

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 on-going 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 self-less 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 and 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, Clerk of Coordinating and Advisory Committee and Presiding Clerk