

Informational Update: Sessions Visioning Process

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Background

At Sessions this summer, Friends approved embarking on a year-long consultation and discernment process to re-envision our annual Sessions. Through informed dialogue, reflection, and worship we hope to re-align, revitalize, and “right size” Sessions to reflect current needs and resources. This is an opportunity to reflect on the heart of our relationship as Friends in New England as well as the particular role of corporate discernment in the lives of Friends. You can find more information about this process on our website at <https://neym.org/sessions-visioning>.

Updates

The Sessions Visioning process is moving forward and still following the plan and timeline affirmed at Sessions. We are now in the “threshing” season of our plan which involves Listening Groups, facilitated conversations happening both in local meetings and quarters as well as some focused around a particular life stage for youth and parents.

I am deeply grateful that so many Friends across the region have embraced the invitation to help make these many conversations possible, engaging, and accessible. Many meetings and some quarters have already held or scheduled their listening sessions and I am encouraged by informal feedback from a number of Friends that such conversations were

life-giving. In addition to conversations held locally, facilitated conversations have been held as part of the winter retreats for Junior Yearly Meeting (elementary school), Junior High Yearly Meeting (middle school), Young Friends (high school), and young adult Friends (ages 18-35) and two opportunities are scheduled this March for parents and children and teens, given the particularities of that experience. If your meeting has not yet planned a conversation, there is still time as the deadline for notes to be submitted isn't until April 1st.

After the listening sessions take place, on April 12th representatives from each group are invited to gather at Wellesley Meeting for a day long "Visioning and Distillation Day" which will be an opportunity for representatives from each Listening Group to come together reflect, unpack, and distill together drawing on the notes from all the Listening Groups. Coming out of that gathering, a report will be drafted, shared broadly for comment, and then presented at the May Permanent Board meeting before further revision ahead of Sessions this August.

Another reminder: Both directly connected with the Sessions Visioning process and in response to a wider desire among Friends to explore the practice of corporate discernment more deeply, instead of a traditional Living Faith this spring we will be offering Discernment Discovery Day. This gathering, taking place March 15th at Moses Brown School in Providence, is an experiment in interactive, all-ages religious education and exploration. Although most of this gathering will not directly respond to the specific questions before us regarding the future shape of Sessions, it will bring many Friends together for dialogue and mutual refreshment about what is at the heart of corporate discernment in our living tradition. As the report to Sessions regarding Sessions Visioning said, "*While it is necessary*

to make decisions regarding the model or shape of Sessions going forward, there is a need for particular reflection on how our practice of corporate discernment can deepen and enrich the lives of Friends across New England.” I hope many of you are able to be with us on March 15.