



# 2024 Minutes

of the Annual Sessions  
of the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends

Three Hundred Sixty-Fourth Year  
Castleton State College | Castleton, Vermont  
August 2–7, 2024



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## 2024 New England Yearly Meeting Sessions Schedule

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

<sup>1</sup>Choices 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*

## 2024 Sessions Coordinators, Officers, Speakers, and YM Staff

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

## Minutes of the Annual Sessions

### Opening Celebration, Saturday, August 3, 1:30–3:00 p.m.

#### 2024-1 Welcome

Presiding Clerk, Rebecca Leuchak (Providence), welcomed Friends to the 364th New England Yearly Meeting Sessions, August 2–7, 2024.

Emily Piper (Mt Toby) sang “We Shall Be Known,” by Karisha Longaker, to settle the meeting into worship. Sarah Smith (Concord) of the Right Relationship Resource Group invited us to ground our worship in humility, respect and gratitude with an Indigenous land acknowledgement, a version of which will be shared at the opening of each of our sessions for business this week, to orient us in relationship with and awareness of the unceded Indigenous sovereign territory on which we meet.

*Friends, whether here at Castleton University or joining from afar, we are mindful that we all live, move, and have our being in the presence of the Creator, whose spirit we recognize in all life around us. Here in Vermont, we acknowledge gathering on land known to the Abenaki people as Ndakinna, meaning homeland.*

*Guided by the Inward Teacher, we feel the tension between the name “New England,” born of colonial ambition, and the ancient names that have resonated on this land for millennia. From the rhythm of waves on rocky shores to the whisper of wind through mountain pines, we recognize our place in the vast, interconnected web of Being.*

*As we open ourselves to the Light, may we listen deeply to the wisdom carried by the land and all its peoples. May we honor the Indigenous peoples who have lived on the land where we now live and worship, their daily lives and traditions woven into the fabric of these places. Their stories – of joy and sorrow, of wisdom gained and challenges faced—intertwine with ours in this shared journey of truth and healing.*

*Faithfully tending the seeds of justice, may we nurture it with compassion and courage. May we remain ever receptive to the wisdom of the living world around and within us, to the languages we have yet to understand, and to the truths that emerge in the silence between our words.*

*In our quest for right relationship—with the earth, with each other, and with Creator—may we find the strength to face uncomfortable truths and the grace to walk gently on this land we all call home.*

*Our journey towards healing and justice involves new considerations, including how we might support language recovery, respect traditional practices, and relinquish entitlement to land. As we wrestle with these complex issues, may our hearts be open. For we are all connected in this living, breathing creation, called to foster a future of mutual respect and understanding.*

The Presiding Clerk spoke to her relationship to seeds, as a collector and sharer, and to practical, cultural and spiritual traditions that revere the power and symbolism of the Seed. She exhorted us to feel the grace of God, reaffirming that essential spirit shining among us, reading from Isaac Pennington (1661):

*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.*

Members of the Clerks’ table introduced themselves to the body with their meeting affiliations, pronouns, and on whose Indigenous territory they reside: Rebecca Leuchak (Providence), Presiding Clerk; Megan Jensen (Monadnock) and Susannah McCandless, Recording Clerks; and Reading Clerks Michelle Wright (Putney) and Jesse Grace (West Richmond Friends Meeting, New Associa-

tion of Friends [NAoF]). Lucretia McCandless Treleven (Middlebury) periodically joined the clerk's table during the week.

Allison Randall (Keene), Carole Rein (North Shore), and Madeleine Vaché (New London) served as elders for the session.

### **2024-2 Approval of New Reading Clerk**

Jesse Grace (West Richmond, NAoF) was **approved** by the body as Reading Clerk.

### **2024-3 Roll Call**

The Reading Clerks instructed each Quarter to stand or turn on their video on Zoom, as able, and to wave or raise a virtual hand as their meeting is called. The following meetings, preparatory and allowed meetings and worship groups were named:

#### *Connecticut Valley QM*

Hartford MM

Litchfield Hills MM

Middletown Worship Group

Mount Toby MM

New Haven FM

New London FM

Northampton FM

South Berkshire MM

Storrs FM

#### *Dover QM*

Concord MM

Dover MM

Riverwoods WG

Gonic MM

West Epping Preparative Meeting

New England Evangelical Friends

Weare/Henniker MM

Souhegan Friends Meeting (Preparative)

North Sandwich FM

#### *Falmouth QM*

Brunswick FM

Durham FM

Portland FM

Southern Maine FM

Windham FM

#### *Northwest QM*

Bennington MM

Burlington MM

Champlain Islands WG

Hanover FM

Kendal WG

Keene FM

Middlebury FM



Middlebury College Student WG  
Monadnock Quaker Meeting  
Northeast Kingdom Quaker Meeting  
Plainfield MM  
Poultney Quaker WG, unaffiliated  
Putney MM  
Orchard Hill Quakers  
Quaker City Unity FM  
South Starksboro MM  
West Brattleboro WG, unaffiliated  
Wilderness FM

*Salem QM*

Acton FM  
Amesbury MM  
Beacon Hill FM  
Framingham FM  
Fresh Pond MM  
Friends Meeting at Cambridge  
Brookhaven WG  
South Shore Preparative Meeting  
Lawrence MM  
North Shore MM  
Three Rivers Meeting  
Wellesley MM

*Sandwich QM*

Allen's Neck MM  
Apponegansett WG, unaffiliated  
Dartmouth at Smith Neck MM  
Martha's Vineyard MM  
Mattapoisett MM  
Barnstable FM (Prep)  
Nantucket WG, unaffiliated  
New Bedford MM  
Sandwich MM  
East Sandwich Prep  
West Falmouth Prep  
Yarmouth Prep  
Westport MM

*Southeast QM*

Providence MM  
Conanicut FM Indulged  
Smithfield MM  
Westerly MM  
Worcester FM

*Vassalboro QM*  
 Acadia MM  
 Belfast Area FM  
 China MM  
 Cobscook MM  
 Dexter Worship Group  
 Eggemoggin Reach MM  
 Farmington MM  
 Megunticook Worship Group, unaffiliated  
 Midcoast MM  
 Narramissic Valley MM  
 Orono MM  
 Vassalboro FM  
 Islesboro WG  
 Winthrop Center Friends Church

#### **2024-4 Visitors to Sessions**

The Clerk acknowledged Friends attending from Cuba Yearly Meeting and other visitors from outside of NEYM, or representing Quaker-affiliated organizations. We welcomed plenary speaker Lloyd Lee Wilson, carrying a travel minute from Friendship MM in Greensboro, and North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative), who first joined our Sessions in 1969.

Other representatives of Quaker Organizations and visitors to any part of these Sessions, both physically present and online, are listed here:

Jennifer Bing, AFSC US-Palestine Activism Program

Margaret Cooley (Mt Toby) Woolman Hill Executive Director, on the occasion of its 20th anniversary

Kirenia Criado Pérez (Havana Friends Church, Cuba Yearly Meeting [CYM]), Pastor

Barry Crossno (Arch St MM, Philadelphia YM), Gen'l Secretary, Friends General Conference (FGC)

Yadira Cruz Peña (Velasco MM, CYM)

Craig Foor, Everence

Melanie Gifford, (Adelphi MM, Baltimore YM)

Sara Gada, Friends Publishing

Nicole Gandhi, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Arlington, Virginia

Katie Greene (Clearwater MM, Southeastern YM)

Keith Harvey, Regional Director, Northeast Region, American Friends Service Committee

Autumn Kirkpatrick (New York YM [NYYM] At Large)

Rania Maayeh, Head, Ramallah Friends School

Lyle Miller, Everence

Jen Newman (Beacon Hill), Executive Director, Beacon Hill Friends House

Nyeri Otero Flanagan, Program Assistant, QUNO office

Anne Pomeroy (New Paltz MM, NYYM)

Emily Provance (15th Street MM, NYYM)

Jorge Luis Peña Reyes (Puerto Padre, CYM), CYM Presiding Clerk

Reyna Elsa de Reyes Álvarez (CYM)

Della Stanley-Green (Plainfield [IN] Meeting, Western Yearly Meeting), Director, Quaker Leadership Center, Earlham School of Religion

Jacqueline Stillwell (Monadnock), General Secretary, Right Sharing of World Resources

Allen Stockbridge (Bellingham MM, North Pacific YM)

Marvea Thompson (Brooklyn MM, NYYM), Trustee and clerk of Ministry and Counsel  
Margaret Veatch (Formerly of Friendship MM, North Carolina YM [Conservative])  
Pamela Williams, (Germantown, Philadelphia YM  
María Yi (Holguin MM, CYM)

### **2024-5 Acknowledging New and Old Friends**

We recognized first-time attenders and new additions to the body, those representing newly recognized meetings, and those who had attended up to 55 or more Yearly Meeting Sessions.

### **2024-6 Technology Team**

David Coletta (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers) introduced the tech team: Neil Blanchard (Framingham); Alana Parkes (Beacon Hill); Luke Coletta (Cambridge); Jen Newman (Beacon Hill); Kim Allen (Durham); Don Peabody, Lianna Tennal, and Willard Peabody (Middlebury); Bob O'Connor (Vassalboro); Kathy Malin (Smithfield); Jonah Sutton-Morse (Concord); and Carl Telenar-Parkes (Wellesley). He requested that we honor these Friends contributions and bear with their learning.

We have an opportunity to experience magical moments of shared experience with Friends all over New England and the world when we worship in hybrid meetings. When all goes smoothly, the tech vanishes from our consciousness. David suggested, however, that we all practice the spiritual discipline of embracing imperfection, and spoke to the hybrid format's contribution to the testimony of accessibility, since we are all only temporarily non-disabled.

### **2024-7 Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness**

Polly Attwood (Cambridge/Three Rivers) and Becky Jones (Northampton/Three Rivers) introduced the Noticing Patterns Working Group: Melody Brazo (Fresh Pond), Celadry Humphries (Northampton), Melissa Foster (Framingham/Three Rivers), Janet Hough (Cobscook/Three Rivers), and Pamela Terrien (Westport). Fran Brokaw (Hanover) and Jeremiah Dickinson (Dover) serve as elders for the Working Group.

Polly shared a quote from Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*: "All that you touch you change; All that you change changes you; The only lasting truth is change; God is change."

They encouraged us to release the fear of making mistakes, to notice patterns and enter into the process of addressing harms, making change within ourselves, and to lovingly invite others to join the vision of an inclusive, just world. They hoped we might do so with tenderness and curiosity, and with attention to the sensations and truths that we carry in our own bodies, and openness to the experiences of others. Friends were invited to a workshop to practice noticing patterns and to build playful community.

### **2024-8 Worship Coordinator's Reflection**

Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers), Worship Coordinator, related our time together this week at Annual Sessions to the experience of her recent bicycle road trip—full of challenges, hardship, sweat and wrong turns, but also growth, adventure, gratifying accomplishment, togetherness and adventure. We are moved along this journey not by pedaling, but by worship, the many opportunities in business, casual gathering, Bible Half Hours, choices, all-ages worship, and more.

She reminded us that early Friends often depended on young Friends to carry the community and life of the Quaker body, when adults had been imprisoned for their witness. Likewise, young Friends today are vital to our organizational vitality. All are invited to join us in worship, service and relationship.

### **2024-9 Youth Program Staff**

Kara Price (Storrs), NEYM Children and Families Ministries Coordinator, introduced the youth program staff. Kenzie Burpee (Wellesley), Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) Sessions Coordinator, released Emily Edwards, Junior High Yearly Meeting (JHYM) Coordinator; and Drew Chasse Young Friends (YF) Interim Coordinator, to lead their groups to their afternoon activities. Rainer Humphries (Hartford) was already at childcare with the youngest children.

We closed in worship, closing with the song “We Shall Be Known,” by MaMuse, sung by Emily Piper (Mt Toby).

### **Saturday, August 3, 3:00–5:00 p.m.**

#### **2024-10 Opening**

Emily Piper (Mt Toby) opened our meeting with the song “May I Be Empty,” by Batya Levin.

Reading Clerks Michelle Wright (Putney) and Jesse Grace (West Richmond, NAOF) began with some announcements and organizational housekeeping.

Robert Dove McClellan (Fresh Pond) served as Zoom elder; Lucy Meadows (Beacon Hill) and Mary Zwirner (Beacon Hill) served as elders in the auditorium.

#### **2024-11 Introduction to the Pastoral Care Team**

During Sessions, there are many moments to connect to Spirit, to ourselves and to each other, in group and individual, planned and informal settings. Carl Williams and Abby Matchette (both of Burlington) oriented Friends to some planned opportunities for Pastoral Care available at Sessions, and invited us all to take part in seeking out, offering and receiving support.

Abby encouraged us to reach out to those we had hoped to see and did not see here. A Pastoral Care line was available to call or text if any Friend needed to reach out for individual care or connection.

#### **2024-12 Economy of Approving Minutes: A Request from the Recording Clerks**

In order to conserve time for our most worshipful work as a body, the Recording Clerks proposed to read back only those minutes that record a decision or otherwise test our sense of unity, but not minor minutes of record or procedure.

Acknowledging that this leaves some margin for judgment about which minutes call for shared approval, Friends are welcome to ask to hear back any minutes they believe should be checked by the full body.

Friends **approved**, with a request that full minutes be made available for review (for correctness of proper names, committees, dates, etc.). The Recording Clerks created a shared online draft minutes document for this purpose.

#### **2024-13 Allowing a Review of Transcripts to Assist Faithfulness in Recording.**

The meeting also **approved** the Recording Clerks’ request to temporarily save text transcripts of our business proceedings to support clarity and faithfulness of the written minutes. The recordings will only be retained until the minutes of Annual Sessions are finalized.

#### **2024-14 A Message on Our Theme**

Jay O’Hara (Portland) introduced this year’s Sessions theme, “Let Us Faithfully Tend the Seed,” inviting us to worshipfully reflect this week on the metaphor of the Seed that is found in the writings of the earliest Friends, in the parables of Jesus, and broadly in cultural and spiritual symbolism, rep-

resenting an internal kernel of truth and essence, that of God in each of us, the potential for growth, multiplication, and future bounty when tended with care.

We were exhorted to be honest, tender and loving with each other, plucking out the weeds and thorns that arise within us and among us, trusting that each seed has the capacity to grow if we provide the conditions for it to take root in our lives.

### **2024-15 Reflection on Our Spiritual Condition from Ministry and Counsel**

Carl Williams (Burlington), clerk of Ministry and Counsel, spoke on the joy of worshiping with many meetings and reading State of Society reports this year.

He notes that New England Friends are coming together at Annual Sessions from many places geographically, but also emotionally and spiritually. Some arrive in turmoil, grief or strife, others in celebration or peace. Some Friends experience their meetings as purposeful and well connected to a wider network, others as a covenant community with little urge to look elsewhere, while yet others might be yearning for greater connection.

We nevertheless come together as a boisterous family, one from which some members might stray, and later return, while others put down roots and stay. Paraphrasing Robert Frost, Carl invited us to consider that home is not only where they have to take you in, but the place where the seed of our joy and our work is tended, and the place where we tend to others.

### **2024-16 Treasurer's Report**

Incoming NEYM Treasurer Marian Dalton (Brunswick) reported that NEYM has been running operational deficits in the past couple of years, including this year. She reminded us that a budget is an expression of our priorities, and Friends have the opportunity to weigh in on how we use the funds we do have. Listening sessions will be offered on updating the vision for the Legacy Gift Fund and the operating budget.

### **2024-17 Finance Committee Report**

Scot Drysdale (Hanover), provided a report as the clerk of the Finance Committee. As usual, the detailed report is available in Advance Documents.

He noted that NEYM has set money aside for an independent financial review. The process is underway, but there is not yet a set timeline nor an outside firm under contract.

Scot reported that, although not in danger of defaulting on our obligations, the condition of our organizational finances is a serious concern. Since the Covid pandemic began, attendance has declined, our investments have suffered losses, and income from retreats and contributions has dropped. Reserves have fallen well below our goal of 25% of annual operating expenses. Budget and fundraising goals are aimed at avoiding fully emptying the reserves or dipping into the Legacy Gift endowment to pay bills and salaries.

### **2024-18 Introducing a New Fundraising Initiative: Generations Together**

Noah Merrill (Putney), Secretary for NEYM, introduced a new initiative, "Generations Together: Encouragement Challenge," a diverse group of Friends committed to broadening the base of financial and personal engagement in our Yearly Meeting's budget concerns. With gratitude for the visioning, messaging, planning, fundraising, and donations of many committed Friends, Noah reports that this working group's efforts have already yielded \$28,500 for NEYM. They hope that this will encourage and inspire more Friends to build on this momentum and contribute a new gift, increase their giving, make a monthly giving commitment, or include NEYM in their estate planning.

Noah encouraged Friends to prayerfully query our hearts about what brings us to Friends, how we are served by the Yearly Meeting, and how that might inform our individual support for NEYM's financial need.

Throughout this week, the Generations Together team will be updating visual charts illustrating financial goals and thresholds. They have already surpassed their first bar, to cover the direct costs of Annual Sessions. They further seek to reach the \$51,900 needed by the end of September (to be on pace to match projected annual spending), and thirdly, hope to raise enough money to begin rebuilding the reserves and contributing to outside organizations.

### **2024-19 Budget Presentation**

Scot Drysdale presented the proposed NEYM budget, which is balanced, but reflects some belt-tightening measures that might underfund some desirable line items and priorities.

The Finance Committee is clear that we want to do more than we can with what we have now. If we do not realize more contributions, we will have to make painful choices about what we must do without.

This budget anticipates \$30,000 more in contributions than the previous budget, but this still does not allow for any contributions to outside organizations, nor does it replenish any of our depleted reserves. Any income in excess of balancing this year's budget is proposed to be allocated 50% for contributions to other organizations (up to the previous precedent of \$45,495), and 50% for reserves.

Scot noted that if income allows, unless they are given a different directive by NEYM, the Finance Committee would follow the precedent set by previous budgets to determine which organizations we would support, and in what proportion.

We were reminded that after a devastating global pandemic, we are in good company with other religious and non-profit organizations who are struggling financially. We could embrace this as a moment to re-vision our identity and relevancy as a faith. What structures are no longer serving us? Who could we serve, who could our faith speak to, and where should we be putting our resources?

This is not the first time a sense of crisis or stagnation has spurred us to make a large structural review with recommendations for a new vision. Some feel frustration at the seeming lack of change, the loss of momentum, the return to "old normal." Change can be slow and painful, and sometimes quiet and invisible for a time. When we are eager to see our seeds bear fruit, part of the process is to be faithful in tending the soil and nurturing the first growth into maturity.

The Permanent Board facilitated a Listening Session on the budget and encouraged Friends to give their attention and voices to this issue.

### **2024-20 Closing**

With a reminder that transformation arises from our encounters with Spirit, from our willingness to bring the things we long to do into the workshop of prayer, we centered in worship. Susannah McCandless (Burlington) closed the meeting with the song "Seek Ye First" (Karen Lafferty, based on Matthew 6:33).

### **Saturday, August 3, 6:30–8:00 p.m.**

#### **2024-21 Memorial Meeting**

Carl Williams (Burlington) and Honor Woodrow (Putney) had care of this year's Memorial Meeting. Elders were Lynn Taber (Fresh Pond), Melissa Foster (Framingham/Three Rivers), Marion Dalton (Brunswick), Janet Hough (Cobscook), and Richard Lindo (Framingham).

We heard memorial minutes for these friends, who served their meetings, neighbors, wider Friends' circles, and the world, with humility, brilliance, dedication, feistiness, and kindness.

Christopher Kevin King, January 11, 1959–March 15, 2023 (Beacon Hill)

Nancy Lloyd Shippen, April 5, 1949–January 20, 2022 (Fresh Pond)

Lynn Johnson, January 3, 1949–July 19, 2023 (Hartford)

Allan S. Kohrman, August 10, 1945–October 13, 2022 (Wellesley)  
 James Dexter, October 5, 1944–September 22, 2023 (Mattapoisett)  
 Susan Jane McIntire Wood, March 4, 1944–September 2, 2022 (Durham)  
 Charlotte Ann Curtis, June 15, 1941–October 14, 2022 (Durham),  
 Richard W. Regen, April 1, 1939–October 3, 2023 (Martha's Vineyard & Rochester MM, NYYM)  
 Margaret Wentworth, November 2, 1934–November 2, 2022 (Durham)  
 Marguerite Helen Velte Hasbrouk. September 30, 1933–June 4, 2023 (Wellesley)  
 Helen Cornelia Pratt Clarkson, August 21, 1925–July 16, 2022 (Durham)

Friends raised up the qualities of those who had passed, from the tending of our youth, meetings and meetinghouses, to bringing the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) to imprisoned neighbors.

The many other names, spoken from the ensuing worship, of beloved Friends whose minutes have not yet come forward made us feel the depth of our loss and the scope both of the blessings we have received and of our need to nurture new and present Friends.

Yearly Meeting Secretary Noah Merrill (Putney) offered a prayer out of worship, saying, “Dear God, thank you for pouring out your gifts through the lives of these Friends and all their lives teach us. Our grief is a sign of how deeply we love them, and our joy at their returning, as we are never truly parted. Thank you, dear God, for the lives of these Friends.”

### **2024-22 Bible Half Hours**

Genna Ulrich presented the Bible Half Hours. Genna (they/them), a member of Portland Friends Meeting, has a complicated relationship to the Bible. For a long time, they didn't touch it, but then they got curious about being in conversation with other people witnessing to God, including far back in time. Genna has found stories in the Bible, which challenge and inspire them, stories which speak to Genna's own condition and to our collective condition today.

Fully offering up their vulnerability to the body in the task of the Bible Half Hour, Genna shared from the heart. With a measured, reflective pace, speaking intentionally and from a place of worship, Genna communicated to us the opportunity of being welcomed as our imperfect selves by Spirit in all its many names and guises.

Genna opened Bible Half Hour on Saturday, reading from Luke 8:1–15, the Parable of the Sower. They invited us to hold ourselves in love the best we can. How do we make ourselves fertile soil, and what are the rocks, birds, and thorns that prevent God's love from finding purchase in us? Genna spoke about being called, unwilling, onto hands and knees in worship, and reflected that the desire to be liked can get in the way of receiving God's message and being fertile soil. Quoting Nouwen, Genna affirmed that “we are beloved children of God,” and invited us “to live our life based on that knowledge.” This is so opposite to the world's message that we have to earn being loved. In what ways can we prepare ourselves for God's message to fruit a hundredfold in our lives? What makes our soil ready for God's message?

Genna continued on Sunday, speaking from Mark 1:4–13. Jesus comes to John the Baptist, to be baptized in water, arising to be named for his belovedness. He only starts announcing the good news after he's had time to wrestle for 40 days in the wilderness, and can do so humbly, making it about God, and not centered on him.

Friend Ulrich spoke to moments of personal doubt, of spiritual dryness, of fear of loss of community should some failing be revealed—and of God's unconditional love, revealed directly and through our community. We can have and tend our own seeds and soil, but also need to help out in one another's gardens. We can invite one another into God's love, and from there to open ourselves and see what is revealed. From there, we can change ourselves. The good news starts from that healing from an estrangement from who we really are. The good news is that we can allow our-

selves to be worked upon and changed—called into altered relationships with earth, one another, and people around the world.

How does our experience of that love change us? “An utter dependence on God means that we can be whole selves; in caring about each other we can heal from some of the fear of loss that holds us back.” With John the Baptist, change your purpose and trust in the Good News.

On Monday, Genna again invited us into imperfection, speaking from Mark 10:17–22. Echoing Jesus’ frustrated query: “Why do you call me good? Only God is good,” Genna gave us an important query for Friends, who so identify with the notion that “we must be good people since we are Quakers.” They asked whether this is in fact a thorn or a stumbling block. This is a timely question as we lean into the painful work of right relationship, noticing oppressive behaviors in ourselves and in our midst, cherishing our treasure, and opening our awareness to the violence and desperation of the world. You can be imperfect and let the perfect God flow through you: God is redefining perfection for us. We are hearing in our self-examination and reflection on our history that our attachment to being the “good people” is something we need to subtract.

On Tuesday, and each day, Genna invited us to become fully physically present, and then brought forth the idea that participating in God’s power is like an ecosystem of infinite seeds. In Chapter 9 of the Christian text called the Gospel of Mary, the disciples wonder, is there enough of God’s power to go around? We as a Yearly Meeting are called to see others gifts and believe that “chosenness” is not scarce. God will use us all. Let us welcome ministry in one another!

On the final morning of Sessions, Genna asked, what gives us real hope? Taking Luke 24:13-35 for a text, Genna led us through the disciples’ rediscovery of hope on the way to Emmaus, exhorting us, too, to have new purpose. We, too, can repent and turn around like the disciples who realized that what they had been relying on wasn’t what they were supposed to rely on.

We are grateful for Genna’s ministry and deep willingness to be vulnerable with us, that we might become gentler and more clear-eyed with our own imperfect selves and therefrom with one another. Genna was accompanied during each Bible Half Hour throughout the week by elders for the body: Madeleine Vaché (New London), Meg Klepack (Portland), Kristina Keefe-Perry (Three Rivers/Fresh Pond), Melissa Foster (Framingham/Three Rivers), Cynthia Ganung (Wellesley), and Allison Randall (Keene), as well as Wendy Sanford (Cambridge) and Robert Dove McClellan (Fresh Pond) via Zoom

The Yearly Meeting has posted Genna Ulrich’s full Bible Half Hours on the website.

### **2024-23 Musical Plenary**

Toussaint Liberator led the body in a powerful all-ages drumming circle on Monday night, and also worked with the youth programs. Toussaint performs music as medicine, teaches music as medicine, and activates artists to help craft the messages that reflect the people’s desire for justice. He leads a weekly program at Cambridge Friends Meeting focused on learning to play West African rhythms on the djembe drums; participants in that program accompanied him during the plenary.

During the session, Toussaint spoke to his own journey coming to the djembe tradition and finding in its mastery a site of transformation for his anger at the systemic injustice he experienced and witnessed as a Black person growing up in this country. In his presentation to us, and his time with the children, the space of Black joy in sound and movement he creates through his work was manifest. We are grateful for Toussaint Liberator’s ministry with us, and for the invitation to support his core ministry to increase underserved young people’s access to this powerful discipline and tradition of drumming, and the liberation and cultural resistance to which it gives voice.



**Sunday, August 4, 9:00–10:00 a.m.****2024-24 All-Ages Worship**

Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers), Ruah Swennerfelt (Middlebury), and Kara Price (Storrs) coordinated Sunday morning all-ages worship. Session elders were Cynthia Ganung (Wellesley), Meg Klepack (Portland), and Betsy Roper (Cambridge). Amy Greene (Cambridge) assisted with singing.

Worship opened with a song, followed by a story of a girl whose expression of love for her tree in the temperate rainforest draws others in. An activity followed in which Friends of all ages were asked to write on a ribbon something they didn't want to lose to climate chaos. The ribbons fluttered on clotheslines outside our gathering space, to be exchanged at the end of Sessions.

**Sunday, August 4, 1:15–2:30 p.m.****2024-25 Plenary Speaker**

Brian Drayton (Souhegan) introduced NEYM 2024 Sessions plenary speaker, Lloyd Lee Wilson, reflecting on 50 years of theological conversation and friendship. Betsy Cazden (Providence), Gail Melix, Herring Pond Wampanoag (Sandwich), over Zoom, and Janet Hough (Cobscook) served as elders.

Friend Lloyd Lee Wilson has been commended into our care and permitted to bring his ministry with a travel minute from his monthly meeting, Friendship Meeting of Greensboro, North Carolina, endorsed by his yearly meeting, North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative). He has sought and received the endorsement of our clerk here at NEYM. Mark Wutka (Friendship MM, NCYM-C) accompanied Lloyd Lee as his traveling companion, and arranged shared worship one-on-one with desirous Friends for their encouragement.

Lloyd Lee Wilson returned to New England Yearly Meeting in the heat of 2024 to share what he has learned on his decades-long path of apprenticeship as a Quaker. He brought to us the news of what he knows experimentally: that there is One who can speak to his condition. That fact reveals truths about The One Who Speaks: that the One has a deep understanding of the many aspects of our being, an unconditional love for us, a willingness to accompany us, and is in immediate unmediated relationship with us. Some of us took hope hearing that Lloyd Lee's connection with the Beloved has been one gained experimentally, more than through reading and study.

We received with gratitude and a sense of spiritual relief Friend Wilson's message of encouragement into a spirituality of subtraction. We are encouraged by the possibility of incremental acts of faithful removal of impediments to transformation, that we may better hear the One Who Speaks. The work, as Lloyd Lee shared, paraphrasing Bill Taber, "is to do everything the One asks, and nothing else." With humility and humor and bits of his own story, Friend Wilson rendered that challenge more approachable, reassuring us that it was advanced through our mistakes more often than our successes.

Lloyd Lee testified to us, "I know from my own experience that the great change we need is possible." To his surprise, emerging from an upbringing in a culture mired in an assumption of scarcity and centering of the individual, he shared, he had learned that "we humans are immersed in a series of overlapping unities." He encouraged Friends to join him in seeking a testimony of community with all things, saying "if all creation is interconnected, every part of it needs transformation, so that we can live into deep Shalom."

Lloyd Lee Wilson left New England Friends with his testimony, springing from a lifetime as an apprentice Quaker: Everything connects, everything belongs, everything matters.

**August 4, 2024, 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.****2024-26 Opening**

Emily Piper (Mt Toby) opened worship with a song. Carole Rein (North Shore), Katy MacRae (New Haven), Kristna Evans (Durham), and Katie Bond (Beacon Hill) served as elders.

Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak welcomed Friends back into worship together with attention to business.

Gordon Bugbee (Beacon Hill) from the Right Relationship Resource Group opened our business with an Indigenous land acknowledgement.

*Friends, we gather with humility and gratitude, here in Castleton on Ndinakina (n-DAH-kee-NAH), the homeland of the Abenaki peoples, and by Zoom on the traditional homelands of many peoples.*

*May our actions, guided by grace, lead us to greater peace and justice for all who dwell on these lands.*

The Reading Clerks gave daily announcements of topical dinner tables Friends can join, event room and schedule changes, the bookstore hours, listening sessions, etc.

**2024-27 Holding Absent Friends In Our Hearts**

The assembled Friends on Zoom and in the auditorium raised up names of Friends whose absence is particularly felt this week.

Absent friends:

Joann Austin (Vassalboro)  
 Dulaney Bennett (Hanover)  
 Peter Blood and Annie Patterson (Mt Toby)  
 Melody Brazo (Fresh Pond)  
 Darien Brimmage (Beacon Hill)  
 Hilary Burgin (Northampton)  
 Lillian Campbell (Beacon Hill)  
 Margy Carpenter (Beacon Hill)  
 Kathy Coletta (Cambridge)  
 Molly Cornell (W Falmouth)  
 Eric Edwards, (W Falmouth)  
 John Fuller (Beacon Hill)  
 Lisa Graustein (Three Rivers)  
 Ralph and Twila Greene (China)  
 Andy and Dorothy Grinnell (Portland)  
 Lee Hamilton (E Sandwich)  
 Beth and Kurt Hansen (Westerly)  
 Mey Hasbrook (Three Rivers)  
 Mary Hopkins (Fresh Pond)  
 Eleta Jones (Hartford)  
 Anna Lindo (Framingham)  
 Martha Manglesdorf (New Bedford)  
 Elizabeth Muench (Brunswick)  
 Heidi and Gina Nortonsmith (Northampton)  
 Alysia Parkes (Wellesley)  
 Martha Penzer (Burlington)  
 Zenaida Peterson (Cambridge)

Yanire Zamora Rodriquez (Cambridge)  
John Reuthe (Vassalboro)  
Benigno and Karen Sanchez-Eppler (Northampton)  
Nat Shed and Julie De Sherbinen (Portland)  
Alana and Matt Southworth (Hartford)  
Carl Stoddard (Vassalboro)  
David Thompson (Hartford)  
James Varner (Orono)  
Susan and Tom Vargo (Northampton)  
Judy Williams (Hanover)  
Penny Wright (Hanover)  
Juliet Wright (Bennington)

Cards were made available on a table outside of the Casella Theater for Friends to sign and write notes to these or other Friends who we were missing from Annual Sessions this year.

### **2024-28 Welcoming Visitors**

Presiding Clerk, Rebecca Leuchak (Providence), welcomed visitors from other Yearly Meetings and representatives from organizations and invited them to introduce themselves. Please note that the names of all visitors to any part of these Sessions who introduced themselves are compiled in the list above (see Minute 2024-4).

### **2024-29 Volunteer Visitors to Youth Programs**

The Clerk called for volunteers to visit youth yearly meetings within NEYM and to draft a report for later in Sessions, to provide us all a glimpse into that lively part of our Yearly Meeting Sessions.

### **2024-30 Epistle: Eastern Europe YM**

Our Reading Clerks read the first-ever epistle of the newly founded Eastern Europe Yearly Meeting. These Friends reflected on what had drawn members to Friends, how they conducted their gathering, and what directions they might take. “We are living history at this very moment ... It is up to us to continue gathering and growing.” The epistle spoke to themes that have arisen in our own gathering, of embracing transformation and intentionally living into who we are meant to be. What would our Yearly Meeting look like if we started from scratch today?

### **2024-31 Unity Agenda Introduction and Review**

Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak (Providence) introduced the Unity Agenda and invited Friends to review details in the Advance Documents in preparation for its consideration on Monday. She instructed us to speak to the person whose name is listed next to an agenda item if we wished it to be considered for removal from the Unity Agenda.

### **2024-32 Staff Report: Program Director’s Reflection**

Nia Thomas addressed the meeting with reflections on the past year as NEYM Program Director.

NEYM offers year-round programming for a range of ages, needs, and locations, catering to individuals, meetings, and quarters, and drawing from the whole yearly meeting, or beyond. Nia relays that when planning programming that is rich and sustainable, we often live in paradigms of balance: ongoing adaptation balanced by steadiness and continuity; listening and waiting balanced by action; short-term gratification balanced by the long-term health of the organization; growing versus honoring our capacity.

NEYM has been around for a long time because many generations of Friends have tended to the long- and short-term care of the Yearly Meeting. Our task is to clarify where we are today and what we need now, and to design programs to serve the body as we are. A thriving body must always

grow in Spirit and reach toward what is alive. If we take time to clarify our core beliefs and motivations, the future can understand what was behind our decisions and carry that essence through different decisions and change.

NEYM seeks to broaden the base of Friends with programming that widens, not closes off, circles, welcomes new Friends and the less involved, builds skills and resources to develop the gifts we already carry, and doesn't just serve the individual attendee, but also strengthens the web of relationships between Friends in a way that builds our mutual strength. Nia encouraged all to invite a new Friend who has never been to a Yearly Meeting who would benefit from connecting to other Friends and other monthly meetings.

### **2024-33 Permanent Board Report**

Permanent Board clerk Susan Davies (Vassalboro) presented a report. She celebrated the inspiring ministry delivered during Sessions. The Permanent Board has the task of carrying forward the life that rises up in Annual Sessions, and in quarterly and monthly meetings throughout the year.

Over this year, the Permanent Board has worked steadily with the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group to become more aware of the impacts of words and actions. In coordination with the Permanent Board, NEYM is moving forward with engaging an anti-racism professional. An excellent individual has been selected by a working group and approved by the Permanent Board. Negotiation of the logistical details are underway.

The Permanent Board began the year's work coming out of Sessions 2023 with instruction to develop an NEYM Conflict Response Team. A working group prepared a proposal that came back to this year's Sessions.

During Salem Quarterly Meeting's hiatus, the Permanent Board assumed their duties, including the process that led to discerning and approving Three Rivers as a monthly meeting of New England Yearly Meeting. Permanent Board and members of Salem Quarter are mutually taking steps toward healing damaged trust and conflict which emerged during that arduous process.

In the coming year, the Permanent Board has set goals of supporting and clarifying the work of the quarterly meetings, and to strengthen and support the NEYM nomination process.

One of the great privileges and responsibilities of the Permanent Board clerk is the oversight and welfare of NEYM staff. We are blessed to be served by such a dedicated and gifted staff.

Lastly, Susan mentioned a few important reports coming to Sessions this week that have been under the care of Permanent Board: the Quaker Indigenous Boarding School Research Group and the Legacy Gift Committee and Legacy Review Committee.

In closing, Susan lifted up something Jeremiah Dickinson offered to his monthly meeting during their difficult discernment process:

“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.”

### **2024-34 Closing**

The Presiding Clerk offered a closing prayer reflecting with gratitude on all the work and servant leadership we receive from the Permanent Board and our NEYM staff.

As Friends settled into a brief waiting worship, the Presiding Clerk enjoined Friends to consider all the components of our Annual Sessions schedule as an organic whole. From Bible Half Hour to business meetings, to Vespers, to the Plenary, to small group and informal gatherings, youth programs and waiting worship, each element can flow from one to the other, inspiring, deepening, informing the overall work of the week. Meeting for business may be scheduled for a block, and

worship for another, but we must carry a sense of continuity in spirit to bring our best selves to each form of engagement in Yearly Meeting.

The clerks table together closed worship with the song “Woyaya,” by Osibisa.

### **August 5, 2024, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.**

#### **2024-35 Opening**

After a forty-minute delay for severe weather on the Castleton campus, Friends were welcomed to settle into waiting worship. Suzanna Schell (Beacon Hill), Janet Hough (Cobscook/Three Rivers), Sara Burke (Beacon Hill), and Madeleine Vaché (New London) served as elders.

Yearly Meeting Secretary Noah Merrill (Putney) spoke out of worship, opening with the words of our movement’s midwife, Margaret Fell:

*Truth is one and the same always, though ages and generations pass away, and one generation goes and another comes, yet the word and the power of the Living God endures forever, and is the same and never changes.*

He gave testimony to the transforming power of Spirit, manifest in community and the presence of Friends in their tender and sacrificial holding of him in the harrowing aftermath of his older brother’s brutal murder in January of this year. He called us to share his experience of redemption in unity of the Spirit, united in one grief and one joy, despite all, opening us once again to the greater love and slow relentless work of God in our hearts. This world doesn’t need more rage, he told Friends. This world needs the source of our hope, and lives in all their blessed diversity expressing their faith, the living seed.

Even as the challenges of our lives shake our foundations, in collapse, those who came before us promise that as we are shaken, we will find true foundation in the security only God can give.

Fostering accompaniment and support, the heartbeat of Religious Society of Friends is found and felt in daily imperfect constellations of individuals seeking to go in relationship with God, to become teachable, to carry the practice and fruits of these moments into our lives.

Humility, steadfastness, patient service: these run contrary to a season of brittleness and breaking, providing a spiritual discipline. The hour is far too late for anything but fearless forgiving, persevering tenderness.

Friend Merrill contrasted loneliness against an ecology of faithfulness and a ministry of the whole: There is truly only one grief, and it is all grief. There is only one joy, and it is all joy. He testified to the great cloud of witnesses—who have sought, are yet seeking, will seek, to discern the patterns made visible by walking in the Light. Even as storms rage around us, confusion and madness hold sway—even as we find ourselves thrown into the utter blackness of the abyss, may we daily call each other back to the first Truth Friends called each other to: the possibility of a relationship.

He concluded, saying, “Truth speaks us into being, calls us into covenant with God and one another, and walks beside us. This is a story about life, sustained by the ocean of God’s love.”

The full text of the Yearly Meeting Secretary’s testimony is appended to these minutes (see page 40).

#### **2024-36 Nominating Committee Report**

Jackie Stillwell (Monadnock), clerk of the Nominating Committee, reminded us of our imperfect connection to Spirit, which nonetheless waits in quiet moments for us to listen and invite Spirit in, so the Spirit of all life can flow through us. The imperfections—the holding back—are part of the joy. She offered that the nominating process is an opportunity to live into our vision as a faith com-

munity, and thanked each of us for whatever part of the puzzle we are carrying—those who we see, and those who are invisibly releasing others to serve.

Nominating committee members were Christopher Gant (Beacon Hill), Beth Hansen (Westerly), Anna Lindo (Framingham), Martha Schwope (Wellesley), Tim Lamm (Worcester), and Sarah Smith (Concord).

Jackie shared the following corrections to the nominating slate presented in the Advance documents:

- For Board of Managers of Investments and Permanent Funds, until 2025: Erik Philbrook (Wellesley)
- For Youth Ministries, until 2027: Heather Gray (Framingham)
- For American Friends Service Committee, until 2027: Bob Eaton (Durham)
- **For Clerks' Table: the term of Phillip Veatch (Fresh Pond), Rising Clerk, should be until 2026. It is listed in error as until 2026 in the Advance Documents.**

### 2024-37 Spiritual Life Listening Group Report

Carl Williams and Noah Merrill presented a report and recommendations from the Permanent Board's Ministry and Spiritual Life Listening Group. The group has crossed New England for opportunities for extended worship with more than fifty meetings. They have formed a prayer list, regularly sharing prayer requests (Friends were invited to email mc-clerk@neym.org to join). The Yearly Meeting has also run the third round of the Nurturing Faithfulness program, supporting servant leadership. The group is tending to the organic life that is rising informally. We aren't planting seeds, Carl shared; we're planting asparagus, investing in a long cycle of fruitfulness.

Encouraging Friends to consult the Advance Documents for additional detail, Carl and Noah sought the body's affirmation for several actions and processes. The first was to affirm Permanent Board's support for care of quarterly meetings. The group further called on Permanent Board, as capacity and possibility allowed, to undertake a review of purposeful care and oversight of quarterly meetings.

Second, the group sought our affirmation for seeking opportunities to learn about and celebrate Friends serving in public ministry. Next, they asked the body to affirm the clerk of Ministry and Counsel to convene opportunities for Friends to gather for prayerful holding of the body between Annual Sessions, in each season. They invite Friends currently clerking, serving on Ministry and Counsel, or otherwise active in nurturing the life of their meetings to participate.

In addition, they asked us to affirm the group's convening ministry and eldership "shop talk" gatherings and growing capacity for opportunities for spiritual formation and religious education. Friends so affirmed.

The group sought approval for two matters. First, Friends **approved** the establishment of a "Thriving in Ministry and Eldership Resource Group" to support and provide accountability to friends serving in public ministry. This does not replace monthly and quarterly meetings' Yearly Meeting role. Neither is the group exclusively intended for recorded or officially recognized ministers, but for all those with a sustained sense of calling to service.

After clarifying the role and remit of the group, Friends approved. This committee is to be populated by the usual Nominating Committee process. A purposes, procedures, and composition document is provided in the Advance Documents.

Second, Carl requested and **received approval** to appoint an assistant clerk of Ministry and Counsel to work with the current clerk for one year, to support the current clerk and be mentored by him, and also serve as rising clerk, to support continuity.

### 2024-38 Faith and Practice Revision Committee Update

Phebe McCosker (Hanover), clerk of Faith and Practice Revision Committee, rose to present the Introduction to the book for preliminary approval. The committee is grateful for specific and careful feedback received, and to Nominating for helping to grow the committee. Friend McCosker reported that rough drafts of three of the last four chapters are ready to be revised. She thanked committee members Eleanor Godway (Hartford), Marion Athearn (Westport), Doug Armstrong (Monadnock), Sue Reilly (Portland), and Carolyn Hilles-Pilant (Cambridge). She also announced that two listening sessions would be held during Sessions, one in person and one over Zoom, and that written and emailed comments were also welcome.

The four outstanding chapters concern the spiritual life of the meeting community, personal spiritual life, our life as our testimony, and the structure of the Yearly Meeting. The committee has a sense that the end of the work is in sight! The resulting text will not speak to any one Friend's condition, but to the core and the range of our Yearly Meeting's experience.

### 2024-39 Closing

We closed with gratitude for this long and faithful work.

### August 5, 2024, 9:15– 11:15

#### 2024-40 Opening

In continuation of the worship that began in Bible Half Hour, Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak (Providence) opened our attention to business with a prayer. Reading Clerks offered daily announcements and housekeeping.

Allison Randall (Keene), Wendy Sanford (Cambridge), via Zoom, and Kathryn Olsen (East Sandwich) served as elders.

Andrew Grant (Mt Toby) delivered a land acknowledgement.

*Friends, we gather with humility and gratitude, here in Castleton on Ndakinna (n-DAH-kee-NAH), the homeland of the Abenaki peoples, and by Zoom on the traditional homelands of many peoples.*

*May our actions, guided by grace, lead us to greater peace and justice for all who dwell on these lands.*

The Reading Clerks presented the epistle from the 2024 General Meeting of Friends in Mexico, who called us to the spirit of *ubuntu* (I am because you are), and gave some insight into their labors to enrich the soil of their spiritual gardens.

#### 2024-41 Indigenous Boarding School Research Group Report

The Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools Research Group (Gordon Bugbee [Beacon Hill], clerk Janet Hough [Cobscook/Three Rivers], Andrew Grant [Mt Toby], Betsy Cazden [Providence], Merrill Kolhoffer [North Shore], and intern Charlie Barnard [Worcester]) delivered a report and recommendations resulting from their third year of work.

The Research Group's report reveals to us deep harms caused by well-intentioned people—with a caution that in our eagerness, we must pause and be mindful of the same danger now, of repeating our hubris, of believing we know what needs to be done, without asking what is wanted by the people we are seeking to support.

New England Friends were deeply, directly, and intimately involved in the establishment and material sustenance of Indigenous Boarding Schools and the policies that drove and justified them.

The Federal Indian Boarding School Program of the late 19th and 20th century was a program of forced assimilation and cultural erasure: attempted cultural genocide. Quakers' reputation among colonizers for dealing honestly with the Indigenous people of Pennsylvania and their reformist zeal

made them feel specially positioned to engage in a project they regarded as civilizing, Christianizing, and progressive.

NEYM used this felt moral authority to protest ongoing and repeated displacement of Indigenous tribes and nations, even as their members benefited from settling on land of displaced Indigenous peoples in the Midwest and New England. They were among the earliest Friends to advocate for Indigenous day schools and boarding schools.

NEYM undertook this archival research project in response to a call from the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS) for information about church-run schools, and for access to school records.

Friends can refer to the report in the 2024 Advance Documents for full context and details. A workshop was scheduled during Sessions for Friends to unpack the recommendations and report more thoroughly.

Friends resoundingly **approved** the Quaker Indigenous Boarding School Research Group's first recommendation to continue the Resource Group's charge for another year, with three components:

- to draft and file a formal account of NEYM involvement in Indian Boarding Schools
- to continue to engage with other researchers through the Quaker Indigenous Boarding School research network
- to continue collaboration with the NEYM Archives committee

So far, the working group's research has focused on the "what" of the extent and nature of NEYM's historic involvement in Quaker Indian Boarding Schools. In the coming term, the working group intends to focus on the "why."

This one-year extension allows the group a natural term to report back to the Yearly Meeting next Sessions and at that point discern capacity and leading for next steps.

Friends also **approved** the Resource Group's second recommendation, that NEYM Friends—individually, as monthly meetings, and as quarterly meetings—be encouraged to join in Friends' Committee on National Legislation's support for the federal bill (H.R. 7227, S. 1723) establishing a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies, which is guided by an Indigenous advisory committee and has the power to subpoena archival records if needed.

Friends present expressed robust support for this work of accountability. Given New England Yearly Meeting Friends' corporate historical responsibility in this matter, we are moved to use our corporate voice now to amplify the work of naming and healing harms.

Consistent with our 2015 Policy on Public Statements, **the assembled body further tasked the Presiding Clerk and the Yearly Meeting Secretary**, in consultation with the Quaker Indigenous Boarding School Resource Group and Friends Committee on National Legislation, to draft a Yearly Meeting statement endorsing the bill (H.R. 7227, S. 1723) and urging active support, to be distributed to every member of our Congressional delegations and to every monthly and quarterly meeting of NEYM.

Friends were clear that this letter from the Yearly Meeting should not supplant vital discernment and action at the individual, monthly and quarterly meeting level.

The meeting also **approved** the third recommendation from the Resource Group, that the QIBS Research Group, in coordination with the Permanent Board, collaborate with the Right Relationship Resource Group to open communications with the Indigenous Peoples of Ottawa and Pottawatomie Counties, Oklahoma (what had been the Quapaw and Sac and Fox Agencies), to explore opening communications towards offering a collective apology and asking what first steps might be acceptable in their view.

Friends spoke with appreciation for the capacity this Resource Group has developed to address this work without compounding harm, and encouraged the whole of our body to hold in our hearts the importance of centering our work not on ourselves or our performance or on eagerness for suc-



cess, but rather on listening to Spirit, and to that of Spirit in everyone; we are not running a race, but must go along step-by-step in surrender and allyship.

Some of us wonder if there is a movement among us to change the name “New England Yearly Meeting,” in awareness of how the name reflects a deeply colonial vision of how this landscape should look and how we should relate to the life, lands and waters that comprise it. How might our name reflect the land from other points of view?

### **2024-42 Closing**

The Presiding Clerk closed our meeting with waiting worship.

### **August 5, 2024, 3:00–5:00 p.m.**

### **2024-43 Opening**

Lynn Taber (Fresh Pond), Meg Klepack (Portland), and Sara Burke (Beacon Hill) served as elders.

Reading clerk Jesse Grace (West Richmond, NAOF) shared the epistle from the Asia West Pacific Section of Friends World Committee on Consultation, meeting in expectant waiting across language, seeking to make the work of speaking and listening more equal, meeting in walking worship, and locating themselves and their efforts for peace and justice, including climate justice, in the worldwide work of Friends.

### **2024-44 Staff Reports: Office Manager**

NEYM Office Manager Sara Hubner (Gonic) joined us virtually, as she was supporting Sessions from home for health reasons.

Sara addressed us briefly to let us know she is poignantly missing the on-campus experience of attending Sessions, but deeply appreciates the many Friends who have been picking up the diverse pieces of work we have usually depended on her to carry. Friends miss her, too, and are filled with gratitude for her faithful work, even when at a distance!

### **2024-45 Staff Reports: Accounts Manager**

Frederick Martin (Beacon Hill) offered reflections on his past year as NEYM Accounts Manager.

While the NEYM staff focus much of their work on this short week of Sessions, there is also so much life in the Yearly Meeting throughout the year, requiring steady funding and stewardship through the calendar.

Frederick understands his job as one of maintaining stability, and for years the Yearly Meeting enjoyed predictable financial security. Then the rollercoaster of the pandemic brought us through a time of some disorder and uncertainty. The normally steady stream of income expected from donations and event registrations was disrupted, and unexpected costs and unfamiliar needs drained the Yearly Meeting’s financial reserves.

NEYM finances have been left in a strained condition. As we re-find our bearings and find new patterns of stability, the Accounts Manager hopes we can bring that attention also to the Yearly Meeting’s finances. He was grateful to report that donations are already up from last year, and encourages Friends to contribute as they are able.

### **2024-46 Legacy Gift Committee Annual Report**

Again this year, through their administration of the Witness and Ministry Fund, the Future Fund, and the Bodine-Rustin Fund, the Legacy Gift Committee has used their endowment to financially empower a broad range of active individual and corporate ministries among New England Friends, and provided funding for necessary or efficiency-improving meetinghouse improvements.

The Legacy Gift Future Fund supports ministry, outreach and education challenging racism, supporting Indigenous people, meetinghouse projects, and addressing climate change and sustainability. The Witness and Ministry Fund supports Spirit-led witness through the funding of public and released ministry, while the Fund for Sufferings supports Friends who suffer as a result of their faithful witness and is intended to respond to urgent needs precipitated by witness.

This year concludes the Legacy Gift Committee's initial ten-year term granted by NEYM. The committee reports that their work still feels relevant and possible, and hopes that the Yearly Meeting will renew their charge to support Spirit-led projects and ministries. The committee welcomes Friends to join!

### **2024-47 Legacy Gift Ten-Year Review**

In 2023-2024, as part of a planned review process at the culmination of the Committee's initial ten-year charge, the Legacy Gift Committee compiled data summarizing their work and surveyed grantees and monthly meetings of New England Yearly Meeting about the impact the Legacy Fund has had.

Over the past decade, the Future Fund supplied 126 grants totaling \$604,147, including \$36,000 from Salem Quarter funds. The Witness and Ministry Fund made 30 grants summing to \$229,099. The Fund for Suffering, reinfused in 2018 with \$25,000 from the Legacy Fund by a redesignation by Permanent Board, has supplied \$6,841. In total, the Legacy Gift Fund has awarded \$858,245 in grants since 2014.

The committee heard from survey respondents that grants have made a difference, that the grants enrich our meetings, and that ministry and witness continue to need support. Most Friends surveyed would like to see the Legacy Gift work continue.

Friends reflected that there is even greater need today than in 2014. A significant number of respondents to the survey encouraged using a portion of the funds for reparations.

One of the strengths of the Legacy Gift Committee's structure has been their ability to support ministries not only financially, but also more holistically and over a longer term, with prayer, accountability, support committees, and accompaniment.

As part of the committee's presentation, Friends saw photo slides and mention of some of the diverse individual and organizational ministries that have been made possible or strengthened by the support of Legacy Gift grants over their ten years of support. These ministries have a direct impact on beneficiaries, but also a broader, indirect effect of enlivening the Life of Spirit among us all.

### **2024-48 Bodine-Rustin Grants Report**

Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers) reported on the Bodine-Rustin Fund, administered by the Legacy Grant Committee. Born out of a group of Friends' desire "to put our energy into what we are for, rather than what we are against," the Fund seeks to support diverse international LGBTQ ministries and organizations.

The fund carries no monies over from year to year, but fully fundraises and distributes its funds each cycle. This year, they disbursed \$4,214.46 among six recipients. To sustain their vital work, the members of the Bodine-Rustin Fund request both nominations of grantees and financial donations to be allocated.

### **2024-49 Israel-Palestine Resource Group**

Leslie Manning (Durham/Three Rivers) addressed us as the convenor of the Israel-Palestine Resource Group, a body tasked with fulfilling commitments NEYM made in 2017, 2019, and 2023 to respond to the ongoing conflict in Gaza and the West Bank.

Over several years, the Resource Group has offered a number of ways for Friends to inform themselves about and wrestle with the issues alive in Gaza and the West Bank (and the U.S. policy re-

sponse). They have offered book discussions, a resource guide, and discussions by people who have visited and lived in the area (from Zionist to anti-apartheid perspectives).

Then the events of October 2023 spurred an outpouring of concern and requests from Friends seeking recommendations for how to engage and be witnesses for peace in the midst of this devastatingly heightened humanitarian crisis. Violence stemming from this conflict touches as close to home as the shooting of three young Palestinian men in Burlington, and we are shaken by reports of how the children and community of the Ramallah Friends School suffer violence and fear.

The Israel-Palestine Resource group offered several recommendations to Friends:

- Individually, Friends can meet with Legislative Representatives or their top staffers to express opposition to current U.S. policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and to press their delegations to co-sponsor the bill [unnumbered] to restore funding to the UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.] by August 8th.
- We can vision and vigil for peace this World Quaker Day, October 6th, the day before the one-year anniversary of the events of October 7th, 2023.
- As monthly and quarterly meetings we can use the voice we share in epistles and minutes to ask Friends everywhere to join us in resisting violence and complicity in war of all kinds and to reject our current administration's ongoing military and financial assistance to the Israeli government. The Resource Group's page on the NEYM website has the text for a number of minutes already approved by monthly and quarterly meetings in New England.
- Friends are encouraged to speak to members of the Resource Group for even more suggestions and resources.

While there was clearly significant support for this witness and the Resource Group's recommendations among Friends, the issue is complex. Friends reaffirmed that our unity remains described by Minute 2017-46, approved by New England Yearly Meeting in 2017 which, in excerpt, includes calls upon our nation to:

- Cease sending United States military aid and selling weapons to the entire Middle East
- Work with the United Nations Security Council to end military aid and arms sales from all outside countries to all parties in this conflict
- Support the United Nations efforts to bring justice, peace, security, and reconciliation to all parties in the conflict.

Leslie exhorted us, we cannot remain silent. Our witness matters. Listen. Obey. Serve. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr, "We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope."

### **2024-50 Closing**

Jesse Grace (West Richmond, NAOF) closed our worship by singing "Vine and Fig Tree," and many Friends went out with much weighing on their hearts.

### **August 6, 2024, 9:15 to 11:15 a.m.**

#### **2024-51 Opening**

We moved from the worship emerging out of Bible Half Hour into meeting for worship for the conduct of business, with a reminder that the 6th of August of each year brings the remembrance of the bombing of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak (Providence) invited Friends into prayer for the realization of lasting world peace.

Lynette Arnold (Mt Toby), Allison Randall (Keene), Robert Dove McClellan (Fresh Pond), via Zoom, and Maggie Fogarty (Dover) served as elders.

Andrew Grant (Mt Toby) read a brief land acknowledgement to ground our gathering in recognition, respect and gratitude.

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*May our actions, guided by grace, lead us to greater peace and justice for all who dwell on these lands.*

### **2024-52 Epistles of Other Bodies and Announcements**

Reading clerks Michelle Wright (Putney) and Jesse Grace (West Richmond, NAOF) selected an epistle from Bohol Worship Group—Philippines, who met on World Quaker Day virtually and in person in a small physical gathering. They reflected on the centrality of food in so many Christian encounters, and reported on their meeting, including sharing a low-carbon-footprint vegetarian meal with members of a local community displaced by the construction of an airport from which Friends have benefitted.

In general announcements, the Reading Clerks encouraged Friends to move their vehicles off of electric vehicle changers, that all might be recharged to return home.

### **2024-53 Sessions Visions Process**

Nia Thomas (Northampton), NEYM Program Director, shared the plans for a Sessions re-visioning process, together with Phil Veatch (Fresh Pond) and Alison Levie (Bennington). Other working group members included Maggie Fogarty (Dover) and Matt Southworth (Hartford).

They are devising a plan for engaging Friends in discernment on the future of Sessions in a wide and comprehensive way. What is our core work? While New England Yearly Meeting has emerged from Covid in better condition than most others in the U.S., the body is trying to do more and serve more complex needs, even as individuals are under increased financial strain. This impacts our time and energy: our numbers are reduced, even as the same proportion participate formally. Staff overload and strain in response, working 360 days to create these five days we have together.

The plan emphasizes connection, gathering information on other models in fall, then holding listening and threshing sessions through winter to ready us for convening and synthesis in spring. A report will inform the form that 2026 Sessions take; Yearly Meeting Secretary Noah Merrill confirmed that 2025 Sessions, to be held at University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts, or the University of Vermont in Burlington, would have much the same contours as the present Sessions.

Friends encouraged the process to center God and possibilities for collaboration, cross-pollination, and growth in our engagement beyond our current confines, even as we are conscious of financial limits.

### **2024-54 Development Update**

Frederick Martin (Beacon Hill), the Yearly Meeting Accounts Manager, updated us on development efforts. Many Friends had contributed to efforts of fundraising and messaging. As of Tuesday morning, we had already met the first goal of covering the cost of Sessions for 2024.

### **2024-55 Budget Approval**

Finance Committee clerk Scot Drysdale (Hanover) reported that the listening session was well attended and lively, but no concerns were raised in objection to passing the current proposed budget, so the Finance Committee believes we are ready to proceed.

Friends **approved** the proposed budget as written.

If at the end of the Fiscal Year 2025 there is a surplus, fifty percent of that surplus will 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. There is a working group that may bring recommendations for discernment to next year's Sessions. If no new decision is made, we would default to the precedent set by most recent passed budgets.

Several Friends spoke to the potential false sense of complacency this decision may create, the perilous condition of continuing to operate with such depleted reserves, and the opportunity to do more with less, in ways that reflect new patterns of how Friends participate.

### **2024-56 Sharing and Appreciation for Marian Baker**

Standing before us in the traditional Quaker bonnet she has been called to wear, Marian Baker (Weare/Henniker) brought us a report on her work and experiences. She shared that she travels under a minute from her monthly, quarterly, and yearly meeting. Accompanied by East African women leaders as her traveling companions and support committee, Marian has followed a calling to lift up the ministry of African women. She has worked for over 50 years in East Africa, particularly in Friends' schools; she has played a key role in the establishment of girls' schools.

Marian opened her remarks with a quote from John Woolman, reminding us to decenter ourselves, and be open to reciprocal learning:

*Love was the first motion, and then a concern arose to spend some time with the Indians, that I might feel and understand their life, and the Spirit they live in, if haply I might receive some instruction from them, or they be in any degree helped forward by my following the leadings of Truth.*

Marian has followed a discipline of arriving humbly with her traveling companion as distant relatives, rather than important outsiders, and thus hearing different truths. Using the concept of the mustard seed, being willing to go and listen to the One Who Speaks, she is trying to lift up the women who comprise 80 percent of Quaker church members in Kenya, even though all leadership positions within the church go only to men.

The results have borne fruit. Finding dozens or a hundred children coming to a local meeting, without programming for them, she found Kenyan women to go out and start Sunday schools, with intervisitation and support from knowledgeable New England Friends like Beth Collea (Dover) and others.

Marian began querying African Friends on what they believed they should be telling the next generation about. Because of divisions driven by men starting a new meeting if not confirmed in their leadership, many Friends were not broadly familiar with the stories of African Friends' leadership and contributions. Young Quakers like 19-year-old Edna Bondi, named for early missionary Edna Bond, are now starting the Africa Quaker Archives. They are conducting oral interviews in their region using smartphones, irrespective of yearly meeting affiliation, to record the African voices of Friends and transcribe and translate them. They are excited to share stories and accompany people to visit elders who can't leave their homes but can tell the stories. Edna Bondi has traveled around Britain as well, to share the good news of what is happening in Uganda and Kenya.

Marian is working with many Quakers around the world—Kenyans, Congolese, Jamaicans—who are underrepresented, to empower ministries of archiving and research, and social, political, and non-violent activism focused on women's rights and human rights. She is part of the work to uplift women, readying them to travel in the ministry. Friend Baker encouraged us to catch the joy, and consider what we might learn from African Friends. We can support women who are trying to make a difference by buying crafts from the Yearly Meeting consignment shop to financially empower these ministries. Marian updates a travel letter daily when she is in Kenya.

The Presiding Clerk expressed the Yearly Meeting's gratitude to Marian Baker for all she brings to the Yearly Meeting and the way she connects us to Friends around the world.

### **2024-57 Staff Report: Children and Family Ministries Coordinator**

Kara Price (Storrs), Children and Family Ministries Coordinator, came to us attired in a visual representation of the three programs she supports at session, draped in parts of the staff t-shirts for Childcare, Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM), and Junior High Yearly Meeting (JHYM).

The program held three JYM retreats, the first full year of in-person retreats since Covid. Some 20 to 30 children attended, bringing new life, as well as new staff, half of whom are JYM parents. Similarly, staff convened three JHYM retreats, with about a dozen youth in attendance. They were supported by a lot of energy from a few returning veteran staff. The program is looking to build support and the staff base for the JHYM program. A local youth minister also supported a videoconference session series this year.

For Sessions, Kara was working on a document titled "100 Children," tracking retreat attendance beginning with the young people involved from when Covid began to those involved now, to try to understand youth programs retention. There are Friends who have returned, and new children coming, including for the first time this year.

She shared that we have a few really good problems to solve. We have been working based on a structure of having something robust for the children to do while adults conduct the business of the Yearly Meeting, but we have youth interested in participating in Bible Half Hour and business. The challenge is in how to overlap the two offerings.

While it was a struggle to find volunteers for Sessions, the staff who did say yes are wonderful and diverse. It feels as if youth programming is turning toward more energy, life, and participation, a positive response after the serious concerns raised by Young Friends and Young Adult Friends' in their epistles of 2023. Yearly Meeting staff are making a concerted, coordinated effort to build support among youth program organizers, sharing staffing suggestions, and convening together. Kara concluded with a request for prayers for youth and youth staff.

### **2024-58 Closing**

We closed in worship.

### **August 6, 2024, 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.**

#### **2024-59 Opening**

Bill Monroe (Providence) opened our worship for business with the song "Joy Comes Back," by Sean Staples. Willa Taber (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers), Kristina Keefe-Perry (Three Rivers/Fresh Pond) and Suzanna Schell (Beacon Hill) served as elders.

The Reading Clerks presented an epistle from Cuba Yearly Meeting, in which Friends were encouraged to move forward with the Quaker testimonies as a guide, trusting that Divine Light shines through us all. The Reading Clerks also offered a land acknowledgement and a few announcements.

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### 2024-60 Address from Cuban Friends

Friends heard a video-recorded address from Jorge Luis Peña, Presiding Clerk of Cuba Yearly Meeting, exhorting us to act with focus and intention—not to let spiritual drowsiness put our (spiritual) lives at risk.

Jorge Luis encouraged us to endorse the delegation from Hanover Monthly Meeting approved by the Puente Committee to travel to Havana this fall.

Accordingly, gathered Friends of the New England Yearly Meeting **approved** Len and Maryanne Cadwallader, Julian Grant, and Sheila Smith (all of Hanover Monthly Meeting) in their intended fellowship visit to Havana Cuban Friends this October, under the general license for religious activities granted by the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control.

### 2024-61 Unity Agenda

The body **approved** the Unity Agenda, with the exception of the item concerning the Conflict Response Team, the Presiding Clerk having received feedback that it would need more work before being ready for approval.

Susan Davies (Vassalboro), Permanent Board Clerk, suggested that if this body were agreeable to the Conflict Response Team in concept, as presented in the Advance Documents, making note of some important details to be worked out, the Permanent Board could take responsibility for resolving the concerns, and the idea could be put into practice sooner than waiting on approval by next Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions.

Friends **provisionally approved** the Permanent Board to refine and implement the proposal to establish a New England Yearly Meeting Conflict Response Team, to be revisited by the 2025 Yearly Meeting Sessions for further discernment and approval. Permanent Board will seek to address the following concerns raised from the body:

- The charge as presented seems to lay a huge workload on a very small group of people. What are the limits of our expectations, and what supports are in place for the Conflict Response Team?
- What would be our measure for success or assessment? Can we establish a clear mechanism for feedback, goal-setting, and evaluation?
- Assign a trial period (perhaps three years) followed by a clear and open review process.
- Consider adding a few more people to the group with expertise in navigating and healing conflict.

### 2024-62 Legacy Gift Recommendations

Mary Link (Mt Toby) reported that, following their presentation to this meeting on Monday, members of the Legacy Gift Committee were able to find unity among the Finance Clerk, Treasurer, Legacy Gift Committee, and the Legacy Gift Review Finance Manager on the following five recommendations. Friends then **approved** the following actions:

1. Continue the ministry of the Legacy Gift Funds and the Legacy Gift Committee as a resource to lift up witness and ministry of New England Friends, with another review in 10 years.
2. Combine the Witness and Ministry and the (currently fully expended) Futures Fund guidelines and eligibility to include supporting meetinghouse projects and create just one fund, titled the Witness and Ministry Fund.
3. Designate \$750,000 as a quasi-endowment for the Legacy Gift Witness and Ministry Fund. Legacy Gift Committee may draw funds from the principal in consultation with Permanent Board in unusual circumstances to faithfully nurture the witness and ministry among us in the future.

Changes in the use of these designated funds continue to require approval from Sessions (as in Minute 2014-62). This allows some flexibility and responsiveness to Spirit's movement if there is a compelling reason to draw off of the capital.

4. The balance of the current Witness and Ministry Funds (approximately \$280,000) remains undesignated for now. We charge the Permanent Board to facilitate a consultation including the Legacy Gift Committee, the Legacy Gift Review Committee, the Treasurer, Finance Committee, Yearly Meeting Ministry and Counsel, and others as appropriate. Until this consultation, the balance of the funds will not be used for other purposes.
5. Consider Financial Reparations. Ask the Right Relationship Resource Group to initiate a conversation and discernment about restorative actions and future financial reparations, inviting local meetings to engage in learning and reflection, and ask that the Right Relationship Resource Group report back to Sessions with yearly updates. If NEYM becomes clear to make financial reparations, a significant draw from Witness and Ministry Fund and/or the undesignated funds could be used for this purpose.

This fifth recommendation was **approved** with inclusion of explicit guidance from the Meeting to consider BIPOC communities broadly in any discernment of financial reparations. The Committee affirmed that the Right Relationship Resource Group is already seeking out Friends with experience to advise on this, and welcomes the monthly and quarterly meetings to include this in their discernment and recommendations.

The Committee concluded with a reminder that there are openings on Legacy Fund Committee, and other openings waiting for Friends to step into service!

### **2024-63 2024 NEYM Epistle**

The Epistle Writing ad hoc committee, Morgan Wilson (Framingham), Frances Lightsom (West Falmouth), and Brian Drayton (Souhegan), presented a first draft of this year's NEYM Epistle, and received feedback from the Meeting.

### **2024-64 Faith and Practice Revision**

Friends preliminarily **approved** a draft presented by Phebe McCosker (Hanover) of the Introduction for the new revision of the New England Faith and Practice, having incorporated feedback from the two listening sessions and comments received from Friends on the draft presented in the Advance Documents.

### **2024-65 Closing**

The Presiding Clerk closed the meeting with waiting worship.

## **August 7, 2024, 9:15–10:15 a.m.**

### **2024-66 Opening**

Emily Piper (Mt Toby) transitioned our worship following Bible Half Hour by singing "Give Light" by Terry Leonino and Greg Artzner, based on writings by Ella Baker.

Maggie Fogarty (Dover), Betsy Roper (Cambridge), Kathryn Olsen (East Sandwich), and Wendy Sanford (Cambridge), via Zoom, served as elders.

Don Campbell (Mt Toby) brought us a land acknowledgement to orient our business towards right relationship and gratitude.

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*May our actions, guided by grace, lead us to greater peace and justice for all who dwell on these lands.*

The Presiding Clerk welcomed Friends with appreciation for the fullness of the week we have shared together.

She read the traveling minute commending Lloyd Lee Wilson from North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) and Friendship Friends Monthly Meeting, and with gratitude for the blessings his visit has brought to us, she shared an endorsement to his traveling minute in return.

### **2024-67 Visitors to Youth Programs**

As has been our custom, volunteers from this Yearly Meeting visited sessions of the youth programs and prepared reports on their experience and observations for the gathered body.

### **2024-68 Childcare**

Douglas Heath (Hartford) and Alison Levie (Bennington) reported their first impression that all the adults caring for the youngest Friends must be grandparents and relatives of the children in the program, so comfortable were the littlest ones with their carers. When they learned that in fact many had only known each other for the few days of Sessions, they were moved and impressed by the sweetness and trust evident in the relationships the children had formed with their caregivers.

### **2024-69 Junior Yearly Meetings**

David Erikson (Weare/Henniker) reported visiting the gym, in which all of JYM, JHYM, and Young Friends were gathering for singing. The songs, with one exception, were those we sang together a generation ago. The numbers in each group are fewer than 25 years ago, but the feeling of care and upholding each other was at least as clear and strong.

Jessica Holmes (Northampton) also had the privilege to observe the JYM 4th through 6th grade sections. The group was gathered together under a tent with twinkling lights and blankets on the ground in the gym for a cozy sing-along with other young people from JYM, JHYM, and Young Friends. Some kids were masked, and others were unmasked and sharing pretzel rods and orange slices. They all appeared to enjoy being a part of the singing led by Kara Price (Storrs) and Kenzie Burpee (Wellesley).

After singing, the JYM-aged children moved very comfortably into a time when they could choose “JYM ball,” jewelry-making or Lego-building. Jessica visited children engaged in each task until lunch, and sensed a healthy community. When asked, kids offered that they had been having fun at Sessions. Highlights included Capture the Flag, JYM ball, scootering on the sidewalks, clay meditations, and seeing friends they knew from JYM retreats.

Leanne Regan (unaffiliated) also reflected on the energy and sense of connection she observed during her visit to JHYM Friends. Leslie Manning (Durham/Three Rivers) and Stefan Walker (Worcester) brought a song from Young Friends back to the body, singing “All God’s Critters” (Bill Staines) with us.

### **2024-70 Young Adult Friends**

Jay O’Hara reported that although there was not a lot of dedicated YAF-specific programming at the 2024 Sessions, he spent some time with young adult Friends and noted that their participation in business meeting had been a blessing, and that these Friends were perhaps best represented by the way many gave their time at Sessions to youth programming in service to the children of our meeting. He raised up the ongoing concern that young adult Friends need encouragement and perhaps more consideration from the wider Yearly Meeting about what care or mentorship this cohort might need.

### **2024-71 Staff Reports: Yearly Meeting Events Coordinator**

Friends gratefully heard a report from Elizabeth Hacala, Events Coordinator for NEYM. She shared that, even though a number of frequent Sessions attenders are instead with Friends in South Africa for the FWCC World Plenary, our on-campus registrations stayed steady. Our online-only registration numbers did also, encompassing Friends who had to change their plans due to illness or other circumstances. Youth numbers were the same or slightly ahead of 2023. Pay-as-led continued to be a successful practice: promised Sessions fees were \$10k higher than last year.

Elizabeth questioned the supposed binary of on-campus and online: a number of Friends have reported being nurtured and supported by being able to access Zoom sessions while on campus. Other Friends had a two-part Sessions experience, joining online part of their time, and spending the balance on campus. She thanked the tech team and those holding the online space, and expressed particular gratitude to Phil Veatch (Fresh Pond) as he wrapped up his time as Sessions Planning Clerk, and to her assistant Jess Sheldon (Durham), working remotely from the UK this year.

She spoke to Friends' concern over the future shape and location of Sessions, and offered her sacred promise to conclude this process as quickly as would give the Yearly Meeting its best result going forward. With an image of the sunset after Sunday's storm, she reminded us that in the wake of concern and uncertainty, we can still find beauty and light.

### **2024-72 Generations Together**

Morgan Wilson (Framingham), a member of the Generations Together initiative, addressed the meeting with a reminder appeal to Friends to contribute toward the Yearly Meeting's financial need. The combined group effort of each giving according to their ability could nurture the seeds of this body's work for the next 364 years.

Yearly Meeting Accounts Manager Frederick Martin (Beacon Hill) reported that Friends had contributed \$21,149 in 34 gifts since the start of Sessions and that NEYM had received ten new monthly-giving pledges, from adolescent Friends to those in their 80s.

### **2024-73 Closing Transition**

In recognition of the heightened Covid transmission risk, the body refrained from singing in full voice, but instead hummed "Dear Friends" to welcome the children into our meeting.

### **Closing Celebration, August 7, 2024, 10:15 to 11:30 a.m.**

Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk, welcomed our youngest Friends to join us, and continued on to the closing celebration of the New England Yearly Meeting 2024 Annual Sessions.

### **2024-74 Epistle Approval**

The ad hoc Epistle-Writing Committee presented the final draft of the 2024 New England Yearly Meeting Epistle, having integrated feedback on their initial draft, acknowledging requests from some Friends for inclusion of more diverse ways of naming the Divine.

Friends **approved** the Epistle with gratitude and sat briefly in worship, letting the reflection on our Sessions and our Yearly Meeting settle on our hearts.

### **2024-75 Youth Epistles**

Representatives from each of the Youth Programs presented epistles from their Sessions. The epistles will be shared alongside these minutes.

Childcare, read by Rainer Humphries (Hartford)

Junior YM, kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, read by Hazel Spatzler (Burlington)

Junior YM, grades 4 through 6, read by Abbie Haineswood (Putney)

Junior High YM, read by Baz Poynter (New Haven)

Young Friends, read by Newt Barletta (Framingham)

Young Adult Friends, read by Tristan Athearn-Hess (Westport)

### **2024-76 Worship**

Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers) led us in a worshipful activity to bring attention and purpose to our departure from this gathered meeting.

Volunteers distributed strips of wildflower-seed-studded paper to all in the auditorium (remote attendees who registered timely received them by mail). Kristina instructed Friends to “write an intention, for you or for us, coming out of this week. Plant the paper, water it and tend to it. Hold us all in your hearts, and know that you are held as well.”

Kristina sang “Walking Each Other Home” by Kate Munger, with lyrics from Ram Dass.

### **2024-77 Appreciation for Drew Chasse**

Drew Chasse (Mt Toby) stepped in as Young Friends Interim Coordinator this past year in service to our Yearly Meeting programming and our youth. Our new NEYM Teen and Outreach Ministries Coordinator, Collee Williams (Mt Toby), offered an appreciation for Drew’s selfless demonstration of agape love, saying, “If we can carry forward even a fraction of the care you have shown, we’ll be okay.” Similar gratitude was echoed by Yearly Meeting Program Director Nia Thomas (Northampton), and other voices.

### **2024-78 Closing**

The Presiding Clerk closed this 364th Annual Sessions of the New England Yearly Meeting, purposing to meet again August 1, 2025, if consonant with the will of God, for the 365th New England Yearly Meeting. Emily Piper (Mt Toby) sang us out.

## Approved 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	FY2025 Proposed Budget	Notes
	Actuals	Budget	Budget			
<b>Income</b>						
4010 Individual Contributions Total	197,009	230,225	223,000	5,000	228,000	
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions Total	348,668	373,000	342,000	3,000	345,000	
4025 Unallocated Income	33,451	31,000	0	-	0	
4030 Organizations Contributions		0	0	-	0	
4050 Interest and Dividend Income	7,761	12,000	12,000	(1,000)	11,000	2
4070 Books & Other Sales Income	11,638	17,000	10,500	-	10,500	
4077 Consulting Fee Contribution	900					
4080 Retreat Program Fees	25,712	47,000	37,500	-	37,500	
4085 Sessions Program Fees	158,157	227,400	249,475	(34,580)	214,895	1
4090 Change in Fair Market Value	3,225	0	0	-	0	
4099 Net Assets Released To/From	0	30,000	5,000	(5,000)	0	3
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>786,521</b>	<b>967,625</b>	<b>879,475</b>	<b>(32,580)</b>	<b>\$ 846,895</b>	
<b>Expenses</b>						
Total 5000 Staff	462,754	493,684	503,842	12,472	\$ 516,314	4
Total 5100 General & Administration	109,827	93,615	87,449	-	\$ 87,449	
Total 5300 Travel & Conferences	30,899	35,300	22,300	-	\$ 22,300	
Total 6000 Programs	193,220	284,300	256,012	(42,162)	\$ 213,850	
Total 6140 Books & Other Sales Expense	10,043	14,500	8,000	-	\$ 8,000	
Total 6200-6590 Support of Other Organizations	42,807	45,975	0	-	\$ 0	
Total 6600 Publications		0	0	-		
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>849,549</b>	<b>967,374</b>	<b>877,603</b>	<b>(119,461)</b>	<b>\$ 847,913</b>	
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>(63,028)</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>1,872</b>	<b>(1,269)</b>	<b>(1,018)</b>	
<b>Other Income</b>						
9940 Other Income - Transfers from other funds	36,639					
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<b>36,639</b>					
<b>Other Expenses</b>						
9950 Other Expense - Transfer to other funds	8,789					
<b>Total Other Expenses</b>	<b>8,789</b>					
<b>Net Other Income</b>	<b>27,850</b>					
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>(35,178)</b>					

**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	Notes
	Actuals	Budget	Budget			
<b>Income</b>						
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	1
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	2
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	1
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	3
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>786,521.25</b>	<b>967,625</b>	<b>879,475</b>	<b>(32,580)</b>	<b>\$ 846,895.00</b>	
<b>Expenses</b>						
5000 Staff						
5010 Salaries & Wages	351,738.85	378,053	380,988	8,248	389,236.00	4
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	4
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	
<b>Total 5100 General &amp; Administration</b>	<b>109,826.83</b>	<b>93,615</b>	<b>87,449</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$ 87,449.00</b>	

Category	FY2023 Actuals	FY2023 Budget	FY2024 Budget		FY2025 Proposed Budget	Notes
<b>5300 Travel &amp; Conferences</b>						
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	
<b>Total 5300 Travel &amp; Conferences</b>	<b>30,898.58</b>	<b>35,300</b>	<b>22,300</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>22,300.00</b>	
<b>6000 Programs</b>						
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	
<b>Total 6112 Retreats - Room &amp; Board</b>	<b>21,793.42</b>	<b>29,480</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>20,000.00</b>	
6125 Program Expenses				-		
6105 Honoraria - Speakers/Wkshp Ldrs	15,672.00	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	
<b>Total 6125 Program Expenses</b>	<b>40,050.67</b>	<b>51,300</b>	<b>56,000</b>	<b>(7,000)</b>	<b>\$ 49,000.00</b>	
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	
<b>Total 6130 Committee Expenses - General</b>	<b>1,929.27</b>	<b>8,350</b>	<b>8,350</b>	<b>(1,950)</b>	<b>\$ 6,400.00</b>	
6160 Program Support				-		
6163 Friends Camp	2,880.00	2,220	2,220	660	2,880.00	
6167 Religious Education & Outreach		0	0	-	0.00	
<b>Total 6160 Program Support</b>	<b>2,880.00</b>	<b>2,220</b>	<b>2,220</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>\$ 2,880.00</b>	
<b>Total 6000 Programs</b>	<b>193,219.61</b>	<b>284,300</b>	<b>256,012</b>	<b>(42,162)</b>	<b>\$ 213,850.00</b>	
6140 Books & Other Sales Expense		0	0	-		
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	
<b>Total 6140 Books &amp; Other Sales Expense</b>	<b>10,043.41</b>	<b>14,500</b>	<b>8,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$ 8,000.00</b>	
6200 Support of Other Organizations				-		
<b>Total 6200-6590 Support of Other Organizations</b>	<b>42,806.86</b>	<b>45,975</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>	
6600 Publications				-		
<b>Total 6600 Publications</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>		
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>849,548.82</b>	<b>967,374</b>	<b>877,603</b>	<b>(119,461)</b>	<b>\$ 847,913.00</b>	
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>(63,027.57)</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>1,872</b>	<b>(1,269)</b>	<b>(1,018.00)</b>	
<b>Other Income</b>						
9940 Other Income - Transfers from other funds	36,638.89					
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<b>36,638.89</b>				<b>-</b>	
<b>Other Expenses</b>						
9950 Other Expense - Transfer to other funds	8,789.03					
<b>Total Other Expenses</b>	<b>8,789.03</b>				<b>-</b>	
<b>Net Other Income</b>	<b>27,849.86</b>				<b>-</b>	
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>(35,177.71)</b>				<b>(1,018.00)</b>	

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.

## Unity Agenda Items

### Charge and Structure for the Yearly Meeting Conflict Response Team

- 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 Meeting Accompaniment 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 21<sup>st</sup> century?

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### **Yearly Meeting Nominating Report**

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The nominating slate appears on **page 35**.

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### **Bank Resolutions**

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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.

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### **Minute to Authorize Edits and Corrections**

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

Nominating Slate

Approved Nominating Slate

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)\*\*

Archives & Historical Records (6)

2025

Forsythe, Carol (Put)\*

2028

Grannell, Andy (Port)

Board of Managers of Investments & Permanent Funds (10)

2025

McKnight, Jeanne (Well)

2028

2026

Allen, Kimberly (Durh)
Davies, Susan (Vass)\*
Zwirner, Mary (Bhill)
Schwope, Martha (Well)

2029

Belcher, Travis (Mon)

2026

Schmidt, Maxine (Nham)

2029

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

2026

Wernette, Tim (Win)

2029

2027

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

2027

Cazden, Betsy (Prov)

2027

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

**Clerks' Table**

2025	2026	2027
Leuchak, Rebecca (Prov), Presiding Wright, Michelle (Putn), Reading Jensen, Megan (Mon), Recording	<b>Veatch, Phillip (FPon), Rising Clerk</b>	<b>Grace, Jesse, Reading</b>
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

**Committee for Nurturing Friends Education (6)**

2025	2026	2027
Steele, Ariana (Prov) Tripp, Dawn (Alln)	_____	_____
	_____	_____

**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) <b>Neumann, Bruce (FPon)</b> Reilly, Sue (Port)
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Finance (10)**

2025	2026	2027
Drysdale, Robert Scot (Han)* <b>Maurer, Philip (Nham)</b>	Keith, Doug (Hart) Corindia, Thomas (Han)	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	2026	2027
Keefe-Perry, Kristina (FPon)	<b>Reuthe, John (Vassalboro)</b>	<b>Baker, Carol (Westerly)</b>

Anna Hopkins and Natalie Bornstein, appointed by Friends Camp Committee

**Legacy Gift Committee (9)**

2025	2026	2027
Christopher, Megan (Well) Isbell Shinn, Jennie (MVin) Link, Mary (Mtob)*	_____	<b>Reixach, Karen (Keen)</b>
	_____	_____

**Nominating Slate**

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

2028	2028	2029
Baker-Smith, Gretchen (Wprt)	Gant, Sarah (Bhil)*	<b>Stamm, Liesa (Hart)</b>
McArthur, Hugh (Han)		
Wilson, Morgan (Fram)		
Woodrow, Honor (Putn)		

**Ministry & Counsel Clerk**

2025
Williams, Carl (Pfld)

**Puente de Amigos (9)**

2025	2026	2027
Lindo, Richard (Fram)	_____	_____
Schmidt, Maxine (NHAm)	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Sessions Planning Clerk**

2027
_____

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

2025	2026
O'Hara, Jay (Port)	_____
Grace, Isaiah (Bhil)	_____
Isbell-Shinn, Jennie (MtTob)	_____

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

2025	2026	2027
Lindo, Anna (Fram)	Gant, Christopher (Bhill)	<b>Manning, Leslie (Durh)</b>
Smith, Sara (Con)	Hansen, Beth (Wrly)**	_____
<b>Stillwell, Jackie (Mon)</b>	Lamm, Thomas (Worc)	_____
_____	Schwope, Martha (Well)	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Youth Ministries (6)**

2025	2026	2027
_____	<b>Barletta, Newton (Fram)</b>	Becce, Melissa
_____	<b>Corindia, Nancy (Han)</b>	_____

**Representatives to Other Friends Organizations**

**American Friends Service Committee Corp. (4)**

2025	2026	2027
Barker, Mark (Conc)	Weaver, Hal (Well)	<b>Steele, Becky (Port)</b>
	_____	

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

**Friends Committee on National Legislation (6)**

2025	2026	2027
Grace, James (BHil)	Telenar, Kaj (Well)	
Southworth, Matt (Hart)	Drysdale, Scot (Han)	

**Friends General Conference Central Committee Representatives (8)**

2025	2025	2026

**Friends Peace Teams Project (3)**

Claggett-Borne, Minga (Cam)		
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**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, to attend 2023 Triennial and serve until 2026 Triennial)**

Keefe-Perry, Kristina (Fpon)	Smith, Jennifer (Conc)	
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**Friends World Committee Representatives (7)**

2025	2026	2027
Goldberger, Judy (Bhil)	Jorgenson, Chris (Camb)	Lindo, Anna (Fram)
		Halliwell, Briana (Vass)

**Quaker Earthcare Witness (1)**

Haines, Christopher (Fpon)

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### Testimony of Yearly Meeting Secretary Noah Merrill

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Testimony for changing times, from our movement's midwife Margaret Fell, in the first generation of Friends:

*The Truth is one and the same always, and though ages and generations pass away, and one generation goes and another comes, yet the word and power and spirit of the living God endures for ever, and is the same and never changes.*

I want to tell you a story about Life.

On January 12th of this year, my brother Justin was brutally murdered. My only sibling, my older brother. On that cold morning when I entered his house to find him, I was thrown into an abyss, a howling emptiness that seemed to have no end. Many days and nights, I am still there. And even there, in that wrenching absence, in the tempest of grief, in irreparable loss that can never be undone, I have day by day been given unmistakable assurance that I am held, cradled, and sustained in every breath by the never-ending embrace of the tender, self-giving, unshakeable power of God.

At first, the wounds were so fresh, the shattering grief so heavy, I struggled just to leave the house, even for meeting for worship. Friends came to our home to share in worship with us. Others near and far accompanied me again and again, as I sought to care for my brother's body, as I testified to the grand jury that indicted the man who took my brother's life, as I wept and raged and prayed to open my heart to the grace of forgiveness—for him, for myself, for all of us.

Through those winter nights, steady compassionate hands helped cleanse my brother's blood from the place where he fell, and from the searing wound of sight and memory. In the midst of chaos, in widening circles of care, Friends labored sacrificially to allow me space to attend to what was needed, to mourn, and to be present with those who were mourning. A wall in our home became a mosaic of cards and letters from Friends—and Friends meetings across our region and far beyond—speaking companionship and prayer.

Where we were, spring took a long time to arrive. Under the care of my home meeting in Putney, and the meeting in which my brother and I were born in New York, many who loved my brother and our family—including many of you who are hearing these words—gathered in grief, remembrance, and celebration of his life.

Since January, in ways beyond number, the accompaniment of Grace has come to me both inwardly and outwardly. This experience continues to be a testament for me to the transforming Power that even death cannot overcome; a Power born anew through lives covenanted in relationship on this pilgrimage of faith.

Returning to service in recent months, in meetinghouses, at kitchen tables, in memorial meetings for worship, in the sound of voices on a long-awaited phone call, in walks together through rural and urban landscapes, I've once again seen glimpses of this same slow, tender, transforming power at work in our lives, as gathered fellowships journeying with one another, seeking to be met, shaped, and led by the Spirit. As I look out across the Yearly Meeting, I am reminded that this transforming power is not just something we experience individually, but one that reaches out to embrace us corporately—as one Body made up of so many lives, so many griefs and joys and conditions, being woven together by the Inward Teacher as we tend the embers of faith. Through the presence of Friends, I am coming again to re-member—to experience again the reconnection with this Body. In the unity of the Spirit, there is truly only one grief, and it is all grief. There is only one joy, and it is all joy.

This year of harrowing and blessing brings me back again to the call I have sought to answer, to serve as Yearly Meeting Secretary in ministry with Friends in our region. Serving alongside you, Friends, has been a profound honor and blessing in my life. For 12 years, in partnership with

you, I have sought to give over my life to the nurture of these simple fellowships, these communities on pilgrimage. Because in all their beautiful and sometimes heartbreaking imperfection, for all the ways we may betray one another, however much we may fall short of others' hopes or our own yearnings, I know from experience that our local worshiping communities are where lives can be most deeply shared and faith can be most deeply sustained. Our meetings are where all of our words and notions about spirituality can melt away—and, can become most real—in the daily, incarnational work of life together. In my experience, this is rarely flashy or dramatic. It's often quiet, almost imperceptible, rarely loudly proclaimed. Like the river smoothing and shaping its course over millennia. Like grief opening us once again to an even greater love. Like the slow, relentless work of God in our hearts.

And this year of harrowing and blessing, of death and Life, helps me to remember that we, as imperfect human beings who are learning to call ourselves “Friends,” have not been and are not being gathered only for ourselves, our institutions, or even our meetings, beloved and cherished as they may be. This people, all of us seeking to share in this pilgrimage together, are being gathered to be a blessing in the world, to allow ourselves to become outposts and channels for God's Love.

Across generations, Friends have testified that this world doesn't need more strident and clamoring voices. This world doesn't need more people convinced that they alone are right. This world doesn't need more rage as it burns, adding fuel to the consuming fire. According to our Quaker spiritual ancestors, what this world needs is the Source of our hope. And this world needs lives—in all their blessed diversity—expressing with humility and boldness the character and qualities of this Source as they take shape in us, as we continue to journey together on the pilgrimage of faith. And this Source, this Spirit, this Living Seed, this One Who Speaks, is profoundly relevant to the condition of the world now—as Love continues to come into the world, even in the midst of our chaos.

For some of us, the challenges of our lives and this time in which we live may be shaking what we have understood to be the foundations on which we had built our identities, our relationships, even our faith. And yet, in the collapse of these illusions, those who came before us promise that—through Grace and our response to it—we can emerge to find ourselves on the true foundation which has been there all along, the paradoxical freedom, resilience, and security that only God can give. Casting off from the shore, we discover that we are carried and sustained by the infinite ocean of God's Love.

In these turbulent days, I still trust and perceive that the One who gathered those who were first called “Friends” is patiently and powerfully present, active in the midst of the local communities of faith and practice that together make up the New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. And I know I'm not alone in this.

As Friends continue to rediscover ourselves and the world beyond the depths of the pandemic, the programs and ministries we steward together through the Yearly Meeting are growing more integrated, more creative, and more intentional in their engagement with the many challenges of these changing times. The service undertaken through the Yearly Meeting in support of Friends' ministry, eldership, and spiritual life, grounded in our local meetings is reaching more and more Friends across our region. Living into the vision of a Yearly Meeting focusing and deepening our attention on the life and thriving of local Friends meetings has been a long work, since 2015 when the Yearly Meeting reaffirmed this as the core purpose of our work as an organization, drawing on more than 40 years of listening and discernment. This quiet, steady, and intentional tending continues through the work of many hearts and hands. And the garden is bearing fruit.

From many corners, Friends have shared that they see a change in long-held perceptions that “the Yearly Meeting” is simply a group of insiders, or some sort of social club, or only those who regularly attend Annual Sessions, or only for people who have for many years served as part of the Yearly Meeting's committees. Now, many among us with long and faithful histories of care and commitment are being joined by those newer to service on behalf of Friends across our region, bringing

rich experience from their local and quarterly meetings, and from their service and learning from other aspects of their lives. Friends are partnering across generations: to encourage and deepen our financial stewardship in alignment with the practical needs and the promise of our faith; to clarify, sustain, steward, and renew what is most precious in long-beloved ministries; and to discover fresh forms and fields of service to help carry living water in this changing season.

From the State of Society reflections composed this year by meetings across New England, it's unmistakably clear that Friends in many of our local communities are hearing and answering a call to rediscover and reclaim their essential purpose as covenant communities, as they turn toward the Spirit and one another in these challenging times. And I am deeply grateful that Friends' service together through the Yearly Meeting is fostering accompaniment, connection, programming, and presence in support of this thriving.

Because as it always has been, the heartbeat of the Religious Society of Friends is found and felt in the daily enactment of these covenanted constellations of imperfect, forgiven and forgiving people, seeking—with persistence, with stumbling steps, with awe and celebration and wonder—people seeking to grow in relationship with God and one another, to become teachable, and to carry the practice and fruits of this shared faith into the whole of our lives. This is why early Friends called our meetings for worship “nurseries of Truth.”

As we journey together, the profoundly radical Way that Friends have for generations discovered begins to become more clear. And this has implications for the fruits we bear for the world.

In these times of prideful urgency, resentment, and insistence on one's own way, the Spirit yearns to teach us humility, steadfastness, and patient service.

In a season of brittleness and breaking, the One in whom we live and move and have our being offers us a spiritual discipline to help us grow in resilience and groundedness.

As polarization grows and the space for nuance and dialogue shrink, we are called back to the Center, from which mutuality and discernment arise, and in which it is possible to dwell with messiness, mystery, and paradox.

Where cycles of retribution escalate, tempting us to lash out with hearts of stone, the Spirit within us testifies that the hour is far too late for anything but a courageous, forgiving, and persevering tenderness.

In a world where individualism and self-centeredness run rampant, in an epidemic of loneliness, we are invited to rediscover an ecology of faithfulness, to reclaim a ministry of the whole.

Distraction, distrust, division, and despair may surround us. And yet, amidst all that is changing, the invitation offered by the Quaker tradition is to encourage and accompany one another—in every moment we are given—as we open our hearts to the Life and Power which is eternal, though ages and generations pass away, and to witness to this life-changing Spirit at work in and among all people, and in all Creation. In this, we join with a great cloud of witnesses through time who have sought, are seeking, and will yet seek to live lives formed by the Pattern made visible through walking in the Light. This is our foundation, our refuge, our calling, and our testimony to the world, now and always.

In every generation, in every season of our journey, the invitation to this pilgrimage together is offered. It is up to us—it is our responsibility, if we choose it—to rediscover and reclaim the spiritual treasure we have inherited, to live it, and to steward it as a gift to a generation yet unborn.

When storms rage around us; when confusion and madness hold sway; when we find ourselves thrown into the abyss, may we trust and daily call each other back to the essential Truth the first Friends came to discover. May we remember that this Truth is not a position we hold or a program we plan, but the possibility of a relationship.

Now as ever, Truth speaks us into being, cradles our wounded and wandering hearts, and calls us into covenant with God and one another. Truth walks before and beside us always on our journey



together. And Truth sends us into this world to partner in Love's arrival, yearning to guide us home, rejoicing.

Together, may we answer the call.  
Because this is a story about Life.

## Staff Reports

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### Secretary

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The Yearly Meeting Secretary's report will be presented at Sessions, and a text will then be available. (See previous pages.)

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### ARCH Coordinator

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#### 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 re-enter 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](http://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 Meeting. 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

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### Children and Family Ministries Coordinator

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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

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### Events Coordinator

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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 re-emerge, 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

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### Friends Camp Director

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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 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 newfound 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 commit-

ment 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)

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### Office Manager

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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 meetings<sup>1</sup>; 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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

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

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### Program Director

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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.

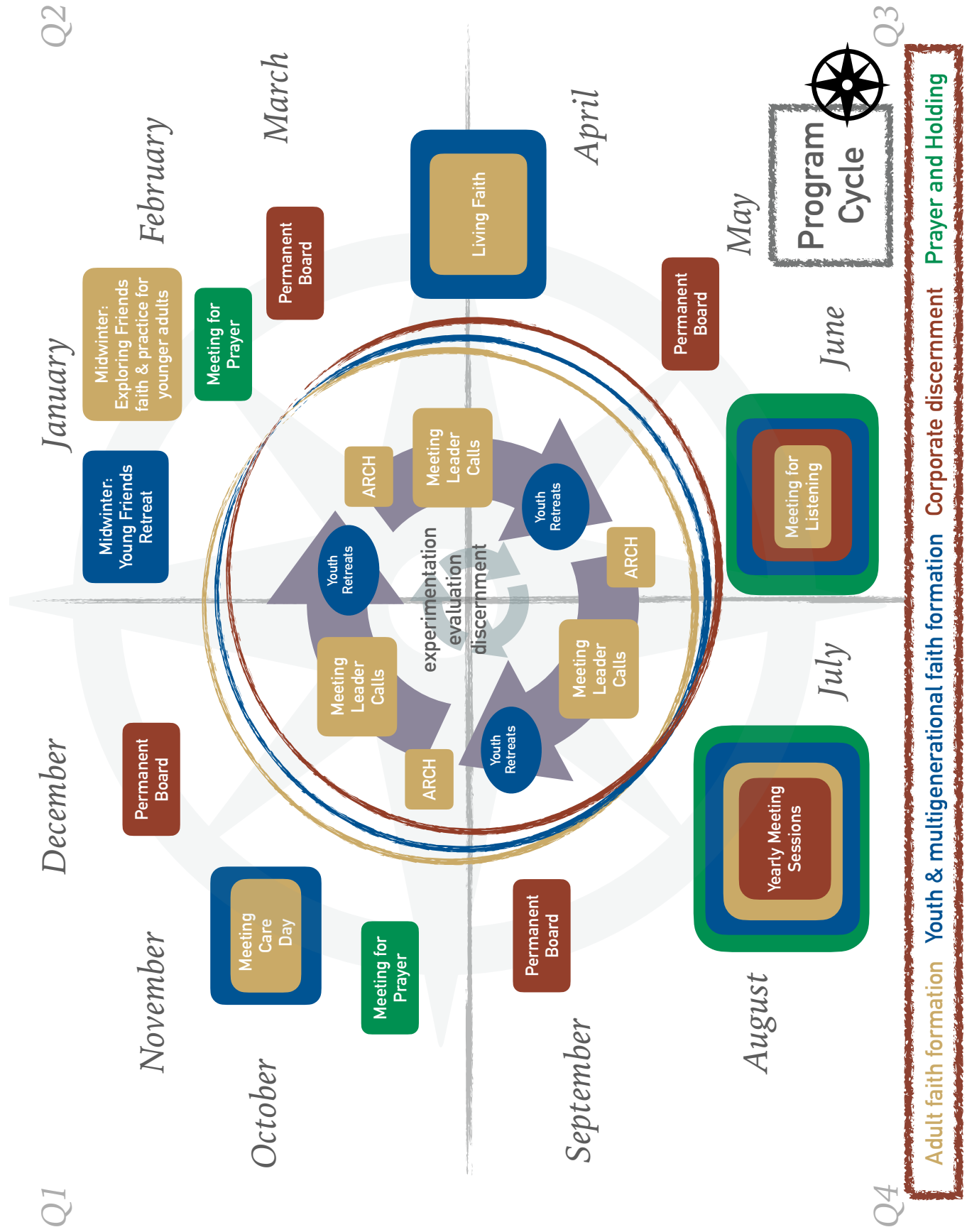
A deep joy I find in the Program Director role is it allows me to look across the spiritual ecosystem that is our yearly meeting, and—like in my rambles through the woods not far from my home—there are regular discoveries of pockets of life and unfolding life cycles. There is always more happening than 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 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



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

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 meetings. 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 intergenerational 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](mailto:collee@neym.org).

—COLLEE WILLIAMS

## Committee Reports

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### Permanent Board

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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 Meeting 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

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### Archives & Historical Records

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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 threefold:

- 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

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### **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 re-assignment 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 LEUCHAR

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### Faith & Practice Revision

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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

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### Finance

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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

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### Legacy Gift

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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, liveli-

hood, 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 surpris-

ingly, 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 worshiping 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

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### Moses Brown School Report

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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](mailto:jmcfadden@mosesbrown.org).

—JENNIFER MCFADDEN, DIRECTOR OF FRIENDS EDUCATION

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### 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](mailto: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](mailto:NOMINATING@NEYM.ORG))

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### 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 (<https://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 in-spire 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

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### Friends General Conference

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**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](http://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



## Memorial Minutes

**Helen Cornelia Pratt Clarkson**  
**August 21, 1925 – July 16, 2022**

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

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

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

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

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

DURHAM FRIENDS MONTHLY MEETING APRIL 21, 2024

FALMOUTH QUARTERLY MEETING, APRIL 27, 2024

**Charlotte Ann Curtis**  
**June 15, 1941 – Oct. 14, 2022**

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

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

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

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

DURHAM MONTHLY MEETING, MARCH 17 2024

FALMOUTH QUARTERLY MEETING, APRIL 27, 2024

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**James Dexter**  
**March 22, 1944 – September 22, 2023**

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

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

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

MATTAPOISETT MONTHLY MEETING, JANUARY 28, 2024

SANDWICH QUARTERLY MEETING, APRIL 27, 2024

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**Marguerite Helen Velte Hasbrouck**  
**October 30, 1933 – June 4, 2023**

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Marguerite Helen Velte Hasbrouck—some knew her as Marguerite Helen, others as Mugs, others as Mimi—died early Sunday morning, 4 June 2023, at the nursing home across the street from Newton-Wellesley Hospital where she had been in hospice care since August 2021.

She was born in Lahore, Punjab (today Pakistan), where her father was a professor of English at Forman Christian College. When she was 3 years old, her parents brought her back to the U.S. in search of better treatment for tuberculosis and osteomyelitis in her legs. A year later, she was told she should give up hope of walking unaided. "That's what you think," she told the doctor, sticking out her tongue at him. She cast off her leg braces and crutches not long afterward, became a strong walker, swimmer, and paddler, and delighted in defying anyone who underestimated her strength, endurance—or wit.

Due to her childhood illnesses, she didn't start formal schooling until eighth grade, but she graduated from high school at 16 and earned a degree in comparative government and religion at Barnard College. "I thought of being a lawyer," she said decades later, "but I was timid, and law school wasn't what women did."

Marguerite raised three children—"each very different, and each of whom I helped to be their different selves," she would say proudly—and worked at a variety of administrative, editorial, and legal jobs including at Wellesley College, where her role included representing the college to the Wellesley Chamber of Commerce, and later as editor of a computer industry trade journal. After getting involved in Wellesley town politics through the League of Women Voters, she served as an elected member of the Town Meeting and the School Committee and an appointed member of the Advisory Committee.

In 1987, as administrator of the Arlington Street Church in Boston, she testified at a Congressional hearing on break-ins at churches that offered sanctuary to refugees from U.S. wars in Central America. She spent the last decade before her retirement as a paralegal at the Nature Conservancy, where she took special joy in being able to help protect the place she felt most at home, Lake George in the

Adirondacks. But she most wanted to be thought of as a writer and a musician. She played organ and piano, sang, and served on the board of the Old West Organ Society.

Marguerite remembered that the incarceration of her son Edward for draft resistance, was a pivotal moment that sparked her to become an activist for the rights of incarcerated people and for peace and justice.

Marguerite was a member of the Wellesley Friends Meeting and a regular attender for almost 30 years of the Friends Meeting at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Norfolk, which she had helped organize in response to a request from one of the incarcerated men. She was one of the founders of the Massachusetts Criminal Justice Policy Coalition, facilitated Alternatives to Violence Project workshops at prisons throughout New England, and received a lifetime achievement award from the Massachusetts Department of Correction for her volunteer work.

Marguerite was active in Quaker witness for peace and justice, including as clerk of several committees of the Wellesley Friends Meeting and the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, as a contributor to *Peacework* magazine and a volunteer at the New England office of the American Friends Service Committee, and as a member of AFSC's national board of directors.

Marguerite is survived by her partner of more than 30 years, Jim Casteris and his family, her son Robert Hasbrouck, her daughter Dorothy McDonald and son-in-law Bob McDonald, her son Edward Hasbrouck and daughter-in-law Ruth Radetsky, her grandson Kyle A. H. McDonald, sister Lois Carstens; and many friends.

A concert and memorial meeting was held at the Wellesley College Chapel under the care of the Wellesley Friends Meeting in hybrid format on Sunday, 5 November 2023. The location was chosen because Marguerite requested organ music at her memorial.

WELLESLEY MONTHLY MEETING, MARCH 10, 2024

NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING PERMANENT BOARD FOR SALEM QUARTERLY MEETING, MAY 11, 2024

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**Lynn Johnson**  
**January 3, 1949 – July 19, 2023**

*Lessons from the Holy*

*We are never alone.*

*We are one with all creation.*

*Heaven is true.*

*We are loved for who we are.*

*Love is the heart of our being.*

*Seen and unseen, the beloved community*

*surrounds us.*

- From *Holy Adventure: A Spiritual Memoir*, by Lynn Johnson

Lynn Johnson lived her life in pursuit of the Holy. Throughout her daily travels, she spread messages regarding the unity of all of creation and the power of love to heal our wounds. Though challenged by multiple sclerosis from her 30s until her death at 75, Lynn always exhibited a radiant smile reflecting her steadfast belief that God's Light shines within us all.

Lynn was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, January 3, 1949. Due to her father's employment, her family moved around quite a bit; consequently, she considered Louisville, Kentucky—her grandparent's permanent residence—as her hometown, always maintaining a love of Louisville, Churchill Downs, and the Kentucky Derby.

Lynn attended Ohio Wesleyan University as an undergraduate theater major, before moving to Boston with her first husband, Tom Tritton, when he began graduate school. Their daughter, Lara, and Lara's three children (Anna, Lilli, and Ava) became central joys of Lynn's life.

In Boston, while attending Cambridge meeting, Lynn became a "convinced" Friend. She subsequently became clerk of New Haven Friends Meeting, as well as clerk of Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting. Later, at Hartford Monthly Meeting, Lynn had a profound impact on the religious education program, as reported by current Hartford Religious Education clerk, Melissa Becce:

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

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

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

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

Lynn's professional life achieved tremendous fulfillment once she completed her master's degree in counseling psychology from Southern Connecticut State University. As a skilled pastoral counselor and creative arts therapist, Lynn helped countless individuals over the years, through individual and group therapy sessions as well as through the addiction counseling classes that she taught at Saint Joseph College (now the University of Saint Joseph). Much of her good work was accomplished through the nonprofit Center for Serenity, which she founded and directed for 20 years.

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

As Lynn's MS progressed, increasingly limiting her mobility, she maintained all of these commitments, and more, without complaint, only requesting our prayers as her conditions worsened. She

insisted that she not go to the hospital, and blessedly, as she wished, she died at home, supported by her loving caregivers. Lynn's Light continues to shine in all those she touched throughout her life.

HARTFORD MONTHLY MEETING, APRIL 21, 2024

CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING, MAY 5, 2024

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**Christopher Kevin King**  
**January 11, 1959 – March 15, 2023**

A devoted husband, father, and friend, lifelong Quaker, and outstanding mathematician and scholar, Chris passed away peacefully at home in the loving care of wife Michelle Ciurea and sons Nicholas and Brendan Ciurea King. He leaves brother Desmond King (Carolyn Cowey), nephew Samuel, and extended family in Ireland and the UK. He was pre-deceased by parents Desmond and Margaret (Brady) King of Stillorgan, Blackrock, County Dublin, Ireland.

Chris was born and raised in Stillorgan, Dublin. Unusually for the time, his parents left the Catholic Church in the early 1960s and joined Churchtown Meeting of the Ireland Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, raising Chris and his brother as Quakers. This imbued Chris with values that pervaded how he walked in the world as scientist, professor, mentor, husband, father, and friend.

As a child and youth, Chris demonstrated unusual academic prowess, especially in mathematics and physics. At Trinity College, Dublin, he completed two full degrees concurrently in those fields. Continuing his graduate studies at Harvard University, he completed his PhD in mathematical physics in 1984. A post-doc at Princeton followed, and then a visiting professorship at Cornell.

While at Cornell, however, he began to question whether a high-powered academic career added up to the type of life he wanted to lead. He used a professional sojourn in Zurich to explore other ways of being as well. In his spare time, he stuffed envelopes for Greenpeace and drove a large Red Cross delivery truck through the narrow, winding streets of Zurich. He traveled solo through Europe, engaging with people whose paths he might otherwise not have crossed. He returned to Cornell having confirmed his love for mathematics, but with a desire to explore new directions. Tai chi, drawing from the right side of the brain, and spirituality all became new interests. He began attending Quaker meeting again in Ithaca. In this period, he also met his future wife, Michelle. They were married in Ithaca in 1992.

In 1991 they moved to Boston, where Chris began a lengthy and satisfying career in mathematics at Northeastern University. Over the years, he was known as a congenial colleague who could be reliably counted on to help with critical but unglamorous tasks of his department. Chris served as department chair, and worked to build the masters programs in applied mathematics and in operations research, developing the co-op program that created opportunities for graduate students to gain work experience outside of academia. He also found great satisfaction as a math mentor and curriculum developer for Northeastern's Bridge to Calculus program for underrepresented communities in Boston public schools. Impressed by the students' devotion, Chris enjoyed learning from them as much as teaching them. For example, despite math being the universal language, he was initially puzzled as to why some recently arrived immigrant students had trouble with basic algebra. He soon realized it was not because they didn't understand the concepts but because they did not know the English names of variables. He soon began lessons by asking the students to teach him the variable names in their language. One colleague noted that he "showed each staff member, professor, and student the utmost respect, creating an even playing field for all."

As one young friend said, "he took his work seriously, but he did not take himself overly seriously." Many younger colleagues, in particular, remembered instances in which his encouragement or assistance with a thorny intellectual problem at a critical juncture proved pivotal in their own lives. In the

words of a former student, “He was a good role model on how to be a mathematician and a human being at the same time. “

As husband and father, his love was steadfast and true, manifest in actions, not words. He passed on his values by simply living them. Children never felt he was talking down to them—one of his wonderful qualities as a father—and he never made his children feel that his work was more important than them. He opened the door to the worlds of science, music, math, history, and literature to his children, but never pressured them to walk through.

For years he was his sons’ notably easygoing soccer coach, math consultant to them and their friends, enthusiastic supporter of their life’s journeys wherever they might lead, and advisor—but only when asked to be. Friends knew him as an affable and witty companion who enjoyed talking more about ideas than about himself.

He also was a lifelong avid bicyclist, hiker, sailor, and skier. The West of Ireland, especially Connemara, held a special place in his heart, and he loved sharing it with his wife and sons on their frequent trips to Ireland.

Chris never lost his love of Irish music and could sing long songs, both poetic and ribald, from memory with his own guitar accompaniment. He took up the guitar as an adult and inspired both his sons to enjoy playing as well. Among his happiest moments were evenings spent making music with his sons and close friends.

In service to Beacon Hill Friends Meeting, Chris characteristically preferred to remain in the background when possible and support the meeting’s infrastructure. He was the meeting secretary for many years, later becoming the meeting treasurer, a task he conducted for many years with such integrity, clarity, and reassuring calmness that many joked he should start a second career as a therapist to the mathematically traumatized.

With age, Chris’s innate Quakerliness came to pervade all aspects of his being. He was a scientist comfortable with mysticism. His low-key manner and attentive presence, devoid of ego or agenda, created space for people to be their truest selves.

Anything he had to share about integrity, diligence, or generosity was taught not with words but by example. If he decided to, or was asked, Chris would share his experiences and knowledge; otherwise, he was usually the last to speak or claim the floor. You could know Chris a long time before you figured out just how insightful and broadly educated he was. One friend remarked, “he was always the smartest man in the room, but he was humble and gentle, and wore his brilliance lightly.”

A deeply moral man, he was disinclined to moral pronouncements; generous and warm-hearted, he was not inclined to sentimentality. Self-pity was no part of his temperament. Even in difficult circumstances, such as the few years following a cancer diagnosis, he comported himself with a stoic grace that spare his loved ones additional burdens, and with a sense of gratitude about what life had given him, not outrage at what it would not.

Chris walked in the Light. He lived the Quaker values of simplicity, equality, and integrity intensely yet undramatically. Chris walked far along the path of knowledge, sharing his knowledge and expertise freely and generously, and learning from novices and experts alike. He also walked the path of wisdom, exhibiting true wisdom by never claiming to be wise.

BEACON HILL MONTHLY MEETING, MARCH 3, 2024

NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING PERMANENT BOARD FOR SALEM QUARTERLY MEETING, JULY 18, 2024

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Allan S. Kohrman  
August 10, 1945 – October 13, 2022

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Allan S. Kohrman was born on August 10, 1945 in Cleveland, Ohio, and grew up in Shaker Heights, Ohio. His early childhood was marked by the death of his father when he was five, and the struggles his mother had to provide for them. He did not fit in easily, though he did have a few friends.

Allan received his undergraduate degree from Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. He received a master's in American history from Brandeis University and a master's in English literature from the University of Massachusetts Boston.

At age 25 he found he had little meaning or focus in life. It was then he received his first big break when he was hired to teach history at Massasoit Community College in Brockton, Massachusetts. In 1980 he began to teach English as well. Allan loved teaching community college students. Allan saw his work as an opportunity to help young people learn to think for themselves. His approach to teaching history was that it provided a way for students to think about their country and themselves. And teaching English was an opportunity to teach people a love of reading and critical thinking. Allan retired from teaching in 2007 after a career of 37 years.

Allan taught himself to cook in an effort to overcome his shyness around women. He would invite interesting women over for dinner, which usually consisted of homemade soup, fresh fish, vegetables in season, and his *pièce de résistance*, a chocolate dessert. This ended in 1977 when he met Carolyn Stone at meeting. For Allan, Carolyn was nearly perfect: kind, decent, honest, impish, earnest, beautiful, bright, and hard-working. They were married in 1980 under the care of Friends Meeting at Cambridge. Their son, Adam, was born in 1986.

For Allan, the Society of Friends was a beloved community. It was where he felt at home. One of the most attractive aspects was the presence of a great many elders from whom he could learn, the most important of whom was Wayne Jones of Friends Meeting at Cambridge. He served on numerous committees at Friends Meeting at Cambridge. After his family joined Wellesley Friends Meeting in 1992, he continued to serve on committees including Ministry and Counsel and the Library committee. He valued the friendship, the bantering, and the love he found in these places.

Allan was a supportive member of New England Yearly Meeting. He attended Yearly Meeting sessions every year from 1979 until his death. Here too he valued the friendships, the hugs, and even the committee work and business meetings. His strong opposition to corporate tax resistance was central in two passionate business meetings on the issue, and his support of an evenhanded Middle East policy helped the sessions turn aside minutes that he thought were too heavily pro-Palestinian. His interest in history led him to study Quaker history in New England. This allowed him to offer historical perspectives to issues. His paper "New England Yearly Meeting of Friends: 1945–1995" was published by the Yearly Meeting and received praise for its careful research. He was also noted for his persuasive work on Nominating Committee.

Allan's Jewish background remained an important part of his life. While he did not practice Judaism once he became a Quaker, the ethical teaching of the Jewish Bible remained central to his spiritual development. He briefly served on an interfaith committee co-sponsored by the Massachusetts Council of Churches and the American Jewish Committee.

Allan attempted to be plain spoken. His ministry was brief and to the point. He was often troubled by those who rambled in their ministry. He sometimes had difficulty sympathizing with those whom he felt did not understand Quaker traditions, or who were attempting to use certain aspects of the tradition to prove their points, while ignoring other aspects of the tradition. He could be feisty, but his feistiness was girded by a deep love for the Society of Friends.

Allan is survived by his wife Carolyn, their son Adam, and Adam's wife, Emily Carpenter.

WELLESLEY MONTHLY MEETING, MARCH 10, 2024

NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING PERMANENT BOARD FOR SALEM QUARTERLY MEETING, MAY 11, 2024

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**Richard W. Regen**  
**April 26, 1939 – October 3, 2023**

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Richard W. Regen was a sojourning member of Martha's Vineyard Friends Meeting. He and his wife Sue have been active members of Rochester Friends Meeting, near where they lived year-round during his career as a middle-school guidance counselor. They have also been members of Martha's Vineyard Friends Meeting, which they helped create in the 1970s.

Rich's Quaker family from New Jersey have had a house they named "Storks Nest" overlooking Squibnocket Pond since the 1950s, and Rich and Sue have long been coming there with their family during the warm months of the year. They usually shared Storks Nest with the Martha's Vineyard Friends Meeting for a Sunday meeting for worship followed by a potluck, often beach time and kayaking, and always the many birds, especially the beloved swans on the pond. They continued spending time on the Vineyard even after their move in 2015 to Collington, a Kendal affiliate, where Rich's memorial service took place.

Rich was always careful to provide pamphlets for new attenders and those wishing to learn more about Quakerism. Rich's messages in meeting for worship were always a deep sharing of what was working in him personally, sometimes inspired by *A Course in Miracles*. Rich and Sue have often been especially helpful to Friends needing support during difficult times in their lives. One member wrote a poem reflecting Rich's profound love of nature within memories of visits to Storks Nest. And Friends remember near rise of meeting one bright morning when Rich's strong, clear voice sang that great hymn, "How Great Thou Art."

Love and Gratitude sustained them in their lives.

Rich's memorial service, on October 14, 2023, was well attended by family and friends and on Zoom by Friends from Rochester Friends Meeting as well as from Martha's Vineyard Meeting. At the memorial service, Rich's family spoke of his generosity, his love of family and community. His wife Sue spoke especially of his love of music and the love they shared for each other during their 61 years of marriage. Martha's Vineyard Friends Meeting looks forward to seeing Sue in meeting for worship when she returns for visits to Storks Nest with her family. As Friends gather in worship and in sharing, Rich will join in spirit, never forgotten.

MARTHA'S VINEYARD MONTHLY MEETING, OCTOBER 24, 2023

SANDWICH QUARTERLY MEETING, OCTOBER 28, 2023

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**Nancy Lloyd Shippen**  
**April 5, 1949 – January 20, 2022**

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

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

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

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

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

She graduated from Goucher College, majoring in psychology and child development. After graduation she spent a year in Europe, working for and living with the Sisters of St Joseph at their school



in Edinburgh. During this time she searched for a spiritual home, and found her life's home in the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), which she joined upon her return to the U.S.

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

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

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

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

After driving past the Concord prison daily for years, Nancy had a profound realization that the inmates there were her neighbors. This led to her founding the 501(c)3 which she entitled "Our Prison Neighbors." The drive to growing the organization, and doing its work—spending time with incarcerated people—eventually led her to leave teaching children. She sought and received a support committee from Fresh Pond Meeting. She found and used the tenets of the Quaker-founded Alternative to Violence Program as the backbone of her work. She organized weekends with "outside" volunteers participating with those "inside" to learn and unlearn the emotions and experiences underlying violent behavior. She organized book discussion groups on spiritual and personal growth and taught basic personal finance in prisons. She was always recruiting and extolling the benefits of extending oneself to people whose lives had been intertwined with trauma and landed in prison.

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

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

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

FRESH POND MONTHLY MEETING, MARCH 3, 2024

NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING PERMANENT BOARD FOR SALEM QUARTERLY MEETING, MAY II, 2024

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**Margaret Wentworth**  
**November 2, 1934 - November 2, 2022**

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

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

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

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

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

Margaret was born in Durham, Maine, and earned a master's degree at Gorham State Teacher's College. She taught in local schools and was a librarian in Lewiston. She served the wider community by serving on the Durham Select Board and volunteering in many ways.

Margaret is survived by her brother James Wentworth (Vera) of Ashburn, Virginia, and her niece Alexandra Wentworth, also of Ashburn. Margaret was predeceased by her parents, Horace and Lida Wentworth.

DURHAM MONTHLY MEETING, FEBRUARY 18, 2024

FALMOUTH QUARTERLY MEETING, APRIL 27, 2024

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

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

We loved to hear her bubbly giggle and appreciated her zingy wit and humor. She was often quiet, but when she spoke she could be very firm. Her incisive views were often shared in monthly meetings,

as she might have a different perspective from others that had not been brought out. She served as co-clerk of the meeting for a time and always held the meeting in prayer.

Sue had friendships that were long lasting and deep. When she first came to Durham Meeting, in many ways it was still much like it had been for 200 years. She found her way to becoming part of the community and then, as the meeting changed, she helped steady the change.

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

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

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

DURHAM MONTHLY MEETING, MARCH 17, 2024

FALMOUTH QUARTERLY MEETING, APRIL 27, 2024

## Epistles

### General Epistle

To Friends Everywhere,

Grace and peace to you, in the love that flows from the Holy One who longs to help us know and live our unity with our human kindred and with all Creation!

New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends gathered for its 364th annual meeting at Castleton, Vermont, and by video conference, from August 2nd through 7th, 2024. We acknowledge with humility and gratitude that we met on Ndaakinnah (n-DAH-kee-NAH), homeland of the Abenaki peoples. It was a joy to hear from Jorge Luis Peña Reyes, presiding clerk of Cuba Yearly Meeting, and to have the presence of Cuban Friends by video conference.

As we came together, we were acutely aware that our world is in turmoil. Armed conflicts in Israel/Palestine, Ukraine, Sudan, and other places are inflicting fear and suffering on millions. Oppressive regimes burden millions more. As climate change accelerates, we live with grief because of the wounds to the natural world that we love. As our days together unfolded, the sometimes-stormy weather in Castleton reflected these impacts of climate change, which have resulted in recent disastrous flooding here, especially in the “Northeast Kingdom” of Vermont, where we have beloved Friends.

We acknowledge our participation in many of the world’s crises, such as climate change, political polarization, and the continued effects of white supremacy. There has been turmoil within our yearly meeting as well, as differences have arisen on many points, for example during our discernment about the creation of a new meeting. We have felt the need to strengthen our capacity for conflict response.

Yet we affirm the joy and consolation of our community in the Spirit, within New England and beyond. We are glad to see our Friends new and old, and as we have centered together in worship, we are glad also to welcome the evidence of God’s work within and among us. The One who speaks, Creator-Sets-Free, is our steadfast companion, whose guidance we listen for, and whose love we strive to embody, however incompletely. When we accept that we are loved, we are strengthened to address our conflicts and our complicity in the ills of our society.

Our Bible Half Hour speaker, Genna Ulrich, of Portland Friends Meeting, reminded us how important it is to accept one another fully, even one who at first does not seem to belong, like John the Baptizer, clothed in unshorn camel-hide and eating locusts and honey. In being able to do this, we reflect in our measure the radical way that God accepts and loves each of us. Our experience of this love allows us to better hear the Good News and change our purpose to better align with the divine ordering, the Gospel Order.

Our plenary speaker, Lloyd Lee Wilson, of Friendship Friends Meeting, North Carolina YM(C), reminded us of the many, sometimes wordless, ways that the Divine speaks to us. He described his experience of the “spirituality of subtraction,” a practice by which we find ourselves gradually freed from distracting habits and unexamined assumptions. This makes it easier to hear the messages we are given by the One who speaks, God-With-Us, even if we are led in ways we do not at first understand.

We also were reminded that faithfulness to the leadings we are given, even when we see no great effects, is humble participation in Christ’s ministry of reconciliation. In our time together, sharing reports of our experiences of the Spirit’s gifts has given us courage and led us to see the many ways

in which we need to grow in the love and power of the divine life if we are to respond, in our measure, to the challenges before us, within our community as well as in the world.

We continue our efforts to understand ways in which we enact the patterns of oppression that express the values of the culture in which we are embedded, a culture which places differential values on humans, the children of God, according to race or gender expression, class, education, or age. We long to be perfect in love, as Jesus calls us to be, and to respond humbly to others, but we remain beginners, apprentices in the school of the spirit that is Quakerism, struggling to apply the lessons of love, even with those near to us, where trust and forgiveness ought to be in richest supply.

The work of repairing relationships with those we have harmed is even more challenging and requires greater humility. For example, this year we heard from Friends who presented a report on the complicity of New England Yearly Meeting in the great harms inflicted by the so-called Indian Boarding Schools. The report found that New England Friends were deeply, directly, and intimately involved in the creation and material sustenance of these assimilating boarding schools and the policies that drove and justified them. We encouraged the reporting Friends to continue their work and explore what next steps we may take as way opens.

We have come to recognize that many structures and practices in our meetings at every level must be renewed or transformed if they are to help us listen to the Spirit and act in faithfulness. We hope to listen more to young and old, newcomers and old-timers, to tend their seeds of Spirit and encourage the use of their gifts. Such changes in practice and habit are unsettling, and can bring conflict. Experimental living in community requires patience, forbearance, and the healing flashes of divine humor as we try and fail, improvise and revise.

We can know that we are walking with the Guide by the growing beauty and freedom of the way we are led, the fearlessness with which we love and act, the growing scope of our gratitude. Not all at once will we come to maturity in that Spirit; not all at once will we acknowledge where we have fallen short, or be able truly to forgive or accept our need for forgiveness. Genna Ulrich reminded us of Jesus' teaching that only God is good, and challenged us to avoid the easy assumption that because we're Quakers, we are "good people"—rather than examining our actual behaviors and effects in the world.

But we are reminded this week that the blessings we have—among them our children, our friends, the abundant Creation, and the resources of the Quaker way—are bread for the journey, deriving from the divine Seed whom we cherish so dearly. Knowing this, the call and the need for radical transformation are invitations to meaning, and to joy. We recall with hope God's prophetic assertion: *I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?* (Isaiah 43:19 NRSV). Alleluia!

Yours In Faith and Love,  
New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends,  
Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk

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### Childcare Epistle

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Dear Children all over the World, Hello.

Eleven children met this week at Yearly Meeting and played, laughed, cried, snacked, napped, and grew together. We sang welcoming songs about our shoes, we read books about playing together with superpowers and how it is okay to be different. We played outside between rainstorms and splashed in the excellent puddles left behind. During rainstorms, we built and destroyed towers and made lots of art. Several of us tended the seed of friendships that formed in previous years, and we enjoyed a group sing with all the youth programs! We love Yearly Meeting and will be back!

New England Yearly Meeting Childcare Program

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### Junior Yearly Meeting Kindergarten through Grade 3

Dear Friends,

We are a group of 20 Quakers from Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade, gathering for the New England Yearly Meeting at Castleton University in Castleton, VT, USA. This week, August 1st-7th 2024, we thought about the theme of the greater Yearly Meeting: “Let Us Faithfully Tend The Seed.”

We spent time in this smaller group in addition to the larger group, which included our older members of JYM—the 4th, 5th, and 6th graders. Together we nurtured friendships both old and new.

In the mornings, we started off as a big group, with singing, reading epistles from kids our age all around the country, and spending some time in a much shorter version of worship. We sang some of our favorite songs like “All God’s Critters”, “This Little Light of Mine”, and more! We even got to sing these songs with Friends from JHYM, Young Friends, and Childcare!

We enjoyed many activities throughout the week, joining in on all ages Capture the Flag, tie dyeing, making ice cream from scratch, and making sure that our beloved staff were drenched after water day. One notable project was the basil seeds that we each planted in paper cups, which we made sure to water each day. Despite our seeds not sprouting during our time at sessions, we still enjoyed the process of tending to our seeds. It was a great reminder that with a little bit of love, care, and patience we can grow something beautiful, even if we can’t see it right away. We had two very special visitors in our program this week as well, the Israel-Palestine Resource Group and Toussaint The Liberator. Together as a community we talked about the children in Gaza and how even while living in the harsh reality of war, the children make and fly kites as a symbol of unity. To connect with the children from that part of the world, we read picture books telling their stories, and even made our own kites. Our other visitor, Toussaint, led a drum circle. We learned all about the djembe and even picked a song to drum to. We got all of our energy out by hitting the drums and dancing to Toussaint’s playing. We even turned this into a game, where we had to stop dancing when Toussaint stopped playing!

Outside of program, we had a lot of fun playing with our new friends. Many of us went to the pool, rode bikes and scooters together, and some of us performed at the coffee house! One JYM staff member invited us to join him on stage to sing a song together if we wanted to. After such a long and fun week we are sad to say goodbye to our friends, new and old, but excited to meet again.

Love,

JYM K-3 Children & Staff

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### Junior Yearly Meeting Grades 4 through 6

Dear Friends everywhere,

We are eleven JYMers in grades 4-6. At NEYM Sessions 2024, we had a very busy week. We really enjoyed spending time with our new and old friends, and nurturing our community. We had conversations about how to be kind to each other by including each other in games and sharing our gifts. Between us, these gifts include singing, playing soccer, basketball and JYM ball, making each other laugh, leading storytelling games, making origami fortune tellers and hats, and much more.

We started our program by tie-dyeing T-shirts to take home with us. We are so happy to have these colorful shirts that show each of our personalities. As always, Capture the Flag was one of the major highlights of the week. The wide age range from 4 to 46 years old made it especially fun. On the sidelines, we drenched ourselves with spray bottles and made a mandala pattern out of dried beans and lentils.

During a campus-wide and sessions-long scavenger hunt, JYMers found Dave Baxter and got him to teach us how to Speed Center. Dave claims that children are better at Speed Centering than

adults, and we agree. As part of the scavenger hunt, we also found a tree that was so large it required three JYMers holding hands to reach around it.

We were so lucky to have special visitors come to our program! Our first visit was from the Israel-Palestine Resource Group, who read us a story about a little girl in Gaza who makes art as a symbol of freedom and hope. Then we made kites to show our support for the children of Gaza. On our kites, we drew symbols that express our hope that people everywhere can live free from war and violence. We also had a visit from Toussaint the Liberator, who led us in a super fun drum circle activity. We then had a visit from the Cuban Friends Group, who taught us more about the lives of Quakers in Cuba! Last but certainly not least, Gretchen Baker-Smith led us in a clay meditation to ground us and bring mindfulness to our Tuesday morning.

To close out the week, we made ice cream from scratch out of coconut milk, which we enjoyed with plenty of rainbow sprinkles. Between these exciting activities, we found time to play circle games like screaming toes, poison dart frog, and sandworm and owl. We also held the first annual JYM summer Olympics, which included sprints, long jump, gymnastics, hopping on one foot, and crab-walking. When we weren't at JYM, we loved riding our bikes and scooters and roller blades, playing tag in the dorms, and going to the pool.

We are thinking about a lot of things this week, including new and old friendships, war, the election, going into a new grade, and passing the swim test. Here is some advice for future JYMers and children everywhere: don't camp when it's raining; don't eat the pizza when it looks weird; do have Juniper on your Capture the Flag team; do catch a frog and let it go in the JYM grades K-3 room.

Love,

The 4-6 graders of JYM

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### **Junior High Yearly Meeting**

Dear friends from around the world,

This week, August 2–August 7, at New England Yearly Meeting Sessions in Castleton, Vermont, USA at Vermont State University, we the 14 in-person, along with 1 online participant of Junior High Yearly Meeting learned and participated in engaging and fun activities. The staff's efforts kept us interested in such activities.

We started out the week with setting some expectations for our community by experimenting with not using our phones during our JHYM program. Some of us kept our phones in our pockets and some of us kept them in little pockets on the wall that we labeled with our names, or the names we had given to our phones.

This year, our theme was “Let us faithfully tend the seed,” so during our program, we learned about “seeds”, and how to take care of our own “seeds” in life. We talked about our lives as if they were a garden and took time to examine the different types of “plants” and “weeds” we might find/want to plant in our own gardens. We also did a fun minigame where everybody had a piece of paper with a seed description on it and we had to find our match without talking.

We started each day early in the morning with Bible Half Hour, though sometimes it ended up being Bible Forty Five Minutes. With our Bible Half Hour speaker Genna Ulrich we explored the central themes of love and accepting each other's gifts.

We had many fun activities with our community. Early in the week we had a very fun pool party where we attempted to play water polo, and had fun diving.

We also took a field trip to Lake Bomoseen state park! Some of us went swimming, and some of us didn't go swimming, and some of us took pleasure in convincing Merritt (one of the JHYM staff members) to buy us ice cream and making him go broke by buying all the expensive ice creams.

We spent time talking to friends from Rwanda. We appreciated their joy and laughter and their patience as we all worked through some technology problems together.

Buddy, one of the JHYM staff, led us in an activity where we all had objects that could make different and unique noises. We were challenged to find a group rhythm. The first time we tried we were not very successful, but then we tried a few more times and we got the hang of it!

We also engaged in many fun crafts this week. We tie-dyed shirts together and signed them once they were dry. We will be taking them home today and washing them.

Another craft was the making of Shrinky Dinks. If you don't know what Shrinky Dinks are, Shrinky Dinks are a special piece of plastic that melts and becomes tiny while keeping the marker and colored pencil designs you can create so you can make little keychains with them!

We also made cyanotype pictures with flowers! We laid out flowers in pretty patterns in a very old picture frame and then laid a piece of plastic on the flowers and a piece of paper on top of the plastic. Then we put the frame on top of a machine that would shine UV light onto the paper. We then finished by developing the pictures by washing them in some water.

Towards the end of the week some of us went to a non-theist workshop and discussed experiences with non-theism in the quaker community. It helped some of us feel connected with our larger and older quaker community and also helped us shine light on some friends who felt underrepresented in our Quaker community.

We were saddened by the departure of our coordinator Emily Edwards who had to leave early due to a need to tend to her own garden, giving us a valuable lesson on the need for self care. We are incredibly grateful for her efforts throughout our week here at sessions.

Overall, We had a lot of fun this week with exciting activities.

Yours in the light,

The Junior High Yearly Meeting of New England Yearly Meeting

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### Young Friends

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Wednesday, 7th August, 2024

Dear Friends everywhere,

Fourteen Young Friends gathered at the annual sessions of New England Yearly Meeting in Castleton, VT from August 2-7, 2024, with the sessions theme, "Let us faithfully tend the seed."

Young Friends had a busy week! We spent much of our time together joyfully and playfully building community. We braved a drizzle and played games during our annual lake trip with Junior High Yearly Meeting. Young Friends occupy a central role in the NEYM community as the tallest people on the Capture-the-Flag field, a responsibility we take very seriously. When many of us could not go to program on time because of lightning and high wind speeds, we found a silver lining in filling the remainder of our time with group singing. We rounded out the week with a YF-YAF dance party in our program room, which was accompanied by a rambunctious game of tag.

Young Friends deeply appreciated the ministry of Genna Ulrich through their Bible half-hours and YF-specific program. Genna shared about their spiritual journey and how they came to find spiritual meaning in the Bible despite hesitation about Biblical language and witnessing ways the Bible had been used to justify harm around the world. As Genna discussed with YFs, when Quakers try to deliver messages they receive from the Spirit, "the water tastes like the pipes," and a central task of Quakerism is discerning how our own cultural context and existing beliefs might inform and misinform our ministry. Genna also encouraged us to think outside the box and to follow the Spirit in joyful exploration, rejecting binaries, categories, and traditions that do not make us whole. As Young Friends engaged in conversations about how to create a welcoming community and how to follow the Spirit in our own individual decision-making, we found ourselves returning to Genna's ministry with deep gratitude.

Young Friends spent much of the week considering how to let the Spirit move us in small ways. We learned about individual discernment and how to practice receiving guidance on things that



might not feel like they matter. Young Friends also found the Spirit moving them in Monday night's workshops. Many of us attended a workshop on Quaker nontheism open to Friends from the broader Yearly Meeting, which we found deeply moving. As young people, we sometimes feel a disconnect between the language we use to describe our experiences with the Quaker faith and the more Christian language often used in the wider Quaker community. This workshop allowed us to realize that there are many Friends outside of YFs age who use similar language to us, and that we as young people who often do not consider ourselves Christian or resonate with the Bible are still welcome in and deserving of Quaker spaces. During this time, the rest of us found our bodies and Spirits profoundly moved by the musical ministry of Toussaint Liberator, who led a drum circle and shared some history of drumming with NEYM Friends.

On Tuesday morning, Young Friends attended Meeting for Business to learn about NEYM's consideration of the future of our annual sessions. Many Young Friends found that our own difficult questions had parallels at the Yearly Meeting level. How do we want to shape our community for the future? How can we best welcome newcomers and encourage new participants? How should we tend to our spiritual growth? As many Young Friends walked across campus to engage in joyful song with Friends aged 6 months through Junior High, we reflected on the importance of how we steward the YF program. Within ten years, some of our Friends in the childcare program will be the newest Young Friends. As Young Friends now, how can we build the kind of community that will nurture and tend their spiritual growth? How do we navigate this time of transition in the Young Friends program to sustain a community that has the depth, joy, and vitality we seek?

In the Light,

Young Friends of the New England Yearly Meeting

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### Young Adult Friends

Due to various circumstances, this epistle has been written with input from the wider Yearly Meeting in the style of a Mad-Libs document. The underlined words represent their contributions.

Greetings Friends across the world from the NEYM Young Adult Foxes.

We splashed once again at the University of Vermont at Castleton for Yearly Sessions from August 2nd to 7th. We braved weather ranging from perfect to 99 degrees Celsius and even an sexy thunderstorm that trapped many of us in the cafeteria for almost a minute (or at least it felt that long!) But the weather couldn't water-ski our spirits as we gathered in fellowship, and reunited with Friends (of both capitalizations) we hadn't seen in far too long. In addition to the regular programming options, we also worked to organize our own upcoming year, spread the word of our Discord server, met with the graduating Young Friends and also cooked.

Many of our members continue to struggle finding balance between attending YAF activities and continuing to follow their passionate calling to support the youth programs, leaving little time for faithfully tending the seed. Adding to our concerns was a resurgence of COVID-19 in the New England area, forcing many Friends to attend remotely, or change their plans entirely. Inconsistent scheduling and a lack of time overlap also hindered our ability to schedule a proper business meeting for ourselves, and even prevented us from playing screaming toes!

Despite all this, we still managed to find time for play, spiritual discussion, capture the flag, capture the flag and small group check-ins. As we prepare to nap at Castleton, we do so with hope that our next gathering will be in a short while, in good health, and in delicious twister tornado.

For all further questions, please see last year's epistle.

Yours in Fellowship,

The Young Adult Friends of New England Yearly Meeting

University of Vermont, Castleton, August 7th, 2024

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### Epístola de Los Amigos (Cuáqueros) en Cuba

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Un saludo de los cuáqueros cubanos a todos los cuáqueros del mundo:

Reunidos en los días del 22 al 25 del segundo mes del año 2024 en la ciudad de Gibara, Provincia Holguín, Cuba, hemos celebrado nuestra 96 Junta Anual.

Aquí desde la parte norte del inmenso atlántico que bordea las enormes piedras que son bañadas por sus azules aguas, entre estas maravillas se levanta un hermoso pino que creció en sus orillas y le han pasado ciclones, tempestades, y ahí está, vivo, porque tiene sus raíces entre las rocas. Como el pino hemos sido azotados por carencias materiales, problemas, éxodo, pero ahí permanece nuestra iglesia sostenida por la roca que es el Señor.

Conscientes de que nada ni nadie podrá evitar que se anuncie el mensaje de vida plena y esperanza, que lo sepa el mundo: Nuestra iglesia Los Amigos cuáqueros en Cuba seguiremos constantes y fieles al Cristo de la Gloria. Inspirados en el texto de Isaías 60:1 “Levántate y resplandece porque ha llegado tu luz y la gloria del señor ha nacido sobre ti”.

Entre conferencias, estudios bíblicos, mensajes, reuniones de trabajo, intercambios de ideas, se han tomado importantes acuerdos para sostener el trabajo de las Juntas Mensuales y misiones. Uno de los momentos más importantes fue el reconocimiento de los dones pastorales de las hermanas Yuliet Santi Feria y Adolfina Núñez Muñiz y de los dones ministeriales de Elina Aguilera Rodríguez.

Un culto especial aconteció en la noche para agradecer por la vida de nuestra querida pastora Julieta Pérez Pérez quien en vida fuera pastora y ministro de esta Junta Anual, en su homenaje, su esposo, el pastor y ministro Heredio Santos Balmaseda expresó su gratitud a los hermanos que durante todo su proceso de enfermedad apoyaron con todo lo necesario, tanto de nuestra Junta Anual como las Juntas Mensuales de Banes y Miami. Se despidió honrándola con estas palabras: “Gracias por lo que fue, por lo que es y será en mi vida”

Casi al cierre de nuestra reunión vimos con beneplácito que se levantaron cuatro jóvenes dispuestos a trabajar en los campos pastorales donde sea necesario, comprometidos con la gran comisión de Jesús “Id por el mundo y predicad el evangelio a toda criatura”.

En otro orden de cosas el ICCP nombró al nuevo consejo directivo para continuar el trabajo formativo y terminada la Junta Anual se desarrollará el taller para Preparación de Facilitadores del Proyecto de Alternativas a la violencia.

Concluye nuestro encuentro unidos en una sola idea: Exhortarnos a seguir adelante, a cada momento recordando nuestros principios cuáqueros: integridad, sencillez, humildad y paz. Así como nos dijo Jorge Fox: “Ahora el señor Dios me abrió por su poder invisible como la luz divina de Cristo alumbró a todos los hombres, y vi que la luz brilla por todos y los que creen en ella salen de la condena y llegan a la luz de la vida”

En la luz,

Rosario Concepción Fernández

Lisdainy Rodríguez Fuentes

María Isabel Leyva C

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### Cuba Yearly Meeting Epistle

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Greetings from the Cuban Quakers to all Quakers in the world.

United together from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> day of second month in the year 2024 in the city of Gibara, Province of Holguín, Cuba, we have celebrated our 96<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting.

Here on the northern coast of the immense Atlantic that borders the enormous rocks that are bathed by blue waters, amid this beauty rises a handsome pine tree that grew on its banks and has survived cyclones, tempests and here it is, alive because it has its roots among the rocks. Like the

pine we have been whipped by material deficiencies, problems, exodus but our church remains sustained by the rock that is the Lord.

Aware that nothing nor nobody will be able to prevent the message of a full life and hope from being announced to the world: Our church, Quaker Friends in Cuba, will continue to be constant and faithful to the Christ of Glory. We are inspired by the text from Isaiah 60:1 “Arise and shine because the Light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen in you.”

Amidst conferences, Bible studies, messages, work meetings, exchanges of ideas, important agreements have been made to sustain the work of the monthly meetings and missions. One of the most important moments was the recognition of the pastoral gifts of our sisters Yuliet Santi Feria and Adelfina Núñez Muñiz and the ministerial gifts of Elina Aguilera Rodríguez.

A special service took place at night to give thanks for the life of our beloved pastor Julieta Pérez Pérez who in life was pastor and minister of this Yearly Meeting. In his tribute, her husband, the pastor and minister Heredio Santos Balmaseda expressed his gratitude to the brothers and sisters who, during the process of her illness, supported him with all that was necessary as much from the Yearly Meeting as from the monthly meetings of Banes and Miami. He bid farewell honoring her with these words: “Thank you for what you were, for what you are, and for what you will be in my life.”

Near the close of our meeting, we saw with pleasure that four youths arose ready to do pastoral work where necessary committed to the great command of Jesus: Go into the world and preach the gospel to all people.”

In other business, the Cuban Quaker Institute of Peace named a new board of directors to continue the training work and at the completion of Yearly Meeting Sessions the Alternatives to Violence Facilitator Training workshop will be held.

Our time together ended with us united in one sole idea: Exhort ourselves to move forward, in each moment remembering our Quaker principles of integrity, simplicity, humility and peace. As George Fox told us: Now the Lord God has opened to me by his invisible power how that every man was enlightened by the divine Light of Christ; and I saw it shine through all, and that they that believed in it came out of condemnation and came to the Light of Life.

In the Light,

Rosario Concepción Fernández

Lisdainy Rodríguez Fuentes

María Isabel Leyva C

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