of their local meeting Ministry & Counsel (or equivalent body), or another serving elder active in the life of their meeting.

These Friends, and others holding the wider spiritual condition of Friends across our meetings (the Presiding Clerk, the clerk of Meeting Accompaniment, the Yearly Meeting Secretary), would gather to share in worship together, to hold in prayer the Yearly Meeting as a whole and the particular concerns or joys of their local meetings and quarterly meetings, and to offer counsel and support to the clerk of Ministry & Counsel in their service on behalf of the wider body of Friends.

B. Appoint an assistant clerk of Ministry & Counsel. This new role would serve as a companion and support to the clerk of Ministry & Counsel, with responsibilities delegated by the clerk of Ministry & Counsel, and would also serve as the rising clerk of Ministry & Counsel for one year, being mentored by the Clerk of Ministry & Counsel in order to support a transfer of insight, knowledge, and understanding of current practices. This role would be nominated by the Nominating Committee, and approved by the Yearly Meeting. This practice would be intended to foster continuity in

learning and practice, to support leadership development and healthy transitions, and to provide additional capacity for the work of the clerk of Ministry & Counsel.

C. Create a Thriving Ministers Resource Group. Building on Nos. 1, 3, and 6 above, we recommend that the Yearly Meeting affirm the Permanent Board creating a small (4- to 6-person) resource group to support local and quarterly meetings in strengthening their practices of support, care, accountability, and oversight of Friends serving in public ministry.

There is deep experience in some meetings in caring for those called to such service, and in some meetings these practices are not well understood. This group would not replace the existing essential role of local and quarterly meetings in tending gifts of ministry, but would provide specific support to strengthen the capacity and grounding of meetings to undertake this care.

This group would:

- Be available to local meetings seeking to understand Friends traditional and current practices of stewarding such gifts
- Help local committees and quarterly meeting leadership navigate the diverse and sometimes arcane processes of creating, approving, and returning travel minutes; crafting minutes of religious service; or recording gifts in ministry
- Regularly inquire about, and prayerfully hold, the condition of Friends serving in public ministry under the care of their local meetings, quarters, and the Yearly Meeting more widely, including Friends carrying travel minutes, those with minutes of religious service, or those whose gifts in ministry have been recorded by their quarterly meeting. In some cases, this may involve outreach to these Friends' local meetings to offer support as well.
- Seek opportunities to celebrate and share news of Friends' service in ministry across and beyond our region, including at Annual Sessions and as other opportunities appear
- Offer an annual workshop or training on care of ministry by meetings, perhaps in partnership with or dovetailing with other events such as Meeting Care Day, or as a standalone opportunity

For the time being, to keep this work integrated and as it is established, this group would be clerked by the clerk of Ministry & Counsel, though with time it might become clear that another clerk for the group would be helpful. As a resource group, the Thriving Ministers Resource Group would be under the care of, and report regularly to, the Permanent Board.

Conclusion

In all of these steps, large and small, we have continued to sense the Spirit tenderly and palpably at work among New England Friends, inviting us into new forms, rhythms, and practices, and aiding us in reclaiming old ones. It is a blessing to steward the unfolding of our shared service, and to reflect it back to the wider body of the Yearly Meeting, as we learn and grow together.

Submitted in faith, and with joy,

SARAH GANT (BEACON HILL), CLERK OF THE MEETING ACCOMPANIMENT GROUP; SUSAN DAVIES (VASSALBORO), CLERK OF THE PERMANENT BOARD; NOAH MERRILL (PUTNEY), YEARLY MEETING SECRETARY; NIADWYNWEN THOMAS (NORTHAMPTON), PROGRAM DIRECTOR; CARL WILLIAMS (PLAINFIELD), CLERK OF MINISTRY & COUNSEL

Faith and Practice Revision Committee

We will consider a revised Introduction for preliminary approval. A download of that text is available online at <https://neym.org/advance-reading-and-business-materials>.

Quaker Indian Boarding School Research Group Recommendations

NEYM created this research group in 2022 to research to what extent and in what ways New England Friends and NEYM were involved in the Indian Boarding Schools of the late nineteenth century.

ry. The simple answer is: deeply, and in every conceivable way. New England Friends were involved in the development and implementation of the Federal Indian Boarding School program from its inception in the 1870s. New England Quakers served on the Federal Board of Indian Commissioners; provided women and men to staff agencies and schools; sent a steady flow of funds, books, clothing, and other supplies; and articulated intellectual and moral principles that shaped and justified harsh measures that became standard practice in many of the Schools.

Their stated intention—to equip Native People to function effectively in the wider culture—might have been benign, even laudable, were it not done in service to the larger goals of cultural erasure and White land theft. Friends of that era, the vocal ones at least, were unapologetic assimilationists even as they wrote to Congress to protest the brutal and unjust removals of Native People, the violation of treaties, and the greed and duplicity of White settlers and politicians.

Our work this year has been extensive. We added a member, plus a summer college intern. We have worked closely with a growing national network of Quakers doing similar research and with the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS). We are clear that this is work in and about which we must engage with our fellow yearly meetings, as way opens, to consider what our collective responsibilities are today.

A full report of our research findings is at <https://neym.org/resource-group-right-relationship-indigenous-peoples>. We will present an oral report with highlights from these findings at Sessions, and make the following recommendations:

1. That the research group be continued for another year to:
 - a. Draft a report on our preliminary findings, in response to specific requests for information from the Department of the Interior (DOI) and NABS. The report will be finalized in consultation with the clerk of Permanent Board, the Presiding Clerk, and the Yearly Meeting Secretary.
 - b. Continue to engage with researchers from other yearly meetings to enable fuller reporting about the Quaker-run schools to the DOI and NABS.
 - c. Continue to work with the Archives committee to make relevant material from the NEYM archives available in culturally sensitive and trauma-informed ways, including through the National Indian Boarding School Digital Archive (NIBSDA).
2. That conversations begin between NEYM and the tribes outside our region whose children went to the schools that were under NEYM's particular care, as they are willing, to share information and listen to what reparative actions may be helpful.
3. That NEYM Friends join in FCNL's support for the establishment of a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies.

These recommendations engage NEYM in additional work and are not intended to weaken our existing commitment to the Indigenous Peoples of the Northeast region, many of whom were impacted by the boarding schools and later child-removal policies.

MEMBERS OF THE QIBS RESEARCH GROUP: GORDON BUGBEE, BETSY CAZDEN, ANDREW GRANT, JANET HOUGH, MERRILL KOHLHOFER (WITH HELP FROM CHARLIE BARNARD, EVAN MCMANAMY, AND EMILY NEUMANN)

2024 Legacy Gift Review Committee Report and Recommendations

Background and Introduction:

The Legacy Gift Funds were designated ten years ago from a portion of the \$1,100,000 net proceeds received from the sale of the New England Friends Home in 2012. The Legacy Gift Funds were set up to support the witness and ministry of Friends in New England both within and beyond our region (minute 2014-44). The discernment in 2014 (minute 2014-62) restricted a portion of the funds for ten years. In 2015 we approved the following statement of purpose (minute 2015-27):

Guided by our living testimonies, we seek to strengthen our Witness through the funding of public and released ministry, with attention to Racism and Climate Change, and to nurture our beloved community through the support of education, outreach, released ministry and meetinghouse projects. Our hope is that the Legacy Funds will serve as potent seeds to help Friends answer God's call in our time and to strengthen the new life that is already rising up in our yearly meeting.

Faithful to our commitment to revisiting this designation in 2024, after three years of work, we bring the following report and proposals to Sessions for consideration this year.

The Legacy Gift Committee supports the faithfulness of NEYM Friends as they seek to respond to the leadings placed on their hearts by the Spirit. We do this work through material support (grants), invitations to thoughtful planning and articulation (the application process), encouragement and discernment (review committee visits), and prayer. We've received feedback, advice, and questions from over 50 meetings and grantees. As we've listened, we have heard overwhelming affirmation of the ministry of the Legacy Gift funding program. There is much to be celebrated.

During this 10-year experiment in Holy Abundance, we've heard Friends' experience of these funds prompting and nurturing a deeper understanding and practice of noticing, discerning, holding accountable and supporting leadings of the Spirit and ministry among New England Friends. Meetings have shared with us that their understanding of ministry and the support for ministry has grown as a result of engaging with the Legacy Gift program and workshops.

As one Friend wrote in response to the review survey:

A really important part of the Legacy Gift Funding Program is that it encourages Friends in general and Meetings in particular to live into the life of the Spirit. Witness, Ministry and faithful presence from a perspective of abundance rather than scarcity is a necessary shift for all people of faith.

Legacy grants have supported NEYM living testimonies, starting with the initial priorities of addressing racism and climate change, expanding to encompass further concerns that Spirit has called us to since.

Using some of the funds for reparations was originally proposed during the first years of discernment while setting up the Legacy Gift funding program. The question of reparations was brought to Sessions several times—in 2012, 2013 and 2014. "A Friend noted that the money in this fund comes from the sale of land that ultimately came to us through the Doctrine of Discovery, and asked that we consider the reparations that might be appropriate out of this sale. How does our use of these funds, and indeed of all Yearly Meeting resources, reflect our testimony of integrity?" (minute 2014-44).

These conversations led NEYM to make an Apology to Native Americans in 2022. Thus far, several grants have been made in support of nurturing relationships with Indigenous People and doing research into New England Friends' role in supporting Indian Boarding Schools in the late 1800s. In the review process we heard again the call for NEYM to consider reparations.

We want to embrace this opportunity to move beyond these funds being a gift from the past to the future, shifting to their being an ongoing commitment to faithfulness in the present and the future.

This review invited us to re-engage with questions raised in 2014 by Cuban Friends:

"How can we be a Church with money in our pocket?" "How can we use all our resources to be God's people in the world?"

We are asking Sessions to approve the following.

1. Continue the ministry of the Legacy Gift Funds and the Legacy Gift Committee established by Sessions in 2014 (minute 2014-44) as a resource to lift up witness and ministry of New England Friends, with another review in ten years.
2. Combine the Witness and Ministry (W&M) and Futures Fund (FF) guidelines and eligibility.

- o The two funds were originally set up respecting two perspectives on our relationship with and stewardship of money—one (FF) desiring to spend freely and the second (W&M) desiring to steward money for future generations and witness (minute 2014-62). The original Futures Fund, which included funding for meetinghouse projects, has been fully expended as planned. However, the need for funding for meetinghouse projects continues and combining guidelines into one fund will be easier to administer.
- o This proposal is to merge the current Futures Fund and Witness and Ministry Fund guidelines and eligibility to again include supporting meetinghouse projects and to create just one fund, the Witness and Ministry Fund. (Current fund guidelines are posted on the NEYM website here: <https://neym.org/legacy-gift/legacy-grants-apply-now>.)
- o How Funds are Drawn: Draw from income and principle of the fund, with permission to draw beyond income sufficient to fund grant applications if needed (aiming to stay within a draw rate of 6% of principal) to faithfully nurture the ministry and witness among us into the future.

3. Consider Reparations: Recommend that Sessions ask the Right Relationship Resource Group to initiate a conversation and discernment about future reparations, inviting local meetings to engage in learning and reflection, and report back to Sessions with yearly updates. This outreach might be similar to the process which led to the “Letter of Apology to Native Americans” approved in 2021 (minutes 2021-29 and 2021-80). If NEYM becomes clear to make reparations, a significant draw from Legacy Gift Funds could be used for this purpose.

Note: The Legacy 2024 Review Committee has consulted with the Right Relationship Resource Group (RRRG) about this recommendation and the RRRG are clear and willing to initiate a Yearly-Meeting-wide conversation and discernment about reparations and to provide support and resources. They ask the YM Nominating Committee to lift up additional members for this work.

Report

Overview

Over these ten years the fruits of the funds established in 2014 have been rich, powerful, and many. Meetings and individual F/friends from 41 meetings, NEYM overall, several NEYM committees, and more than 25 other Quaker entities have benefited from these funds supporting witness, ministry, and facility improvements. It has been a great blessing to be able to nurture the movement of Spirit among us. A summary and a slide show of grant recipients is on the Legacy Gift web page of NEYM’s website, along with overall information, guidelines and funding priorities at <https://neym.org/committees/legacy-gift>.

During this time the Legacy Gift Committee’s work has expanded to meet additional needs. This includes administering the new Bodine-Rustin Fund and shepherding Salem Quarter’s funds while they are on sabbath (applying their funds to re-infuse the Future Fund). Other changes and developments have also evolved, key ones being the establishment of a process for making Time-Sensitive Grants, and NEYM approving the roll-over of W&M funds from year to year, thus making more funds available in support of witness and ministry among us.

Finances

At the start, in Fiscal Year 2014, at the request of Sessions, as recommended by the Legacy Discernment Committee, \$100,000 was given to Friends Camp to retire a mortgage. Investment income of \$18,391 in FY2014, and \$25,000 in FY2015 was transferred to the NEYM operating budget. Legacy funds also reinfused the Fund for Suffering with \$25,000 in 2018.

The remaining proceeds, with accumulated earnings, were used to create two funds. The NEYM Witness and Ministries Fund was started with \$750,000.00 and the balance went to NEYM Future Fund (\$470,975.46). The Future Fund, and all accumulated earnings, was intended to be spent

down, while the Witness and Ministries Fund was set up as a quasi-endowment in the New England Pooled Funds overseen by the Board of Managers.

Since inception, the Future Fund awarded grants totaling \$541,953 by the time it was completely spent down as intended, in 2020—having grown even while it was being used. Since the beginning, the Witness and Ministry fund has awarded grants totaling \$202,999 from annual investment earnings, as of June 6, 2024. As of March 2024, the Witness and Ministry Fund had an invested balance of \$1,015,634.

Process for this review and recommendations

The 2024 Legacy Review Committee was formed in August 2021. We have met regularly since the fall of 2021, reviewed the history and original charge, and collected data and responses reflecting on the initial ten years.

We sought input widely from meetings, grant recipients, and the yearly meeting community, using surveys that were sent directly to meeting contacts, grantees, and via outreach in the NEYM newsletter for several months. We received and reviewed 52 responses. We have reflected on how well Legacy has responded to its spiritual charge.

We reviewed the history of grants made and the impact of these grants. The almost universal response is positive, both of the impact of the grants and the process of the grantmaking.

We considered the specifics of the Legacy funding along with the wider impacts, and also reflected on ways the Yearly Meeting has grown and priorities that have evolved or emerged since 2014.

We also re-read the original responses from the 2014 discernment that led to the formation of the Legacy Gift Program. The financial history and other data, total amounts granted, growth of the funds available, and the number and types of grants and grantees during the first ten years were reviewed.

Drafts of this report and proposals were presented to Permanent Board in February 2024 for review, responses, questions, and suggestions, which have strengthened and clarified the report along the way.

Assessment

A number of Friends have asked, “How have we done towards meeting our original goals?”

The Legacy Gift program was an experiment in faithfulness. We did not try to emulate more mainstream foundation processes with “measurable goals” or so-called “deliverables.” We set out to use the proceeds from the sale of the New England Friends Home as one way to answer God’s call in our time. We created a funding program to support the ministry of New England Friends with certain priorities minuted by NEYM Sessions and guided by the movement of the Spirit.

We have endeavored to be responsive to the movement of divine guidance among us and to emergent priorities identified by Sessions, such as the 2013 minute refuting the Doctrine of Discovery and the 2022 minute calling for NEYM to research our involvement in and support of the Federal Indian Boarding School Project in the 19th century, and support of Dover Meeting’s Sanctuary ministry.

We surveyed grantees and Friends across NEYM to understand the impact of the funds.

The Legacy Funds have strengthened Friends’ processes for supporting ministry, such as clarity and support/accountability committees and financial oversight through monthly meetings or Friends’ organizations. Our workshops have shared successful ways to carry out these practices and we hear that our work has deepened the support of ministry across NEYM.

Responses to our survey from around the Yearly Meeting, regular grant reports from grantees, stories, and experiences tell us that we succeeded in this endeavor. Survey responses are available at <https://neym.org/advance-reading-and-business-materials>.

The ministry supported by Legacy has been far ranging and meaningful. For example, at a recent Zoom meeting of the Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools working group—convened by Legacy

grant recipient Andrew Grant as part of NEYM's response to the Friends' Peace Team's minute approved by Sessions in 2022—attendees included Friends from Alaska, Texas, Colorado, and Washington, DC, as well as a number of Friends from NEYM who are past or current grantees. A ministry gathering that was funded brought together Friends from several yearly meetings. And another ministry grant led to the establishment of a new monthly meeting. Funds have helped Friends travel to international gatherings and conferences and to an AFSC action at the southern U.S. border. Legacy funds supported travel for the Black Quaker Project to present their work to the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva. Other grant recipients have traveled to Cuba, Bolivia, Peru, Kenya, Uganda, Poland, Ukraine, England, and Switzerland, and to other parts of the U.S. in faithfulness to their leadings.

Meetings and Other Organizations that have Received Legacy Grants

As of May 2024, 41 of NEYM's 62 monthly meetings have benefitted from a LGC grant (either as a meeting or in supporting the witness or ministry of individuals), over half of them in more than one grant application. Meetings in all NEYM Quarters have been touched by Legacy Gift funding, including a majority of the meetings in 6 of the 8 quarters. Approximately 25 other Friends related groups and organizations (e.g., Friends Schools, Camp, Beacon Hill Friends House, Woolman Hill, Quaker Voluntary Service, NEYM committees, etc.) have also received funding, many of them more than once.

Closing

We celebrate the deep faithful work guided by the movement of Spirit over these ten years. The question before us now is whether and how to continue the ministry these funds have nurtured and supported among us. We have planted many seeds that have borne fruit. Shall we continue to plant new seeds that the Spirit calls us to?

Appendices and Resources Pages can be found at <https://neym.org/advance-reading-and-business-materials>.

THE 2024 LEGACY REVIEW COMMITTEE: MARY LINK, LEGACY CO-CLERK (MT TOBY); FRITZ WEISS, PRIOR NEYM PRESIDING CLERK (PORTLAND); SUZANNA SCHELL, PRIOR LEGACY GIFT CO-CLERK (BEACON HILL); AND BOB MURRAY, THEN NEYM TREASURER (BEACON HILL); AND LEGACY GIFT COMMITTEE: MARY LINK, CO-CLERK; SUE ROCKWOOD, CO-CLERK (MIDCOAST); SARAH GANT (BEACON HILL); KAREN REIXACK (KEENE); JENNIE ISBELL SHINN (MT. TOBY); AND MEGAN CHRISTOPHER (WELLESLEY).

Israel-Palestine Resource Group

Minutes from monthly meetings on the Israel-Palestine conflict, along with the Yearly Meeting statement, are posted at <https://neym.org/advance-reading-and-business-materials>.

Plan: Sessions Visioning 2025+

Background

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

In light of all of these changes, the Yearly Meeting's model of programming, logistics, services, and funding for the event of Annual Sessions is in need of review and reimagining. With the recent financial deficit for Sessions (2022) and potential for a deficit in Fiscal Year 2024, as well as a relatively low level of operating reserves at the time of writing, there is a need to carry out this review and reimagining creatively, dynamically, consultatively, and in a timely way.

Objectives

To engage many Friends across New England in meaningful consultation and discernment regarding future offerings of NEYM's Annual Sessions¹.

This consultation and discernment should set the stage for the Yearly Meeting to make decisions which:

1. Clarify the essential purpose(s) of Sessions in a way that allows for acknowledging trade-offs in planning
2. Clarify which components of Sessions could (and do) happen at other times or in other ways
3. Reduce the downside financial risks to the Yearly Meeting
4. Reduce the level of services and overhead that are the responsibility of the YM as an organization. Reduce overload for those with key responsibilities for putting on Sessions
5. Reduce reliance on recruitment of volunteers to cover essential roles
6. Rebalance the investment of limited resources of time, energy, and money, allowing reinvestment in other aspects of NEYM's core purpose of nurturing the thriving of Friends Meetings throughout the year

We seek to maximize active listening and engagement, bringing together varied perspectives on Annual Sessions' purpose and its relationship to the wider Yearly Meeting. We believe the process outlined below will help to "pave the way" for healthy, necessary, and Spirit-led changes, and that participating Friends will grow in their ability to be participants in ongoing discernment and experimentation regarding Sessions, listening together for how God is calling our Yearly Meeting at this time. We also have endeavored to write a consultation plan that is usable, adaptable, and realistic.

Measures of Success

- A felt sense of Spirit in the rooms where conversations are taking place; ability of Friends to let go of personal opinions to listen to God's guidance for the Way Forward
- Although unlikely to end up with Friends all agreeing on every aspect of Sessions, we are hoping that we will grow towards unity so that incremental decisions can be made. Key metaphor: We're not trying to create "MapQuest" step-by-step directions to a specific location, we're trying to increase the number of Friends who are looking at the same map and navigating towards the same general direction
- This process supports (or at least doesn't get in the way of) the thriving of local meetings

Key Questions for Consultation and Discernment

Phase I of this visioning process lifts up key questions essential to the visioning process:

1. What is the purpose of Sessions?
2. Who do we hope will attend Sessions? Why?
3. What infrastructure and resources do we need to achieve our purpose?
4. How do we prepare for and hold corporate discernment during Sessions?
5. Are there things we currently include in Sessions which could happen at another time instead?

Regarding these questions, our working group notes that while Friends differ somewhat in their personal passions and priorities for their time at Sessions, there is much common ground to be found in the list of reasons why Friends attend Sessions in general. Time does not need to be spent brainstorming the reasons why Friends attend, but rather is best spent exploring how these purposes can be nurtured by Friends and by the Yearly Meeting inside of and beyond Sessions in a way that adapts to capacity limitations.

We also note that among the purposes for Sessions, corporate discernment is the most enduring and, in many ways, the most challenging due to the level of spiritual and practical preparation that large group discernment on complex issues involves.

¹ Although the focus is on Sessions specifically, questions about Sessions are entwined with considerations about the Yearly Meeting as a whole.

While it is necessary to make decisions regarding the model or shape of Sessions going forward, there is a need for particular reflection on how our practice of corporate discernment can deepen and enrich the lives of Friends across New England.

Design Principles and Underlying Assumptions

- We have intentionally created a detailed but not complete plan. While it's important for the overall design to be thought through in advance, we intentionally have left room for important details to be discerned along the way as more Friends engage in this process.
- Sessions cannot be all things to all people. The current strain experienced by those in leadership roles at Sessions is unsustainable and moving out of the straining place we are in now will require compassionate listening and discernment.
- Sessions is, and will continue to be, of more personal importance to some Friends than others. That being said, to assess the impact of Sessions, we must look beyond Friends who attend. The value of Sessions is not limited to Friends who participate directly. Because of this, as we explore potential changes to Sessions, we must explore the possible impact both on Friends who attend regularly as well as Friends who do not regularly attend but who are impacted in indirect ways such as through their local meeting.
- We will not be able to move towards unity by staying within the silos of those who already share similar perspectives and experiences. This will be a process of listening for all of us. There are particular insights that will be gained from gathering Friends sharing a common concern; however, care should be taken to not create closed silos or to isolate these Friends from the wider discernment.
- Although there will be some need to discuss the short-term goals we ascribe to Sessions (healthy attendance, financial stability, reduced overload for Sessions planners), we need to point Friends' attention toward the longer-term outcomes (impact on local meetings and the Quaker faith in New England overall). The goal is not to use market research to "fix" the current model to please more potential attenders, but rather to step into broader imagining and discernment about how Annual Sessions relates to the wider work of the Yearly Meeting now.
- We prioritize critical connections over critical mass (Margaret Wheatley). Meaning: We intentionally value the reflections that arise from groups of Friends engaging in dialogue and worshipful reflection together over simply gathering as many individual responses as possible.
 - If surveys are used, they should be used to gather background information rather than build towards unity. Collective discernment will get us further than a collection of individual opinions.
- Although some conversation will need to happen on Zoom, we encourage groups of Friends to physically gather when possible
- There are two things needed to bring Friends to the table for meaningful consultation and discernment: accessible background information and skilled facilitation that makes space for us all to share and listen well. Facilitators need to be able to bring the group in so they are ready to listen to Spirit. Depending on the group, this preparation will look different (a song, a shared meal, an icebreaker).
- We will need to ask for and accept God's guidance throughout this process.

Methods and timeline

- Fall 2024: PREPARATION
 - Feasibility study and alternative model development
 - ◆ The Events Coordinator will take a lead role in interviews with Friends with awareness of alternative models used by other faith communities (including other yearly meetings) in order to capture descriptions of other likely approaches in simple terms. Recent Sessions planners will provide insights into feasibility of such models, given current Yearly Meeting

- capacities in terms of pros, cons, and unknowns. This information will be made available to Friends participating in the consultation and discernment process so they can benefit from the insights of what is already known about potential alternatives.
- ◆ Friends participating in the consultation and discernment will not be limited to the alternative models already developed. The goal is not to limit conversation but rather focus it and also to share known information about limitations or challenges of potential models. We want to avoid a scenario where Friends spend lots of energy brainstorming and dreaming about something that would be very impractical in the short-term.
 - Preparation of informational materials
 - ◆ The Program Director will take a lead role in consulting others to prepare background information for Friends engaging in this consultation and discernment. This will include:
 - Clearly stated reasons for why we are embarking on this process
 - Clear and concise information about the current model of Sessions; what makes our current model unique in the wider Quaker world and how it has evolved over the years, as well as challenges and benefits related to our current model and alternative models currently in use
 - Basic information about NEYM's current year-round offerings
 - Facilitator, notetaker, and conversation partner recruitment and preparation:
 - ◆ Listening Group facilitators may be local meeting clerks or other Friends who can guide groups in trust-building, Spirit-led conversation. Notetakers should be able to listen carefully and summarize accurately, asking for clarification when needed. Conversation partners should be Friends who can engage with kindness and curiosity, encouraging constructive conversation. For all these roles, Friends will be invited to volunteer as well as nominate others. See Appendices for additional information about Listening Groups.
 - Broad communication will be shared inviting Friends and meetings into the process. Responses sought regarding participation plans.
 - ◆ Ask meetings to tell us if they aren't interested or don't have capacity so that alternative Listening Groups can be offered to interested Friends in other ways (such as opportunities within quarters)
 - Development and distribution of Listening Group packets. Guidance and orientation offered to facilitators, notetakers, and conversation partners.
 - Winter 2024–2025: THRESHING
 - Listening Groups engage in dialogue and discernment
 - Listening Group notetakers share back participation notes
 - Spring 2025: DISTILLATION INTO DISCERNMENT
 - The facilitator or another designated individual from each Listening Group will be invited to participate in a Visioning Day to draw out and distill themes heard across groups. The purpose of this gathering is to move from the sharing/threshing/consultation phase into listening for our collective way forward, going beyond individual preferences using the notes from all Listening Groups as a starting point.
 - For facilitators or other designated individuals from Listening Groups who cannot participate in the Visioning Day, there will be a more flexible, lower-commitment way to review notes from the Listening Groups and share reflections on key themes emerging.
 - After this Visioning Day, a preliminary report will be shared back with Listening Group participants for comment before being shared for any formal decision-making purposes.
 - A revised version of the report will be shared with the Permanent Board in May 2025
 - The final report will be brought to Sessions in August 2025

Roles and Reporting

Once the above plan is affirmed, the Program Director (Nia Thomas) will serve as Project Manager, ensuring the plan is implemented and that related updates and reports are shared appropriately.

Hopefully, a large number of Friends will say “yes” to serving as facilitators, notetakers, and conversation partners.

As questions arise, the Project Manager will contact relevant advisors, such as members of the Sessions Vision Planning Working Group, Listening Group facilitators, and the appropriate members of staff, current and recent Sessions planners, and Coordinating and Advisory.

The Events Coordinator will take a lead role in the feasibility study.

Periodic updates will be provided to Permanent Board and posted on the website.

Questions for Friends reading this plan

This plan is a living document, informed by ongoing conversation. In particular, we are looking for feedback about the following:

1. What excites you about this plan?
2. As we look towards revising or refining this plan ahead of Sessions, what questions or concerns do you have and what is your suggestion for how those concerns might be addressed? What is missing or confusing?
3. What role are you led to play?
 - a. Roles we know are needed: Listening Group Facilitators, Listening Group notetakers, outreach helpers (connecting Friends who are less involved in NEYM with Listening Groups), conversation partners to visit with peer or concern-based groups, researchers for feasibility study, elders

Appendix A: Initial brainstorm of content for Listening Group Packets [in development]

Background information provided to all Listening Group participants shall include:

1. Factsheet about the current Sessions model including Friends served, resources required, and history
2. Overview of current Yearly Meeting offerings for youth and adults and their intended purposes
3. Sketch of possible alternative models including likely pros, cons, and unknowns

Reminders for Listening Groups and Listening Group Facilitators

1. While it is necessary to make decisions regarding the model or shape of Sessions going forward, there is a need for particular reflection on how our practice of corporate discernment can deepen and enrich the lives of Friends across New England.
2. Friends should speak from their own experience. If it feels necessary to speak beyond one’s own experience, the speaker should clarify that what they are sharing is a perception and what, specifically that perception is based upon. This discipline makes space for us to test assumptions, acknowledge unknowns, and open our hearts and minds beyond our initial impressions. The facilitator will help the group maintain this necessary discipline.
3. Individuals speak from their own experience and do not represent all others in a demographic they may be a part of.
4. Be mindful of the tendency to oversimplify stories, to erase the multiplicity of factors that may have contributed to a given outcome, and to ascribe cause and effect based on limited evidence. Make space for curiosity and complexity, acknowledge unknowns, step back from generalizations that go beyond what we have individually experienced.
5. EXPLANATION OF PROCESS: The facilitator or another designated individual from each Listening Group will be invited to participate in an early spring Visioning Day to draw out themes heard across groups. After this Visioning Day, a preliminary report will be shared back with

Listening Group participants for comment before being shared for any formal decision-making purposes.

6. [insert information about other Listening Groups and perspectives included so that Friends are reassured they don't need to speak for others or from hypothetical concerns but rather from their own experience]

Guidance for Listening Group Notetakers

1. Ensure that each individual in the Listening Group has filled out a participation log. If they need support with this online form, assist them in filling it out. This log captures basic demographic information. The goal is to have a sense of what perspectives have been included in the listening process and where more focused invitations to participation may be particularly helpful. Information captured:
 - a. Name
 - b. Meeting/worship group (if any)
 - c. Roles in local meeting, Yearly Meeting, and Sessions (if any)
 - d. Age group: youth, younger adult, middle adult, older adult; parent of minors (yes/no)
 - e. Sessions participation history: has never attended, has not attended in 5+ years, attends sometimes; regularly attends

Top Reasons Why Friends Currently Participate in Sessions:

- Corporate Discernment (the founding reason, the core purpose named in Faith and Practice)
- Reflecting back on ourselves as Quakers: “Who are we as Quakers?”
- Quaker witness in the wider world
- Fellowship/relationship building
- Faith formation/spiritual growth (youth, adults, families)
- Worship
- To be with the ministers and elders among us and experience their gifts
- Learning about what Quakers are doing in other meetings, other places
- Gathering with Quaker peers you might not have in your local meeting (Friends who share your passion or your condition or your developmental stage)
- A sense of duty
- A desire to serve, give back, and/or share their gifts

What are the ways New England Friends and NEYM (the organization) could tend to the above things in a way that would be life-giving and realistic in terms of resources and accessibility?

Appendix B: Stakeholders

Who are the stakeholders?

There are four general categories of New England Friends in relation to Sessions:

<p>Committed Attenders Attend all or most of the time; their default is to attend Sessions unless something major comes up (serious illness, family wedding, etc.)</p>	<p>Provisional Attenders: Consider attending Sessions and even sometimes attend, sometimes don't depending on various factors some of which may be barriers.</p>
<p>Staff and Sessions Leadership: Must attend by nature of their service commitments; play key roles in putting on Sessions</p>	<p>Disinterested Friends: Quakers active in their meeting but not interested in Sessions. Even if we changed a number of factors about Sessions, the general concept is not particularly compelling.</p>

- o The people in the white boxes have a stake in the future of the Sessions event itself.
- o The active Friends in *all* boxes have a stake in how Sessions impacts local meetings.
- o The people in the darker shaded box may have particular insight into the most salient issues with the current Sessions model.

Appendix C: Brainstorm of Potential Listening Groups Focused on a Shared Concern or Experience

In addition to Listening Groups gathering Friends locally across perspectives and experiences, there will be Listening Groups focused on particular shared experiences or common concerns. These Listening Groups will not be traditional homogeneous “focus groups” (which can create silos) but rather will be composed of Friends drawn to the particular focus as well as Friends invited to serve as conversation partners bringing compassionate curiosity and dialogue, and reflecting back what is heard beneath the words.

The list below is a brainstorm of potential Listening Groups. As facilitators and conversation partners are identified and brought into this work, the precise groupings will be determined.

Possible Groups:

1. Life-stage based cohorts composed of Friends in life-stages which are often under-represented in local meeting, such as elementary-age youth, middle-school-age youth, high-school-age youth, emerging adults (ages 18–25), parents of minors. For all groups it will be important to include a mix of those who have and have not attended Sessions.
2. Concern-based groups, such as Friends carrying a concern for the quality of corporate discernment and worship in NEYM, Friends carrying a concern for the vitality of local meetings, Friends carrying a concern for Quaker witness in the wider world, Friends carrying a concern for Quaker family life and youth faith formation, Friends carrying a concern for the long-term financial health of NEYM
3. Friends for whom participating in Sessions is currently a significant challenge but would like to attend.

THE SESSIONS VISION PLANNING WORKING GROUP: MAGGIE FIORI (PORTLAND), ALISON LEVIE (NORTH-EAST KINGDOM), MATT SOUTHWORTH (HARTFORD), NIA THOMAS (NORTHAMPTON), PHILLIP VEATCH (FRESH POND)

Budget

**New England Yearly Meeting
FY2025 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed - Summary**

Approved by Finance Committee 4/26/2024

Category	FY2023	FY2023	FY2024	Δ FY24 to FY25 Budgets	FY20 Propo: Budg
	Actuals	Budget	Budget		
Income					
4010 Individual Contributions Total	197,009	230,225	223,000	5,000	
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions Total	348,668	373,000	342,000	3,000	
4025 Unallocated Income	33,451	31,000	0	-	
4030 Organizations Contributions		0	0	-	
4050 Interest and Dividend Income	7,761	12,000	12,000	(1,000)	
4070 Books & Other Sales Income	11,638	17,000	10,500	-	
4077 Consulting Fee Contribution	900				
4080 Retreat Program Fees	25,712	47,000	37,500	-	
4085 Sessions Program Fees	158,157	227,400	249,475	(34,580)	
4090 Change in Fair Market Value	3,225	0	0	-	
4099 Net Assets Released To/From	0	30,000	5,000	(5,000)	
Total Income	786,521	967,625	879,475	(32,580)	\$
Expenses					
Total 5000 Staff	462,754	493,684	503,842	12,472	\$
Total 5100 General & Administration	109,827	93,615	87,449	-	\$
Total 5300 Travel & Conferences	30,899	35,300	22,300	-	\$
Total 6000 Programs	193,220	284,300	256,012	(42,162)	\$
Total 6140 Books & Other Sales Expense	10,043	14,500	8,000	-	\$
Total 6200-6590 Support of Other Organizations	42,807	45,975	0	-	\$
Total 6600 Publications		0	0	-	
Total Expenses	849,549	967,374	877,603	(119,461)	\$
Net Operating Income	(63,028)	251	1,872	(1,269)	
Other Income					
9940 Other Income - Transfers from other funds	36,639				
Total Other Income	36,639				
Other Expenses					
9950 Other Expense - Transfer to other funds	8,789				
Total Other Expenses	8,789				
Net Other Income	27,850				
Net Income	(35,178)				

**New England Yearly Meeting
FY2025 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed - Detail**

Approved by Finance Committee 4/26/2024

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

Category	FY2023 Actuals	FY2023 Budget	FY2024 Budget		FY2025 Proposed Budget	Notes
5300 Travel & Conferences						
5310 Travel - Committee	1,278.60	3,000	1,400	-	1,400.00	
5320 Travel - Clerk	3,027.86	4,500	2,500	-	2,500.00	
5330 Travel - Programs	5,792.90	3,700	3,100	1,000	4,100.00	
5335 Travel - Representatives Travel	13,421.87	6,700	2,000	-	2,000.00	
5350 Travel - Staff	7,377.35	17,000	12,900	(1,000)	11,900.00	
5360 Travel - Ministries		400	400	-	400.00	
Total 5300 Travel & Conferences	30,898.58	35,300	22,300	-	\$ 22,300.00	
6000 Programs						
6110 Sessions Room & Board	126,566.25	192,950	169,442	(33,872)	135,570.00	1
6112 Retreats - Room & Board				-		
6114 Room Rental	8,632.35	13,550	10,000	-	10,000.00	
6150 Food Expense	13,161.07	15,930	10,000	-	10,000.00	
Total 6112 Retreats - Room & Board	21,793.42	29,480	20,000	-	\$ 20,000.00	
6125 Program Expenses				-		
6105 Honoraria - Speakers/Wkshp Ldrs	15,672.00	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	6,637.09	6,000	6,500	-	6,500.00	
6121 Supplies and Other Expenses	4,966.76	7,300	9,000	(4,000)	5,000.00	
6165 Pre-Sessions Expense	1,524.82	1,000	1,500	-	1,500.00	
Total 6125 Program Expenses	40,050.67	51,300	56,000	(7,000)	\$ 49,000.00	
6130 Committee Expenses - General	1,632.27	6,350	6,350	(1,950)	4,400.00	
6134 Childcare	297.00	2,000	2,000	-	2,000.00	
6137 Committee Day Expenses		0	0	-	0.00	
Total 6130 Committee Expenses - General	1,929.27	8,350	8,350	(1,950)	\$ 6,400.00	
6160 Program Support				-		
6163 Friends Camp	2,880.00	2,220	2,220	660	2,880.00	
6167 Religious Education & Outreach		0	0	-	0.00	
Total 6160 Program Support	2,880.00	2,220	2,220	660	\$ 2,880.00	
Total 6000 Programs	193,219.61	284,300	256,012	(42,162)	\$ 213,850.00	
6140 Books & Other Sales Expense		0	0	-		
6142 Books	2,696.87	14,500	8,000	-	8,000.00	
6145 Other Items for Sale	1,126.41	0	0	-	0.00	
6147 Consignment Sales	6,220.13	0	0	-	0.00	
Total 6140 Books & Other Sales Expense	10,043.41	14,500	8,000	-	\$ 8,000.00	
6200 Support of Other Organizations				-		
Total 6200-6590 Support of Other Organizations	42,806.86	45,975	0	-	\$ 0.00	
6600 Publications				-		
Total 6600 Publications	0	0	0	-	\$ 0.00	
Total Expenses	849,548.82	967,374	877,603	(119,461)	\$ 847,913.00	
Net Operating Income	(63,027.57)	251	1,872	(1,269)	(1,018.00)	
Other Income						
9940 Other Income - Transfers from other funds	36,638.89					
Total Other Income	36,638.89				-	
Other Expenses						
9950 Other Expense - Transfer to other funds	8,789.03					
Total Other Expenses	8,789.03				-	
Net Other Income	27,849.86				-	
Net Income	(35,177.71)				(1,018.00)	

1. Sessions registration fee income: assumptions: 8% fee increase over 2024; 450 attendees (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 similar to 2023
1. Sessions costs: increase 3.5% 2024+2025
- 2: 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
- 3: No use of reserves in 4090 Net Assets Released to/from. The \$5000 for FY23 was per PB minute about Volunteer Leadership honoraria
4. Staff salary/wage increase by cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) of 2.0%, CPI for Boston metro area January 2024.
4. Recent previous COLAs have been: FY24 6.1%, FY23 6.3%, FY22 0.5%, FY21 2.22%
4. Health insurance: rates actually went *down* 8.12% from 2023 to 2024; number of staff family members insured has gone up.

Nominating Slate

Names in bold are to be considered for approval. Bold italics indicate a reappointment. These nominations are from the Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee. Please be in touch with the Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee clerk, Jackie Stillwell (jacqueline.stillwell@gmail.com or 603-933-2608) with questions or concerns.

Permanent Board (50)

2025

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

2028

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

2026

- Allen, Kimberly (Durh)
- Davies, Susan (Vass)*
- Zwirner, Mary (Bhill)
- Schwoppe, Martha (Well)***

2029

Belcher, Travis (Mon)

2027

- Brenner, Tom (Worc)
- Drayton, Darcy (Souh)
- Isbell Shinn, Newell (Mt Toby)
- Jordan, Carolyn Lamar (Wfal)
- Klepack, Meg (WSan)
- Stamm, Liesa (Hart)

Archives & Historical Records (6)

2025

- Forsythe, Carol (Put)*

2028

- Grannell, Andy (Port)

2026

- Schmidt, Maxine (Nham)

2029

- Barker, Mark (Con)**
- Kohlhofer, Merrill (NSho)**

2027

- Cazden, Betsy (Prov)

Board of Managers of Investments & Permanent Funds (10)

2025

- McKnight, Jeanne (Well)

2028

2026

- Wernette, Tim (Win)

2029

2027

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

Clerks' Table

2025

Leuchak, Rebecca (Prov), Presiding
 Wright, Michelle (Putn), Reading
 Jensen, Megan (Mon), Recording

2026

Veatch, Phillip (FPon), Rising Clerk

2027

Grace, Jesse, Reading

Committee for Nurturing Friends Education (6)

2025

Steele, Ariana (Prov)
 Tripp, Dawn (Alln)

2026

2027

Faith & Practice (16)

Armstrong, Doug (Mon)
 Athearn, Marian (Wprt)
 Edmondson, Maggie (Wint)

Edwards, Eric (Wfal)
 Godway, Eleanor (Hart)
 Hilles-Pilant, Carolyn (Bhil)

McCosker, Phebe* (Han)
Neumann, Bruce (FPon)
 Reilly, Sue (Port)

Finance (10)

2025

Drysdale, Robert Scot (Han)*
Maurer, Philip (Nham)

2026

Keith, Doug (Hart)
 Corindia, Thomas (Han)

2027

Walker, Stefan (Nham)

2028

2029

Treasurer:

2027

Dalton, Marian (Brun)

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

2025

Keefe-Perry, Kristina (FPon)

2026

Reuthe, John (Vassalboro)

2027

Baker, Carol (Westerly)

Anna Hopkins and Natalie Bornstein, appointed by Friends Camp Committee

Legacy Gift Committee (9)

2025

Christopher, Megan (Well)
 Isbell Shinn, Jennie (MVin)
 Link, Mary (Mtob)*

2026

2027

Reixach, Karen (Keen)

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

2028

Baker-Smith, Gretchen (Wprt)
 McArthur, Hugh (Han)
 Wilson, Morgan (Fram)
 Woodrow, Honor (Putn)

2028

Gant, Sarah (Bhil)*

2029

Stamm, Liesa (Hart)

Ministry & Counsel Clerk

2025

Williams, Carl (Pfld)

Puente de Amigos (9)

2025

Lindo, Richard (Fram)
 Schmidt, Maxine (NHAm)

2026

2027

Sessions Planning Clerk

2027

Sessions Theme and Speakers Team (5; two-year terms)

2025

O'Hara, Jay (Port)
 Grace, Isaiah (Bhil)
 Isbell-Shinn, Jennie (MtTob)

2026

Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee (15) (nominated by Permanent Board)

2025

Lindo, Anna (Fram)
 Smith, Sara (Con)
Stillwell, Jackie (Mon)

2026

Gant, Christopher (Bhill)
 Hansen, Beth (Wrly)**
 Lamm, Thomas (Worc)
 Schwope, Martha (Well)

2027

Manning, Leslie (Durh)

Youth Ministries (6)

2025

2026

Barletta, Newton (Fram)
 Corindia, Nancy (Han)

2027

Becce, Melissa

Representatives to Other Friends Organizations

American Friends Service Committee Corp. (4)

2025

Barker, Mark (Conc)

2026

Weaver, Hal (Well)

2027

Steele, Becky (Port)

boldface = new appointment | boldface italic = re-appointment | *clerk | **recording clerk

Friends Committee on National Legislation (6)

2025

Grace, James (BHil)

Southworth, Matt (Hart)

2026

Telenar, Kaj (Well)

Drysdale, Scot (Han)

2027

Friends General Conference Central Committee Representatives (8)

2025

2025

2026

Friends Peace Teams Project (3)

Claggett-Borne, Minga (Cam)

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

Fogarty, Maggie (Dov)

Walker, Stefan (Nham)

Weinholtz, Diane (Hart)

Heath, Ruth (Con)

Weaver, Hal (Well)

Weinholtz, Donn (Hart)

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

Keefe-Perry, Kristina (Fpon)

Smith, Jennifer (Conc)

Friends World Committee Representatives (7)

2025

Goldberger, Judy (Bhil)

2026

Jorgenson, Chris (Camb)

2027

Lindo, Anna (Fram)

Halliwell, Briana (Vass)

Quaker Earthcare Witness (1)

Haines, Christopher (Fpon)

Staff Reports

Secretary

The Yearly Meeting Secretary's report will be presented at Sessions, and a text will then be available.

ARCH Coordinator

End of Life Reflection Group

Through our first year with the Aging Resources Consultation and Help ministry, elders and seekers across NEYM have explored their experiences of living with an awareness of death close by. Participants shared experiences of diminishments and deepenings, all received with attentive listening from group members with an occasional bit of advice.

Every other month we reflected on one of the six Pendle Hill pamphlets that address different experiences with death. I appreciated the leadership of some members who would describe their chosen pamphlet and lead us into discussion. We alternated months with an open sharing, focused on experiences of living with aging and disabilities.

After our Zoom gatherings I often needed to take a solitary walk to absorb the messages before I could reenter my day's business. I feel so blessed to help create a container for this wise and changing group.

This September we will renew our online series with an open sharing, especially welcoming new folks. Choosing from an abundance of options, the group decided that beginning in October we will begin reflections on *The Light of Evening: Meditations on Growing in Old Age*, written by our own member, Gunilla Norris. All are invited to join us at 10 a.m. on the second Thursday each month, by registering at neym.org.

Workshops

Advance Planning Series

I presented a 3-part series online on planning for serious illness, deathcare, and remembrance. This was well attended, with some participants arriving with their partner or key family member. My presentations drew on knowledge garnered from being a funeral consumer activist, an end-of-life doula, and my ARCH role. The questions from participants led to my developing an online resource manual, which I plan to finish in the coming months.

Sessions

Summer gatherings gave me a wonderful opportunity to meet with Friends both informally over meals and in workshop settings. I offered these workshops last year.

- Caregiving Stories—Blessings and Struggles, cofacilitated with a Beacon Hill Friends Meeting member
- Challenging Conversations with loved ones about our long-term plans

- Sharing the Road Ahead, in person and online, cofacilitated with New York Yearly Meeting's ARCH Director

I look forward to this year's Sessions and new offerings.

Monthly Meetings and Other Gatherings

I've had the pleasure of visiting a few meetings this year, both online and in person. Allen's Neck Monthly Meeting is doing great work building support for their aging members and they have also become a resource for the Yearly Meet-

ing. We all face the needs of our elderly members and those with health and disability concerns. Reflecting with my own meeting's pastoral care team, I've learned that there is no line separating spiritual and physical support when our actions are heart-centered.

Our new Faith and Practice chapter on "Dying, Death and Bereavement" lists among meeting responsibilities that we encourage advance planning and aid those dying and those grieving with a clearness or support committee. I'm eager to hear how you and your meeting are facing these grave matters and how I can help you.

—PATRICIA MULDOON

Children and Family Ministries Coordinator

As I look back on my second year with Yearly Meeting staff, I am struck by the resilience and vitality of our youth retreat programs.

For the first time since the pandemic, Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) held all our retreats in person. The new crop of families from last year gave way to an exponentially increasing number of parent volunteers this year. Our fall retreat at Woolman Hill explored emotional expression with 26 children and 13 staff. Our winter retreat was an exercise in coziness at Wellesley Friends Meeting with 31 children and 12 staff, and in June we returned to the birthplace of JYM, Westport Friends Meeting, to reflect on Rites of Passage with 19 children and 15 staff.

Four sixth graders advanced to the Junior High Yearly Meeting program (JHYM), which also welcomed two new participants drawn in by Friends Camp connections and an 8th-grader who hadn't attended a retreat since the pandemic. Two new parent volunteers joined our staff and we celebrated the return of two veteran staffers who weren't able to participate last year. Twelve youth and 8 staff came together for a service retreat at Storrs Friends Meeting in October; the joy of musical expression was explored by 13 youth and 8 staff at Framingham Monthly Meeting in January; and finally, we bid farewell to our 8th graders after an important, albeit awkward, conversation about adolescence for our Rites of Passage retreat at Woolman Hill in May, with 14 youth and 7 staff.

And though it is not under my purview, I have admired from afar how the high-school program, Young Friends, has continued under the cohesive leadership of Interim Coordinator Drew Chasse, Program Assistant Kenzie Burpee, and new Teen & Outreach Ministries Coordinator Collee Williams. I am grateful for our collaborations and collegial relationships.

Last year's epistle from the Young Adult Friends reminded us that the sustainability of our youth programs depends on our collective care and respect for the volunteers' needs, particularly at Sessions. This year, there has been extensive communication between the coordinators of each program in the months leading up to Sessions regarding recruitment, planning, and self-care. (Thank you for letting youth staff skip the line in the dining hall!) I'm confident that each program will have a robust, well-rested, and well-nourished

staff, and that each coordinator will have constant support from an assistant, mentor, or trusted confidant.

In support of monthly meetings, I held four virtual sessions for Local Youth Ministers Supporting Each Other (LYMSE). At these sessions, a total of 20 Friends received practical tips, shared lesson ideas, and formed relationships for follow-up consultations.

I continue to be grateful to serve the yearly meeting in this capacity, doing what I love with and for a community that loves me back. I am particularly appreciative of the patience and support I received while my family navigated multiple health challenges, and I am eager to put my full energy into this work in the coming year.

—KARA PRICE

Events Coordinator

Dear Friends,

Looking back at my earliest reports as Events Coordinator, I was full of optimism, energy, and even a few pop-culture references. Over these past seven years a lot has happened. Beginning with the need to shift Sessions online during the pandemic, every year seems to have some major new challenge, and honestly, I am tired. I look forward to being with you all again to be reminded of why I do this and all we can be when we are together. So, in a theme which continues to reemerge, this has been a challenging year. Along with the struggles though, there have been many growing edges and bright spots. I would like to reflect on with you in this report.

Our New England community of Friends has come together in the spirit of fellowship, learning, community, and service in many ways this year. Three of the gatherings of note are as follows.

Meeting Care Day: Last year's Meeting Care Day was an opportunity for Friends who serve in formal roles in their local Quaker meeting. It was a day to connect with others serving in similar roles in their monthly meetings to discuss challenges, explore best practices through conversation and workshops, and share worship and lunch. The daylong event was held last November at Moses Brown School and will be held this year on November 16 at Friends School of Portland (Maine).

Living Faith: This past April more than 120 Friends gathered for a day of worship, fellowship, and community. This year's Living Faith was held at the Friends Academy in North Dartmouth Massachusetts and once again featured a parallel teen retreat. It was so wonderful to have so many teens participate in Living Faith as part of the retreat program, and it was a great inaugural retreat for Collee Williams (Teen & Outreach Ministries Coordinator). The connections formed during Living Faith continue to strengthen our community. The next Living Faith location is still being finalized but we intend to hold it in the greater Boston area in late March of 2025.

Sessions: On its surface, Annual Sessions seems like such a straightforward thing. Friends join together for corporate discernment and community; done and dusted. Of course, we know that description overlooks a great deal of complexity. Sessions is that, and so much more. Sessions is a chance for youth and teens to connect, a time to conduct the business of the Yearly Meeting, a pause for worship, a sharing of joys and sorrows, a family vacation, an opportunity

to learn and share. Managing the infrastructure for Sessions is the single largest and most complicated part of my work. Luckily, I do not do it alone. Between Noah's unexpected leave in the first few weeks of the year, and Sara's illness, there was every opportunity for things to fall apart. Instead, due to the intentional teamwork we have built over these past seven years, thanks to our love for each other and this community, thanks to a great deal of hard work by a lot of people, we are arriving at these Annual Sessions close to where we would be in a "typical" year.

The search for a new site for Sessions is continuing alongside a process of discernment about the shape of Sessions. There are a few potential sites under consideration. Work on that is happening even during the final weeks before Sessions. We are entering another time of uncertainty and change. I am confident that that will bring some sadness and grief for what was. I also aspire to do my part to reveal the beauty and joy yet to come.

"We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty." —Maya Angelou

—ELIZABETH HACALA

Friends Camp Director

Dear Friends:

Campers and counselors tell us that one of the best parts of being at Friends Camp is feeling present in the moment. They are undistracted by technology, connected by Spirit and community, and filling their hearts with the joys of summer. For our community to experience this gathered sense of presence at camp, as stewards of camp we must also look to the future and ensure this privilege exists for the next generation of youth.

For the Friends Camp Committee and for myself, this has been a year of looking forward and planning for the short- and the long-term future of camp. We have done the hard work to pre-prepare for me (the Camp Director) to be on leave for 5 months, after welcoming my first child last August. I returned to work from parental and sabbatical leave in February with a new-found awe for life itself and awareness of the demands of parenting. I am filled with gratitude to the people who made it possible for me to be so present with Louisa while she was a new-born baby. It is an achievement for Friends Camp to have been able to manage and fund my absence, as Friends Camp has long had just one full-time, year-round employee.

As the stewards of Friends Camp, we are called now to look forward and to ensure the longer-term future of camp. I firmly believe that summer camp is more important than ever before, as it is the garden where young people can learn to change our world. They develop skills in listening, self-awareness, and communication that they carry to the world outside camp. Friends Camp is a fruitful and necessary garden of leadership for Quakers in New England and beyond. Yet, operating summer camp is more demanding of resources than ever before, as well. The costs of staffing have increased dramatically, both due to standards of fair pay and a need for more staff to support campers. Materials, food, insurance, vehicles, and other operating expenses have increased in cost. Along these rising costs, our camp community has grown; in 2024, we expect more than 450 individual youth campers and 50 staff members.

A task before the Friends Camp Committee, and New England Yearly Meeting as a whole, is how to ensure the future of Friends Camp. We must be prepared to weather rising costs while continuing our commitment to inclusion and campership funds. We must consider long-term financial commitments such as creating an endowment fund, in consultation with wider NEYM fundraising efforts. We must continue to invest in our existing, aging property so that we are prepared for warmer summers and more intense storms. We must continue to develop volunteer and staff leaders of camp so that we are resilient when someone needs to step away.

We must nurture our young adult counselors so that they may show up to guide and support our campers.

—ANNA HOPKINS (CAMP DIRECTOR)

Office Manager

My work from year to year is very much the same, although there are shifts and variations. From day to day and month to month, I answer emails, respond to requests for help, generate reports from the database, help write fundraising appeals, write thank-you notes, send tax receipts, edit the newsletter, maintain the website.

Please remember, Friends, to keep in touch. Who needs prayers? Who has moved in or out? Who has died? Send me your meeting newsletters and address lists, please. (Friends who wish not to receive fundraising letters or any mail at all can indicate that, and their database record will be marked accordingly.)

Annually, I collect state of society reports and monthly meeting statistics, memorial minutes, and reports from staff, committees, and representatives to other Quaker organizations; coordinate updates to the registration site with our website and database consultants; and produce these advance documents for Sessions.

This is not an exhaustive list.

I also take on special projects. This year I've been reading through minutes from Annual Sessions going back to 1945 to collect information for Permanent Board working groups and to collect our state of society reports, epistles, and substantive minutes. As I was a history major in college, I have a deep interest in primary source material and, Friends, that is what we are creating and, I hope, preserving.

Reading those old minutes, I am struck with the themes and issues that come to the floor of Sessions again and again: nurturing our youth; supporting local meetings¹; creating and recreating structures that best serve our work; funding the budget, and managing deficits. Sometimes I chuckle, sometimes I shake my head and wonder whether our efforts are futile, but I don't despair. We try, we fail, we try again, over and over, but we persist. I hope we can have faith in our persistence—and in God's presence in our labors.

All routines went out the window when late in the winter I was diagnosed with a low-grade, stage 1 lymphoma. I started four rounds of chemotherapy in April, in 3-week cycles. Some of you who have been through chemo yourself or have

witnessed others' treatment know how exhausting it is. I haven't had bad side effects other than the unavoidable hair loss, but it has taken a toll on my body and mind, and made it more difficult to do the quality of work I prefer to do.

I am grateful for the quality of health care I am receiving, for the great insurance coverage the Yearly Meeting provides, and for the support of Friends and coworkers.

In a typical year, working on campus during Sessions is exhausting, so this year I will be staying home to conserve energy, but with the help of office assistants and volunteers, all the office work will get done as usual—name tags, the Yearly Meeting News, schedules and other handouts, and the rest. I'll see some of you, at least, on Zoom. (Sorry for the loss of revenue to the bookstores; I'll try to make it up next year.)

—SARA HUBNER

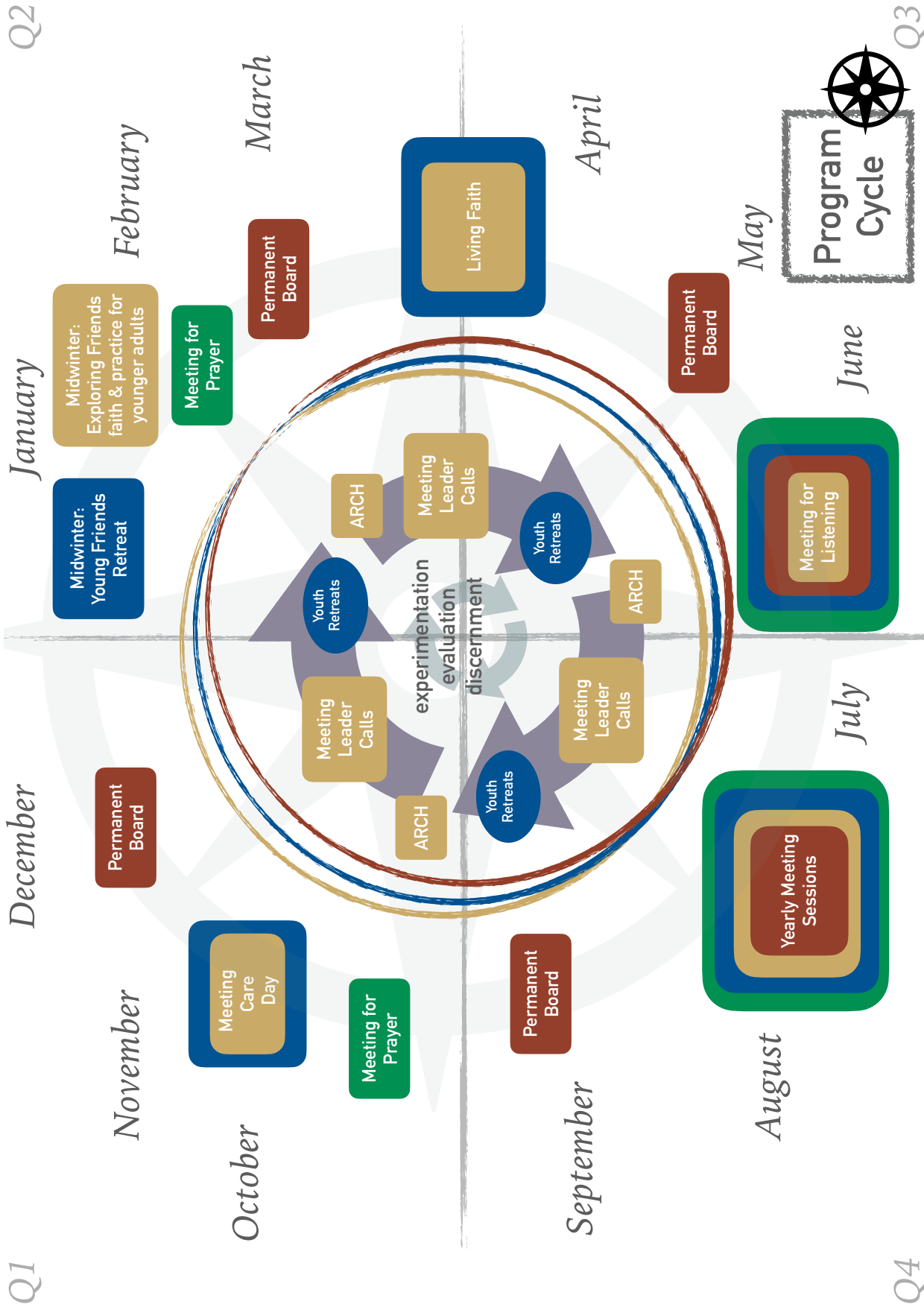
Program Director

My service as Program Director lies at the intersection of two very big questions: "How can hearts and communities today be fed by the richness of the Quaker faith?" and "What does it look like to cultivate the capacities needed for the long-term health of the Quaker movement in New England?" Holding both the immediacy of the Life available to us now and the enduring invitation to diligently steward all that is in our collective care, I move through the conversations and tasks that make up my days.

A deep joy I find in the Program Director role is it allows me to look across the spiritual ecosystem that is our yearly meeting, and—like in my rambles through the woods not far from my home—there are regular discoveries of pockets of life and unfolding life cycles. There is always more happening than any one person can witness, yet collectively our "sightings" provide a growing understanding of the shared Life we participate in together. These sightings come through monthly calls with those serving in leadership roles within their local meetings, visits to retreats for youth and adults, reading State of Society reports and local meeting newsletters, conversations with individuals, and the structured and unstructured conversations at our smaller workshops and larger events such as Meeting Care Day, Living Faith, and the Meeting for Listening. Although there are certainly places across our yearly meeting where Friends are wrestling with complex and painful challenges, it is also astounding how much Life abounds, how consistent are the reminders of God's continual presence and re-creation with and through us.

Beyond the awe-filled witnessing of Creation, there is, of course, work to do. Maintenance. Sustaining what is still ours to tend. Keeping the kitchen clean for the next cooks. This sort of service takes commitment to and faith in the mission of the Yearly Meeting, to nourish Quaker faith and practice through supporting the thriving of Friends meetings across our region. It also takes collective accountability. Throughout the year, our programming is offered in various forms. Then data are gathered, reflection meetings are held, reports are written. Guiding documents outlining "big

¹ For those who worry about our diminishing numbers, the 1945 statistics total 3521 members; for 2023 statistics (the most recent completed report), members total 3185, albeit in many fewer meetings. Please note that 37 of our 61 monthly meetings did not submit statistical reports—so who knows what our numbers really are? If your meeting needs help with membership record-keeping, please contact me at office@neym.org



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

picture” priorities and measures of success for the Yearly Meeting’s various initiatives bring groups of Friends serving together back to our core commitments as ripe possibilities and distractions alike arise. These shared-accountability practices make decision-making possible and keep the Yearly Meeting’s metaphorical “chore wheel” turning so our shared spiritual home is ever-ready for new guests at our door. This maintenance, monitoring, and communication is far less visible (or glamorous) than the workshops, retreats, and other events themselves, but it is where the majority of the work happens.

This collective accountability and basic functioning are, of course, impossible where the underlying purpose is unclear or the current approach is beyond our current resources. In these places, the work of keeping things going can quickly become an overwhelming exercise in cheap blame and self-defeat. Because of this, I am deeply grateful and hopeful as the Yearly Meeting steps into shared, intentional conversation and discernment about our vision and priorities for the future of our Annual Sessions as well as our longer-term finances. We have made the space this year to step into hard but much-needed conversations about volunteer recruitment and care, outreach, and leadership transitions. Together, we are learning to look at the gap between where we are and where we yearn to be with curiosity, compassion, and courage.

Making space to attend to this discernment together, to move through still-unfolding significant junctures in our shared journey, will mean the coming year will be less about lots of new initiatives and more about sustaining the quality of the pillars of our current program cycle: Sessions in August, Meeting Care Day in November, Young Adult Midwinter in February, Living Faith in March, the Meeting for Listening in June, and youth retreats and monthly calls with meeting leaders year-round. In this seasonal rhythm of programmatic offerings, we aim to offer Friends opportunities that complement and enliven what’s available locally without displacing the center of gravity of our lives of faith: our weekly worship and its resulting relationships; our daily spiritual practices. Staying committed to what is most essential requires discipline, the willingness to honor our core commitments by giving them the space and resources they require. In this, I sometimes encounter disappointment or the fear of not doing enough. On these days, I return to the wisdom that was at the heart of this winter’s especially rich and well-attended Young Adult Friends Midwinter Retreat. My role as Program Director is not to produce the biggest buffet of spiritually flavored offerings for Quaker-approving consumers. Rather, our programmatic offerings are one way the Yearly Meeting lives into its mission: allowing our faith to unify the wholeness of our lives; a purpose affirmed by the depth and the fruits experienced over time.

Reflecting over the year, my heart is grateful. As our wider world undergoes dizzying change, it feeds me to serve alongside so many Friends helping meetings and ministries gently adapt to current conditions and sometimes disappointing or painful realities. The permeating liminality of our time can leave us all feeling adrift, and the mutual accompaniment we can offer each other is an invaluable gift. Looking back on how I’ve logged my work hours over the past year, it doesn’t surprise me to see the many hundreds of hours walking alongside our youth ministries staff and volunteers, and developing opportunities for connection, learning, and consultation among those serving their local meet-

ings. My service is often challenging, but it is rarely lonely. May you each experience this same blessing in your call. As another annual cycle of our service together concludes, I give thanks to you, fellow pilgrims.

—NIADWYNWEN THOMAS

Teen and Outreach Ministries Coordinator

Dear Friends:

My name is Collee Williams. Quakers have been an essential part of my spiritual journey since I began worshipping at Mt. Toby and attending retreats with other young adults in 2014. In the years since I have engaged in youth ministry in multiple congregations, though I always yearned for opportunities to serve youth in our Yearly Meeting. I was thrilled when I was offered and accepted the new role of Teen & Outreach Ministries Coordinator last winter.

My role consists of ministering to the needs of the Young Friends (high school age) and young adults in our Yearly Meeting. There are differing intentions and objectives for both constituencies. In the Young Friends program I work with Resource Persons (adult volunteers) to provide youth with flexible opportunities for spiritual nurture, faith formation, loving care, and relationship building. While we still aim to achieve this through the traditional model of seasonal big group weekend retreats, we are exploring other options of spiritual accompaniment beyond that, including partnerships with local meetings to support smaller, localized youth group models of engagement.

For young adults in our Yearly Meeting, we have a yearly weekend retreat at Woolman Hill in February in addition to a shared dorm and activities at Annual Sessions. We are also exploring opportunities for young adults to gather throughout the year in conjunction with events like Living Faith and Meeting for Listening.

One overlapping area of ministry that I have felt drawn to is supporting both former Young Friends in navigating their relationship to Quaker practice during college and the first few years after high school, in addition to engaging college-age seekers and those new to Quakers. Both communities of young adults benefit from strong outreach efforts from local monthly meetings, particularly those situated near college campuses. In making and maintaining connections with young adults and newcomers, where do you sense that there is room to grow in your meeting? What life-giving practices have you discovered? It is my wish to support this journey together with local meetings to reinforce this inter-generational bridge of connection.

Looking ahead to Annual Sessions and beyond, it is clear that Young Friends and young adults are in need of additional support from the wider Yearly Meeting community. With Young Friends, there is a need for more adults to volunteer as Resource Persons, especially from older adults at Annual Sessions. What are the implications for our Yearly Meeting if young adults are not able to participate equally in business meetings at Sessions due to filling the majority of volunteer roles for youth programming at Sessions? How can we step further into shared care and stewardship of our youth programs?

I look forward to working together to nurture the growth and faith development of the Young Friends and young adults in our Yearly Meeting. If you’re interested in being in further conversation you can reach me at collee@neym.org.

—COLLEE WILLIAMS

Committee and Board Reports

Permanent Board

The Permanent Board (PB) has met in four all-day hybrid meetings, held in different quarters around the Yearly Meeting, and in five, shorter Zoom meetings, since last year's Sessions. All Yearly Meetings Friends are welcome to attend regular meetings of the PB. A complete record of PB minutes and advance documents can be accessed for each meeting, on the NEYM website, by searching "Decisions and Discernment." The current Board has 29 regular members and eight ex-officio members. Nearly half of PB members are further serving on one or more Yearly Meeting or PB working groups or committees. We have mourned the deaths of three of our members this year and supported our Yearly Meeting Secretary after he suffered the violent death of his brother and only sibling in January.

The members of PB have been nominated, and serve on behalf of all Yearly Meeting Friends, to implement the decisions and priorities of the Yearly Meeting, as directed by Sessions. The Board is to thoughtfully season and decide issues of immediate concern throughout the year, and to be attentive to the spiritual health of the entire Body of New England Friends between annual sessions. Because PB (in conjunction with Sessions and/or the Coordinating and Advisory Committee) is responsible for the oversight of 13 Standing Committees and five working, research, or resources groups, and for discernment of ways forward for new or modified initiatives coming out of Sessions, the aspiration and longing to "thoughtfully season" can feel in direct opposition to the tyranny of time limitations. The work before us is urgent and important and each charge from Sessions, picked up by faithful Friends, is deserving of Permanent Board's deep listening, gratitude, and discernment. With so much to attend to, at times, efforts towards faithfulness in some groups have been dashed and disappointed by PB. We are frayed with anxiety and urgency stemming from the real catastrophes of the world we live in. Narratives spring up in different parts of the Yearly Meeting, telling different stories about where we are, and why, and who is to blame, and who is "right". At the beginning of the year Nia Thomas, Program Director, brought to Coordinating and Advisory the book *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going: Leading in a Liminal Season* by Susan Beaumont. One does not have to have read the book to recognize our condition in the title. We are all doing our very best to birth the emergent, but unknowable future for NEYM, and for a better world to come. For encouragement, I look to the wise and benevolent words Jeremiah Dickinson (Dover) offered recently to his meeting:

"The work before us is not a problem to be solved but a faithful path to be discerned. ... Let us gather, ready to speak the truth as it is given to us and to listen tenderly and with open hearts to the truth as it is given to others."

—SUSAN DAVIES, CLERK, PERMANENT BOARD

Archives & Historical Records

This year the Committee began work with the selection of a new Outreach Archivist, Tamara Gaydos. We also welcomed

new committee member, Andy Grannell, who has been a wonderful addition to our committee with his enthusiasm.

The core work this year of the committee has been three-fold:

- Support for the work Tamara has led with Danielle Kovacs in reviewing and updating the process for submission of meeting records to UMass Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA);
- The nearly complete development of records retention schedule for monthly and quarterly meetings;
- Support to the Indigenous Boarding School working group, with a statement regarding access to records, as well as mentoring a summer intern, Charlie Barnard.

We continue to hold as a goal for future work the development of a better relationship with the Maine Historical Society, which holds many records from Maine meetings and statewide committees.

Much of the committee time was reviewing and supporting Tamara in her work with SCUA and outreach to Meetings. This is evident in the reports from both Tamara Gaydos and Danielle Kovacs included below.

Danielle Kovacs, Curator of Collections at SCUA, reports:

- Completed digitization of the bound volumes. The digital objects are currently available online via the Internet Archive but there are plans to add them to Credo, SCUA's digital repository.
- Met with the Archives Committee to review and update archives policies, including process for acquiring and describing new/additions to collections; deed of gift and transfer forms; workflow and expectations.
- on transfer forms and update the current deed of gift.
- Updated all finding aids to reflect recent additions to collections; acquired and ingested digital accessions, communicated with meeting contacts to assist in acquisitions.

Tamara Gaydos reports:

I began my position as Outreach Archivist in October 2023. In November, I visited SCUA and met with Danielle Kovacs and Aaron Rubenstein to determine policies and procedures and examined the NEYM records at SCUA. I updated the deeds of gift and instructions to meetings which are located on the NEYM website. In February, I emailed all monthly and quarterly meetings to encourage them to donate their records to SCUA. This included researching what SCUA already had in its collection. I worked with Danielle to find physical and electronic donations, update finding aids, codify procedures, make sure donations were added to finding aids, and catch up on acknowledgements. I worked with several meetings to facilitate the transfer of their records to SCUA. With Carol Forsythe, I advised the Friends Camp Director on how to improve her grant application for archiving old records she found. I attended monthly meetings with the Archives Committee and worked with them on policies for donating electronic records and a records collections policy.

—CAROL FORSYTHE, CLERK

Coordinating and Advisory

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

Underlying all that we do is our commitment to listening for the guidance of Spirit, the divine grounding which, when profoundly present, gives us the strength to engage in our challenging work.

We met this year, as in previous years, in person for three working retreats in the fall, winter, and spring/summer and between those gatherings we met monthly on Zoom. Our post-Sessions retreat last September involved prayerful consideration of how we wish to work together and discernment of the themes and priorities before the committee and those before each of the members of the committee for the year to come. We named our work clearly and over the course of the ensuing year set priorities from among the many initiatives, concerns, and ongoing activities of our Yearly Meeting.

The committee is charged with the supervision of the Yearly Meeting secretary and overall care for our Yearly Meeting staff. After the untimely and violent death of Noah Merrill's brother, we met in deep grief and concern for him and his family and for our Yearly Meeting as we sought a way forward to support both individuals and our community and our work. We felt the resilience of Friends shine through in this dark time, as we were guided to find solutions for work reassignment and balancing and temporary funding for staff from the Legacy Gift Fund and the Obadiah Brown Benevolent Fund. Support for Noah and the staff and our Yearly Meeting continues unflagging and ongoing since that tragic occurrence in January, and more recently in response to our community's needs as we have experienced the loss of a number of long-time, dear members of our Yearly Meeting. These Friends' example of selfless service to our Quaker family gives us inspiration and sustenance to carry on in our own efforts.

In that same spirit, another essential function of C&A is to advise and support each member of the committee in their own respective service. These are the Yearly Meeting presiding clerk; the clerks of Permanent Board, Ministry & Counsel, Finance Committee, and Nominating Committee; the clerk of the Accompaniment Group; our Yearly Meeting Secretary, the Secretary's supervisor, the Yearly Meeting Program Director, and our Yearly Meeting Treasurer. We represent a group of Friends, servant leaders and staff, who serve in different roles with specific responsibilities that give us different lenses or perspectives on our Yearly Meeting community. We engage these sensibilities as we consider in careful listening to, and communication with, our beloved community. That diversity of vantage points helps us to prayerfully hold the Yearly Meeting in its wholeness as we do our work to support its movement forward.

A discernment of the committee this year has been the need for greater coordination in our work with the concerns, needs, and calendar of the Permanent Board and the many benefits which greater collaboration with that body of Friends could bring. Indeed, we have witnessed an increasing sense of working together and mutual support towards

our common goals. Together we have explored how in our faith community, as a working partnership, we can be example and witness of Spirit at work in the world.

Our first and most uplifting awareness is of the incredible vitality and energy that is moving among us in New England Yearly Meeting: new monthly meetings established, multiple gatherings of Friends from across the region throughout the year, ongoing funding support for Friends' leadings to service and care of monthly meetings, careful listening and support for each other in our monthly and quarterly meetings, exciting educational programs and workshops, careful research that is deepening our awareness of our complicity in systemic racism and oppression throughout history, Friends' witness as they travel in the ministry, continued engagement with Friends beyond the Yearly Meeting, and the donation of time and treasure by many, many Friends and monthly meetings in support of our community.

While there is much good news, over the course of the year we have listened carefully to expressions of frustration and doubt. And we have seen in a wider perspective how much the instabilities of our world are inextricably part of our current condition in the Society of Friends. We have gained appreciation for where and how we all may let each other down and stray from the path of Spirit's calling. Perceptions and personal opinions and faulty communication have driven some of the tensions that our community has experienced. C&A members have understood the concerns raised and believe that better communication among us all is fundamental and that it must be grounded in open loving hearts and careful listening to others. We are heartened that the work, begun in gathered discernment at Sessions 2023, to create a Conflict Response Working Group has resulted in creation of its charge and approval by Permanent Board in their Spring meeting.

C&A Committee has supported this year, and will continue to support, the growing energy and initiative in many areas of the Yearly Meeting. From growing support of the youth of our Yearly Meeting, offering care for the elders of our community, developing new structures of ministry and counsel, working to create space for productive response to conflict, creating new intergenerational endeavors in fund raising, exploring how we are called to support ministry, visioning the future of Yearly Meeting Sessions, encouraging the vitality of our Friends Camp, clarifying the use of our Yearly Meeting resources to support God's work in the world of Friends, to providing of pastoral care and nurturing of the spiritual health of our local meetings.

Within the context of all of these exciting and challenging developments, an important concern that we have been carrying for some time is the need for more hands to do the work that Spirit is calling us to do. You will see in many of the reports included in these advance documents that there is need for Friends to join in and help to make the good work happen. The joy of working with others in common purpose and tasks is an experience that many of us are familiar with, and we urge you to communicate with others the real benefits of becoming engaged in any of myriad ways to help our community thrive.

In all of this, we express deep gratitude to our Divine Guide, bestower of love, faith, mercy, and hope.

Our work is ongoing.
—REBECCA LEUCHAK

Faith & Practice Revision

This year the Faith & Practice Revision Committee began its year with a review of the remaining work to be done. We had rough drafts of many sections of the book and spent time considering how to best organize the remaining sections. We divided into two groups, taking up the topics of testimonies and the spiritual life of the meeting community. Now, with these two topics well underway, we have initial drafts of all parts of the book in hand, except for the section on the structure of the Yearly Meeting. As we continue this work, one of our biggest challenges remains the best placement of topics for a coherent, readable book. The monthly meetings have consistently asked us for more detailed information on Quaker procedure and Quaker practice and we have tried to respond to this request with detailed appendices.

In the fall we sent out the Introduction to the book to the monthly meetings and requested feedback. Thirteen monthly meetings and individuals replied with input. We sent the draft with four specific queries, hoping to gain a better understanding on how monthly meetings understood and responded to specific aspects of religious terminology and Quaker thought. We thank you for providing guidance on these issues. We have rewritten the draft, with your input in mind, and will bring it to the Yearly Meeting for preliminary approval at the 2024 sessions.

We will not be bringing any new work to Sessions this year. We continue to work on four draft chapters, both further developing them and weighing the best way to organize the material. We are also looking forward to working with Permanent Board on the text covering structure of the Yearly Meeting. Permanent Board is working on the Yearly Meeting's first set of by-laws and the Revision Committee will need to incorporate that work into a chapter on the structure of the Yearly Meeting.

We ended our report last year with these words, which remain true: Our committee remains small. Our numbers are still fewer than the intended sixteen Friends, and though we do not reflect the demographic diversity of the yearly meeting, we are grateful for our theological diversity, which does more closely represent the varieties of religious experience among the Quakers of New England. Our work together is not always easy, but always contributes to our spiritual understanding and growth. We hope our chapters embody that seasoned discernment.

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

Finance

The primary job of the Finance Committee is to oversee the Yearly Meeting's finances and to propose budgets for future years. We followed our usual procedure of appointing a budget subcommittee that met twice in early 2024 to develop a preliminary budget for FY 25. This budget was approved by the Finance Committee and presented to the Permanent Board for their comments.

After a number of years when the budget and our operating results were approximately balanced, in FY 22 we had a significant deficit. Our investments had substantial losses as well, leading to our reserves falling to about 13% of our expenses. This is well below the 25% of annual expenses that we seek to maintain as reserves, according to our policy. In

FY 23 our reserves dropped even further. Part of the reason for this was that the budget for that year used \$30,000 of reserves that were thought to be in excess of our 25% policy in early 2022 when the budget was approved to fund particular programs. At the end of FY 23 our reserves were about 5% of our annual expenses.

For this reason the budget further reduced our expenses in several areas. A particularly painful decision was to fund the Support of Other Organizations line at \$0 for the second year in a row. The reasons for this are explained in the commentary on the budget [insert pg ref], so will not be repeated here.

Last year Sessions approved a minute stating that if FY 24 had a surplus, then 75% of that surplus would fund Support of Other Organizations and 25% would go into reserves. At the beginning of the year, the Finance Committee decided that we did not want to do that again this year. We were concerned that this would allow people to feel that they were not really zeroing out this line, because perhaps there would be a surplus. Thus they would not really come to grips with the extent that our desires exceeded our income. However, in the end we decided to write a similar minute, except that only 50% of the surplus would go to Support for Other Organizations. See the commentary on the budget for the text of the proposed minute.

As mentioned in last year's Finance Committee report, for a number of years the Yearly Meeting has been planning for a review of NEYM finances by an independent accountant. Money was set aside over several years to pay for this review. This year a committee of Finance Committee members and staff developed a Request for Information, which was sent out to accounting firms. Based on their feedback, a Request for a Proposal is being sent out this summer, with work expected to begin in the fall.

—SCOT DRYSDALE, CLERK

Legacy Gift

The joy of supporting ministry across our Yearly Meeting has continued during this 10th year of the Legacy Gift program, as Friends' ministries and their meetinghouses were held with care and support by Legacy Gift. Two grant cycles led to a dozen awards; additionally, we responded to three time-sensitive requests and a special appeal for the NEYM office. In our second year shepherding Salem Quarter's funds (through Future Fund guidelines), we joyfully granted funds for meetinghouse projects, helping replace a combustion-based heating system with a non-carbon-emission system in one meetinghouse, and helping replace the roof on an 1820 meetinghouse. Witness & Ministry Fund awards supported two prison ministry projects, participation in "Making Queer Quaker History" programs, creation of literacy curricula promoting peace skills, travel in ministry to Ukraine, ministry skills training, research in Texas and Oklahoma into our Yearly Meetings role in schools and policies that forced assimilation of native children, and other ministries.

We worked with the 2024 Legacy Review Committee (see their report) helping research the initial 10 years of the Legacy Gift program and offering seasoning of the report and recommendations. We were moved by the overwhelmingly positive responses by former grantees and other Friends to the 2024 review team's surveys testifying to Legacy Gift Committee's support of ministry and Spirit-led witness over

the last 10 years. We fully support the 2024 Legacy Review Committee recommendations. There is much to celebrate!

Some particulars this year:

This is the second year of shepherding Salem Quarter's grants using Legacy Gift's Futures Fund guidelines. Receiving requests for meetinghouse projects during both grant cycles this year shows that there continues to be a need for such funding. We are grateful to Salem Quarter for trusting us with discernment for the allocations of their funds while they are on sabbath.

This was also our second year of administering and discerning the disbursement of Bodine-Rustin funds in support of programs and projects that support LGBTQIA+ people. While it was easier this year, having set up the systems last year, we discovered that shepherding these funds adds complexity to our work, as the guidelines and time frame are different from our other funding cycles. The total available this fiscal year was \$4,214.46. We received six recommendations from meetings and individuals to support the organizations listed below, half of them for the second time. The subcommittee researched potential recipient organizations in order to verify that all were legitimate entities, get contact information, and learn the scope and focus of their work. This research helped us gauge the degree of need and potential impact our funding might have. Legacy Gift recommended the following individuals and organizations to Permanent Board to receive Bodine-Rustin funds this year:

- Friends Uganda Safe Transport (FUST): \$114.46 to assist with winding things down, as it is too dangerous to continue their work.
- South Coast LGBTQ Network (southeastern MA & RI): \$500.00
- Individual Ugandan Friend: \$2,250.00
- Trans Asylum Seekers Support Network (western MA): \$650.00
- Community Asylum Seekers Project (CASP) (Putney): \$500.00
- J-FLAG, a human rights and social justice organization which advocates for the rights, livelihood, and well-being of LGBT people in Jamaica: \$200.00

Legacy Gift Committee provided emergency funds of \$7,000 (the total requested by Permanent Board) from the Witness & Ministry Fund to respond to the unanticipated need for additional staff hours to help cover the extended compassionate bereavement leave for our Yearly Meeting Secretary following his brother's violent death. Our clarity was to make an exception to our usual practices and guidelines by providing the funding simply as a transfer of funds on this extraordinary basis. We encourage the Yearly Meeting to create a sustainable development plan to build adequate reserves to cover future emergencies.

If Sessions approves extending the Legacy Committee's charge, we joyfully look forward to continuing the ministry Legacy Gift Funds provide. Our committee is currently understaffed, and will lose some experienced people at the end of Sessions. Without new volunteers joining us, we will be down to four members (our original charge was for at least nine members). The work is both greatly rewarding and too much for so few people to carry out. We will be exploring changes to lessen the administrative workload in an effort toward sustainability.

More members will give Legacy Gift Committee more spaciousness to focus on continuing to support the ministry

of New England Friends: listening to the hopes of applicants, asking about ongoing support for ministry within monthly meetings, and providing resources, such as workshops and connections, to further that support. We welcome new committee members. (Please let Nominating know if you are interested!)

—SUE ROCKWOOD AND MARY LINK, CO-CLERKS

Meeting Accompaniment Group

Friends gathered to reflect on common themes in State of Society reports at NEYM's second "Meeting for Listening" in June. The majority of the 30 monthly meetings which submitted reports in advance reported that the number of Friends actively engaged in the work of their meeting is stable. Of those that reported changed levels of engagement, three times as many meetings reported an increase in active individuals as reported a decline in participation.

Meetings are emerging from the disruption of Covid to focus on a simple question: "What supports spiritual health in our meeting?" Some meetings remain in unsettled discernment about the if's and how's of technology use. Some meetings, with new-found energy around experimentation, are exploring right-sized approaches to service and community life.

Change, and the discernment that leads to it, is not without challenge. Yet many meetings are finding refreshment as they explore structural shifts. Not surprisingly, there is a diversity of approaches to these experiments. What emerging structures look like is unique to the context and capacities of each meeting community.

- One meeting, discerning with certainty that their worship and care for each other was deep and life-giving—and that the demands of being a monthly meeting were taxing—went through a spacious and careful process, determining to be laid down by their quarter so as to become again a worship group after nearly 70 years as a monthly meeting.
- There are two new monthly meetings among us—Evangelical Friends Church of Nashua and Three Rivers—as well as two new worship groups in Maine (Belfast and Dexter).
- Meetings are experimenting with how they hold property or whether they even should. One meeting reached unity to sell its building and has found joy renting chapel space from another congregation. Many, many meetings are experimenting with sabbath periods or restructuring how the work and worship of meeting is carried. Meetings are experimenting with functioning as a "committee of the whole" or doing business every other month. Seeking right-sized structures reflecting current context—changing demographics, including aging members and smaller family sizes, number of seekers wholly new to Quakerism, etc.—meetings are merging committees or re-grouping the work they carry. Committees are being laid down and lifted up, including one meeting which now has a "Fun for Everyone Committee" committed to worship-based intergenerational welcome and fellowship.

Of course, meetings still struggle with conflict, just as the imperfect human communities that we are might. And, with God as our guide, we might well journey toward grounded discernment, toward a path forward, rocky though it may

remain for a time, and find Spirit-centered Life. The journey itself is as important as what we are ultimately clear about; how we conduct ourselves, as important as what we decide.

We end with some words Winthrop Center Friends offered in their State of Society report: “We praise God for our ability to adapt and learn and we look forward to what this coming year may bring for our community.”

Accompaniment Group, here for the journey.

—SARAH GANT, CLERK

Ministry & Counsel

My Friends,

In 1945 New England reunited, formally healing a 100-year-old schism between Wilburite and Orthodox Friends. We’ve continued to live into that unity in the ensuing 79 years. It’s been sometimes cantankerous and other times exuberant; there is a continuum of beliefs and practices that fit under the umbrella of New England Yearly Meeting. In my listening during this past year, I’ve sat with Friends who seek to be transformed by stepping into forms that are new and experimental, and those who find transformation by holding our traditions close to our hearts. Our house does, indeed, have many rooms (John 14:2).

On the first Saturday in June, I spent the day with 40-plus Friends, in person and on Zoom, at our second Meeting for Listening. Using monthly meeting State of Society reports, we explored the challenges and joys of our worshipping communities and in that process ferreted out some of the threads that hold Friends in New England together. It was a wonderful day and I left feeling like we were on a threshold of expanding our ways of understanding each other, of looking not to resolve conflicts as much as to nurture each other through them, of loving each other more. There was a willingness to look at our committees, our practices, our procedures, not as an end in themselves but as the tools we use to bring us closer together and to follow God’s leadings. It felt like Ministry & Counsel. We were, in the old Quaker sense of the word, gathered.

The continued exploration of ways Ministry & Counsel can reshape itself to support monthly meetings, to be a resource and a worshipful presence has, this year, included looking back at the tasks that had been assigned to the committee in the years before 2019 as well as the vision from Sessions 2020. There has already been much accomplished: the Accompaniment Group is successfully reaching and supporting monthly meetings; the pastoral care listserv has been reactivated to share Friends’ challenges and needs; an annual Meeting for Listening has met to listen to each other through our statistical and State of Society reports; and the appointment of a Sessions Worship Coordinator has served the community well. In the coming few months I hope we for three things to be established: a group of Friends to focus on supporting ministry amongst us, opportunities to come together several times of year to hold the Yearly Meeting in prayer, and an advisory group to work with the clerk in listening and responding to our joys, our needs, and the growing edges in our spiritual lives together.

Our worshipful experiment continues—sometimes slowly—but continues.

In the faith that nurtures and challenges,

—CARL WILLIAMS, CLERK

Moses Brown School Report

Kate Titus became Moses Brown School’s new Head of School in July 2023. Though new to Friends education, Katie is deeply committed to upholding Moses Brown’s Quaker identity. Her first project was to initiate discernment opportunities for all stakeholders (students, staff, families, alumni, and Board members) to reflect on our testimonies and identify opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. Insights from these sessions will help to drive the development of the school’s next strategic plan beginning in the fall.

A generous grant from the Obadiah Brown Benevolent Fund will enable the creation of a new Faith and Practice to serve as a guide to Quaker principles for all who work, study, and serve at Moses Brown School, as well as a tool for orienting new students, families, and employees. The new version will contain queries and advices concerning testimonies, background on essential Quaker principles, and basic explanation of practices. We look forward to the conversation and collaboration to come, and anticipate publication in fall of 2025. We owe a tremendous debt to OBBF for its support of this work!

Finally, here are a few highlights from Friends Education this year:

- **Two visits to campus by Quaker peacemakers were generously enabled** by the Obadiah Brown Benevolent Fund. In early fall, Paula Palmer (member, Boulder Monthly Meeting) and Gail Melix (traveling elder, East Sandwich) presented a workshop on Indigenous American History for 11th graders and spoke with the entire Middle School about Quaker Indian Boarding Schools. In late spring, Getry Agizah (Programme Coordinator, Africa Ministries Office, Friends United Meeting) and Beth Collea (traveling elder, Dover) met with students in 4th, 8th, and 10th grades to describe Getry’s work building peace in Kenya, facilitating non-violence trainings in conflict zones, and carrying on the Girl Child Education Project first envisioned and implemented under Eden Grace’s leadership.
- **School culture around meeting for worship (MFW) has developed positively in all divisions.** Lower-school students gained comfort in unprogrammed meeting, middle-schoolers helped lead several worship opportunities with the entire school community, and upper-school leaders creatively drew their peers into communal reflection through, for example, offering students the opportunity to share messages in writing; teaching meditation strategies; developing queries on peace and justice; and partnering with younger students to offer advice on leadership.
- **Upper School’s Student Senate helped give all 9th-through 12th-grade students some basic knowledge of and experience with business meeting practices.** Students continued to practice these skills throughout the year in grade meetings and senate meetings.
- **Worship sharing** (known at MB as “meeting for sharing”) **was integrated into athletics seasons.** Each head coach is responsible for helping team captains organize a worship sharing for the team. These events have helped build community and commitment to sportsmanship across athletics.
- Parent Association members and families new to MB were offered introductory sessions on Quakerism, clerking, and Friends business practices.

To learn more, please contact Jen McFadden, Director of Friends Education (member, Providence Monthly Meeting) at jmcfadden@mosesbrown.org.

—JENNIFER MCFADDEN, DIRECTOR OF FRIENDS EDUCATION

Nominating

Nominating Committee calls forth individuals to serve our Yearly Meeting faith community. This invitation to serve our Yearly Meeting is also an opportunity to be in relationship and learn together as Friends with members of other monthly meetings. When inviting someone to serve we endeavor to explain what the service entails, what is the current situation with the committee or position, and what gifts and skills they bring to this opportunity. Would you like to learn and grow with other Friends across the yearly meeting? Contact Nominating Committee at nominating@neym.org.

This past year the magnitude of work for our small committee of seven has been challenging. We have had hundreds of conversations and learned from many of you. Our world is changing in unknown ways that call us to get involved in new ways. We have heard from many Friends that they are actively serving their local communities and monthly meetings. How can we also support each other and share our energy to meet our needs as a yearly meeting?

In November at Meeting Care Day, we facilitated a workshop on “Best Practices and Challenges of Nominating.” Please check the NEYM website for nominating resources: <https://neym.org/strengthen-your-local-meeting/care-one-another/nominators>. Another aspect of our work is to support healthy committee composition, functioning, and transitions. This applies to individuals serving in leadership positions also. Nominating Committee shepherds interview volunteers to gain insights into what is working well and what might be needing attention. We have worked to raise up new leadership, reorganize our files, and improve searchable descriptors in our records. Nominating Committee meets twice monthly, enjoys working together and meeting new friends, and would be delighted to speak with you about possibilities for sharing your gifts.

Now in year three of an Integrated Nominating Committee, it is time to review and discover new ways to do our work well, and to communicate and integrate beyond standing committees. New ways of supporting the work of the yearly meeting have been emerging. There is an increase in the use of working groups and ad-hoc committees allowing Friends to serve for specific tasks with a shorter time frame rather than a three year committee commitment. These

changes help us discover new ways of being and serving Spirit together.

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

With gratitude and joyful anticipation,

—JACQUELINE STILLWELL (NOMINATING@NEYM.ORG)

Sessions

I am always amazed at the continual striving in our yearly meeting to self-renew, to keep those forms that support the work and worship of Friends and to let go of those forms that no longer meet our needs. This takes courage and trust, characteristics that I have found in abundance amongst the staff and volunteers who have worked all year on our annual gathering. A planning session held early in the fall of 2023 produced a detailed calendar of events coordinating all of the tasks that the various planning teams needed to accomplish. In hindsight, this road map was a tremendous success in bringing together the exact sets of people who were needed to season different tasks and avoid the burnout that comes from having too many people in meetings that they don't really need to be in.

A major focus this year has been thinking about how we create the vast pool of volunteers who make Sessions possible. Because we have such a dedicated and skilled staff working for the Yearly Meeting, I feel it is easy to slip into the expectation that Sessions is something that is done for the attendees, when instead the life of our Yearly Meeting depends on us all acting on the understanding that Sessions is something that we must make ourselves. During the past year, many “volunteering deep-dive” meetings were held in which we considered the questions: Why do people say yes when asked to help at Sessions? What gets in the way of saying yes? Can we make the asking a more widely spread responsibility and not lay it all on individual program leaders? In response to these queries, several innovative approaches were created, with more work planned in the future.

This is likely to be our last year at Castleton. Let us enjoy and celebrate all that this site has given to us. And as we search for new paths, let us strive to be gentle with each other, remembering that the words of the Holy Spirit comes to us through the voices of people—people who may hold strongly held views from which disagreements arise, and from which only in listening for the harmonics within the disagreements can we hear the original, true leading.

—PHILLIP VEATCH, CLERK

Reports of Representatives to Other Quaker Organizations

American Friends Service Committee

The theme of the Annual Meeting of the AFSC this year was “Weaving the Threads of Democracy and Peace in an Age of Conflict.” Held from April 11–13 in Philadelphia, the meeting brought together more than 50 Friends from across the U.S. in person and more than 20 more by Zoom. Jose Antonio Vargas, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and Tony-nominated producer, kicked off the meeting. Jose recounted his personal journey as an undocumented migrant in the U.S., highlighting his organizations’ current immigrant advocacy initiative, a project that focuses on storytelling about immigrant experiences.

The Corporation heard reports of emerging new staff and governance structures, implementing changes approved by the Board in 2022 aimed at improving the coherence and cohesiveness of programs across the organization. The Corporation also approved a number of changes to the bylaws, enabling greater flexibility in use of electronic technologies, adding a virtual Corporation meeting in the fall to approve new nominees, and modifying representation from regional groups on the Board. More changes may come forward during the coming year, particularly regarding Board composition.

In her report, General Secretary Joyce Ajlouny highlighted AFSC’s ongoing humanitarian relief efforts in Gaza, including distribution of food and hygiene kits and providing recreational activities. Joyce referred to AFSC’s Gaza staff as heroes who, despite being forced to move multiple times, are doing their best to provide food and other goods. Regarding other programs, Joyce highlighted AFSC’s engagement of youth and reported progress in efforts to bring together staff around the three themes of the Strategic Plan: Just Peace, Just Migration and Just Economies. Staff and the treasurer were able to report increased stability on the financial front, with steady donations and a balanced budget.

—SUBMITTED BY PETER WOODROW

Friends Committee on National Legislation

All five appointed NEYM Representatives attended the FCNL Annual Meeting in November 2023. (Ten other New England Friends serve as at-large members of the General Committee.) A meeting highlight was careful discernment of a policy on reproductive health, which FCNL has traditionally avoided taking a position on. Input from more than 200 Quaker meetings and groups, including many in New England, showed that while Friends differ on the morality of abortion in particular situations, there is considerable unity that those decisions belong to individuals and families, within their faith traditions, and that the role of government should be very limited and should not threaten either women or medical providers with criminal penalties. The full policy is available on the FCNL website.

The FCNL General Committee also approved a new five-year strategic plan and launched a new capital campaign to support that work.

During the year, Betsy Cazden served on the FCNL Finance Committee and Scot Drysdale served on the Policy Committee (which was charged with writing the new policy on abortion). We know that many New England Friends work with local Advocacy Teams, respond to Action Alerts, encourage young adults to attend Spring Lobby Weekend, and participate in other ways in FCNL’s work. Thank you!

There will be some vacancies in our appointments for the coming year, so consider whether you may be called to serve New England Friends and FCNL in this way. The 2024 Annual Meeting, open to all Friends, will be November 13–17 near Washington, D.C., and also hybrid. FCNL is eager to have fuller participation from younger Friends and Friends from historically underrepresented groups.

FCNL’s annual report to Yearly Meetings is posted at <https://neym.org/news/2024/07/2024-fcnl-report-yearly-meetings>.

—BETSY CAZDEN (PROVIDENCE), SCOT DRYSDALE (HANOVER), JIM GRACE (BEACON HILL), MATT SOUTHWORTH (HARTFORD), KAJ TELENAR (WELLESLEY)

Friends Peace Teams

How can you live your life as a flaming testament of love? In this time of war and genocide, how does Truth prosper? Friends Peace Teams (friendspeaceteams.org) live out these Quaker queries. And we find joy!

FPT offers discernment and encouragement for many programs. We work to decolonize and root out racism; reflect on our relationship to money, particularly in fundraising; nurture justice and peace workers. We completed eight Alternatives to Violence Project workshops en español at Cuba Yearly Meeting. Three Quaker schools (Earlham and Haverford Colleges and George School) offer students FPT internships.

Recognizing our settler history of colonization and forced assimilation, Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples (TRR) seeks to rebuild trust between communities based on truth, respect, and justice. TRR also coordinates research, guided by the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, about the historical and ongoing harms caused by Quaker Indian Boarding schools. How can Quakers make amends?

Maida McKenna teaches literacy for peace, most recently in Rwanda. Jonathan Vogel-Borne helps FPT with finances and web sites. The Power of Goodness stories, which inspire courageous and nonviolent action, are on display at the Arch Street Meetinghouse in Philadelphia and online. I am humbled by how many FPT programs in Philippines, Ukraine, Burundi, Guatemala, and Palestine deliver nonviolent skills. I am deeply grateful. Would you like to join this hopeful work?

Mary Oliver asks, “Doesn’t everything die ... too soon? ... What is it you plan to do with your one and precious life?”

—MINGA CLAGGETT-BORNE

Friends General Conference

Not burying the Lead: The 2026 FGC Gathering will be at the University of Vermont in Burlington, in late June and early July. How can New England Yearly Meeting help prepare and welcome Friends from all over North America in 2026?

Friends General Conference Executive Director Barry Crossno is able, thanks to a successful fundraising campaign, to engage more with the experiments in virtual gatherings that FGC has undertaken this year. He is also able to travel more, and visited in New England in April. Barry is doing more speaking and giving more presentations, including The Water We Swim In, a program to help Friends understand the broader societal changes that are impacting the Society of Friends.

Barry carries a concern for outreach and retention. Meetings need spiritual formation programs and pastoral care in order to integrate newcomers. How can FGC help its yearly

and monthly meetings conduct outreach and share approaches that are helpful? How can we grow our Society at a time when it has much to offer seekers?

Publications Committee has been working on two projects to reach new audiences. One is a Spanish language translation of Brian Drayton's Living with a Concern for Gospel Ministry; the other is an audiobook version of Black Fire. A rising demand for newcomer materials will also be addressed.

FGC's Ministry on Racism continues to host meetings for worship and worship; see the FGC website under the tab Programs/Ministry on Racism for meeting times throughout the week.

Friends are encouraged to visit www.fgcquaker.org and learn what resources and programs can serve your meeting community. Look for event reminders in New England Yearly Meeting's newsletter.

—CAROLYN HILLES-PLANT, REPRESENTATIVE