

**Permanent Board Agenda**

**March 1, 2025**

**Monadnock Friends Meeting**

**9:00 AM - 3:30 PM EDT**

**8:30 AM Greetings, hospitality and fellowship**

**9:00 AM Opening Worship**

**PB clerk's comments**

**Reflections on the news of the world**

**Roll Call**

**Informational updates and Approvals**

**December 14, 2024 PB minutes- for Approval**

**The condition of the quarterly meetings**

**Salem Quarterly Meeting administrative recommendation- Affirm direction**

**Traveling in the Ministry updates- Marian Baker, verbal report**

**FOR APPROVAL- Gordon Bugbee & Mary Zwirner Travel Minute**

**FOR APPROVAL- MOSHER BOOK AND TRACT EXPENDITURE FOR PUBLICATIONS**

**FOR APPROVAL- New proposed Puente delegation;**

**FOR APPROVAL Bodine-Rustin award recommendations from Legacy Gift Committee -**

**NEYM Treasurer Financial Status update**

**Yearly Meeting Secretary's Report**

**Progress report on Development**

**Sessions 2025 update and Sessions Visioning**

**Friends Camp financial status update**

**Nominating Committee Clerk's Report**

**Presiding Clerk's Report**

**Memorial Minutes for Approval to send to Sessions (Eden Grace; Rud Ham; Christopher McCandless; Jean McCandless; Rose Miller; James Ramsey)**

**3:30 Closing worship**

**March 1, 2025 Permanent Board meeting**

**Draft Minutes  
Permanent Board  
Worcester Meeting  
December 14, 2024**

**24-85 Roll Call**

Willa Taber (Fresh Pond), Recording Clerk, for the Permanent Board read the roll.  
**Bold is present in the room. Underline is present on Zoom.**

Susan Davies (PB Clerk), **Willa Taber (PB Recording Clerk)**, Travis Belcher, **Thomas Brenner**, Darcy Drayton, Martin Forsythe, **Elizabeth Hansen**, Newell Isbell Shinn, Carolyne Lamar Jordan, Meg Klepack, Frances Lightsom, Edward Mair, Bob O'Connor, Allison Randall, **Carole Rein**, **Martha Schwope**, **Liesa Stamm**, Diane Weinholtz, Donn Weinholtz, **Morgan Wilson**, **Kathleen Wooten**, Mary Zwirner.

**Ex-officio members**

Marian Dalton (Treasurer), Scot Drysdale (Finance Clerk), **Sarah Gant** (Clerk, Meeting Accompaniment Group), **Rebecca Leuchak** (Presiding Clerk), **Noah Merrill** (YM Secretary), **Jackie Stillwell** (YM Secretary Supervisor, Clerk of Nominating Committee), Carl Williams (Clerk of Ministry and Counsel).

**Absent**

Kimberly Allen, Deana Chase, Anna Radocchia, John Reuthe, Eleanor Warnock,

**Visitors**

Elizabeth Hacala, Anna Hopkins, Kara Price, Kristina Keefe-Perry, Janet Hough, Becky Jones, Ed Mair, Bob Watt, **Kurt Hansen**, **Lou Ann McDonald**, **Phil Veatch**, **Maille Wooten**, **Frederick Martin**, **Nia Thomas**

**24-86 Permanent Board Clerk's Comments**

Susan Davies (Vassalboro), the clerk of the Permanent Board, welcomed us with gratitude for the technology of Zoom which allows people to attend at a distance. In particular she is grateful that it allows her to clerk this meeting while she is recovering from Covid. Her full comments are attached.

On January 18, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. there will be a joint memorial service for Jan and Ken Hoffman at Wesley United Methodist Church, 98 North Maple St., Hadley, MA.

Much of this morning will be dedicated to listening and discernment about our financial condition. We will also be hearing about progress about the reduction of the administrative overhead of the Legacy Gift Committee.

While the nominated membership of the Permanent Board is the body charged by Sessions with acting for the whole of NEYM between Sessions, the Treasurer, the Yearly Meeting Secretary, the Finance Committee Clerk, the Accounts Manager, and others are charged with

significant responsibility to pay proactive attention to Yearly Meeting finances. The clerk said she asked Noah to summarize these responsibilities so that Friends understand they are bringing recommendations in fulfillment of responsibilities they have been given by the Yearly Meeting.

In response to a charge from Sessions, Noah Merrill (Putney) and Sara Hubner (Gonic) met with Mary Link (Mt Toby), clerk of the Legacy Gift Committee in advance of the consultative process, to establish administrative support for management of the funds and provide for the administrative needs of the Legacy Gift Committee.

The consultation consisted of two separate two-hour meetings. 23 people attended one or both of them.

Themes expressed were:

- Concern to strengthen, sustain, and nourish the spiritual vitality of our tradition and our community, so that Friends might continue to offer our ministry to the world
- In relation to the Legacy Gift, be mindful of the current YM-wide initiative to consider reparations
- There was broad recognition and support for the immediate need to strengthen YM financial sustainability
- Concern that a careful, deliberative process be followed and that we do not rush to identify all uses of all the undesignated funds

As a culmination of this consultative process, representatives of the Legacy Review committee requested that their work be acknowledged as complete and the committee be now laid down.

The work of the Legacy Gift Evaluation has been laid down and the Yearly Meeting expresses its appreciation for its work.

Susan Davies expressed appreciation for the informal meeting of the Permanent Board for Orientation and Conversations, held over Zoom on October 17, which allowed people to share. In that sharing Susan heard a concern to understand more deeply our spiritual tradition and the way it underlies our practice of corporate discernment.

There have been two meetings for consultation on the condition of Quarterly Meetings. The Meeting Accompaniment clerk will be working with the clerks of quarters to address some of the administrative issues raised.

As Friends are aware, a concern to address conflict at the Yearly Meeting level has been raised repeatedly over the last two years. In 2023 Sessions charged the Presiding Clerk to establish a working group to develop a charge for a group that could “respond to conflict at the Yearly Meeting level.” The Permanent Board approved the draft charge in May 2024 [**PB 24-52**], but it was not approved by Sessions due to last-minute, but valuable, requests for changes. Rebecca will bring a progress update in her Presiding Clerk’s report.

The PB clerk informed the Permanent Board that last month, the three members of the laid-down Permanent Board Visiting Committee to Three Rivers communicated to her that harms done to the Three Rivers community in the process of approving monthly meeting status should be brought to the Permanent Board to seek repair. On their own initiative, the visiting committee prepared a second report, re-stating the recommendations of their February 2024 report to the Permanent Board, with the request that it be posted in the advance documents for this meeting. She declined this request because:

- The Permanent Board is charged by Sessions with an enormous amount of work necessary to the welfare and sustainability of our entire spiritual body. The clerk believes that the Permanent Board is not a suitable body to publicly mediate a conflict when narratives differ about what happened and why.
- In response to last month's message from the Visiting Committee, she reiterated her offer of last May to meet in dialogue, either with her, or with others they think might be helpful to respond to their concerns. Susan looks forward to hearing their response.

In a similar vein, she has received many messages from individuals and groups expressing distress over perceived and experienced harm caused by actions or inactions of Yearly Meeting leadership. Yearly Meeting leaders have led you imperfectly. The Three Rivers approval process was chaotic and disappointing or deeply painful to many and for that she is sorry. Other committees have expressed that they felt unappreciated or unheard. She and all members of the Coordinating and Advisory Committee hold these concerns tenderly. She acknowledged that her words, actions, and inactions have upset or resulted in distress among some individuals and groups.

The concerns raised are troubling but they also indicate that there exists a sufficiently robust relationship to say "That's not good enough. You can do better"—and that is a good thing. Deep, humble, and searching self-examination is a part of the core testimony of integrity for each of us as Friends. The clerk stands ready to hear of any missteps, offences, or neglected responsibilities and to take them into her prayer life, and aspires to improve in sensitivity, wisdom, and action.

In another sign of strength amid differences, she is heartened by the frank, open, and respectful dialogue modeled by Fresh Pond Friends when they invited Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk, Carl Williams, Clerk of Ministry and Counsel, and herself to worship and dialogue with them in October.

#### **24-87 Small Group breakout sessions**

The clerk invited Friends to turn to a neighbor and discuss the following query: What practices help to hold space to express truthful critique while also expressing loving acceptance and encouragement?

#### **24-88 September 28 minutes.**

Friends **approved** the minutes from the September 28 meeting here attached.

#### **24-89 Update on NEYM Financial Status.**

Marian Dalton (Brunswick), Yearly Meeting Treasurer, presented an overview of our current financial situation here attached. At the end of fiscal year 2023, our operational reserves were down to about \$52,000, or about 6% of our annual expenses. The biggest driver of our deficit was lower than expected Sessions fees, because attendance was below what had been expected.

Although our books are not closed yet, it appears that at the end of FY 2024, our reserves were down to \$27,000, approximately 3% of our operating budget. We have now received most of the pandemic era Employment Retention Tax Credit funds. This is about \$45,000, which brings our reserves at the beginning of the fiscal year to about 9% of our budget. Our Financial Handbook specifies that we have a goal of having reserves at the level of 25% of our budgeted expenses at the beginning of the fiscal year.

We went through a downturn in 2014 which we were able to weather by drawing down our reserves. This is not possible now because we have significantly lower reserves. The major source of our deficits has been reduced attendance at Yearly Meeting Sessions. The most important thing we can do in the short term is to encourage members of our meetings to attend Sessions, even if only part time, so that our fixed costs will be spread out over more people.

#### **24-90 Report from the Contributions working group**

Liesa Stamm presented the report of the Contributions working group, here attached. This report makes recommendations for how to decide what organizations to make contributions to.

They have recommended criteria for contributions to outside organizations. All contributions should be made from resources designated as available by the finance committee. The first priority is organizations and associations of which we are a member. The report contains queries to be used when considering discretionary contributions.

This report does not address the question of who will be making the decisions about contributions. The Finance Committee continues to be clear that they are not that body. **[PB 21-42]** We have pressing issues of financial sustainability so we should take this up at a later date when we have excess funds.

Friends **approved** putting off further discussion until we have made progress in addressing our current financial problems. Friends **accept this report** with gratitude for the work of the working group.

Friends were reminded that we are in one of the wealthiest regions of the wealthiest country where there are Quakers and we are making a decision to prioritize continuing our programs at their current levels while declining to support Friends in less privileged positions.

#### **24-91 Yearly Meeting Secretary's Report**

Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, spoke about a meeting he attended once here at the Worcester meeting house. People were asked to go around and share what they would like to

accomplish in the meeting. Clarence Burley from Worcester Meeting responded, “God, what do you want to do today?”

Friends General Conference and other Yearly Meetings are all encountering significant deficits. We are in perilous financial times but all winds and the waves favor the skilled sailor. We have been in difficult situations before. What do we have control over? What is possible for us to do?

There are four proposals that we are being asked to consider today. They are contained in the Proposed Actions Relating to the Financial Sustainability and Stewardship of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, here attached.

#### **24-92 Create a fund for Present and Future Uses of NEYM**

The first proposal is that we create a Board-designated fund for the present and future use of the Yearly Meeting. This fund would be initially funded with the residue of the former Witness & Ministry Fund after the Yearly Meeting redesignated \$750,000 of this fund. That residue is currently approximately \$280,000 and fluctuates with market conditions.

Friends **approved** designating for “Present and Future Uses of NEYM”—including such timely uses as financial sustainability, development (fundraising), Sessions, staff capacity and resilience, and ensuring appropriate reserve levels—the remaining funds deriving from Sessions’ decision to set aside the remainder of funds formerly designated for the Witness & Ministry Fund, after redesignating \$750,000 to the Witness & Ministry Fund (Sessions Minute 2024-62).

#### **24-93 Initial use of the Present and Future Uses Fund.**

Noah Merrill proposed use of up to \$50,000 from these “Present & Future Uses” funds to support immediate next steps to strengthen NEYM development work overall, including a feasibility study, fundraising consulting hours, and possible temporary increases in hourly staff time prior to the meeting of the Permanent Board on March 1, 2025. He does not expect to use the entire \$50,000 before March. Some of the expenses are expected to be incurred later.

He also indicated that any increases in hourly staff time prior to March 1 would be temporary and provisional, pending further discernment and approval by the Permanent Board. There have been initial explorations of the feasibility study and development consulting and they could proceed in early 2025. At the March 1 Permanent Board meeting, following further consultation and seasoning with Friends with financial management, fundraising, and organizational leadership roles and experience, further recommendations for uses of the “Present & Future Uses” funds to strengthen development and financial sustainability, as well as other possible coordinated uses, would be brought to the Permanent Board for discernment and approval.

Friends **approved** the use of \$50,000 from the Present and Future Uses Fund as described above.

Friends were reminded that we also need to address our declining membership. Along with our financial development, we need to strengthen our spiritual development. We need to have a message that will encourage people to join us to walk with us.

#### **24-94 Establishing a small number of Board-designated Funds**

Noah Merrill recommended that we create four board-designated funds as described in the report referenced above in minute 24-91. These funds would be a Thriving Meetings Fund, a Spiritual Formation Fund, a Youth Ministries Acorn Fund, and a Stewardship Fund.

This was a complicated proposal and there were a number of logistical questions about the administration of these funds. There was also a lack of clarity among the members of the Permanent Board as to where the contributions to these funds would come from and the impact of this on our other fundraising. The Treasurer said that, if we approved creating these funds, they would exist only on paper until someone actually made a contribution to them.

Friends took no action on this proposal today but it may be brought back to us at a later date.

#### **24-95 Fund for Friends Camp Camperships**

Anna Buller, Friends Camp Director, presented the Friends Camp Proposed Endowment Fund for Camperships, here attached. It is important to the ministry of Friends Camp to be able to provide camperships to families in need. Having a dedicated endowment fund to fund camperships will help alleviate the financial stress on both the camp and the Yearly Meeting. There are still issues that will need to be worked out such as what to do if the need for camperships no longer exists or if the camp itself no longer exists. These issues will be brought back to the Permanent Board at a later time.

Friends **approved** the creation of a permanent endowment fund for camperships to Friends Camp as described in the attached proposal.

#### **24-96 Sessions 2025**

Noah Merrill referred people to the Sessions 2025 Financial Report here attached. Elizabeth Hacala and others have looked at a variety of options for holding an in-person Yearly Meeting in the summer of 2025. The only option appears to be to have Sessions at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. All of the options were significantly more expensive than Castleton had been. Some of them lacked significant facilities. UMass Amherst has a room suitable for business meetings that has all of the infrastructure in place to host hybrid sessions. It has the best value for room costs. Even so, Sessions in 2025 could incur a deficit of up to \$75,000. There are more than sufficient funds in the Present and Future Needs Fund that we just established to cover this deficit.

The Yearly Meeting is starting a visioning process for Yearly Meeting Sessions, but that work will not be completed before 2025 Sessions. This is a stop-gap measure to allow us to continue to meet while we consider a new structure for Yearly Meeting Sessions that would be better adapted to our resources and supportive of the life of Friends. Consideration was given to having an online only meeting. Youth Programs in particular are still recovering from having

online only meetings during the pandemic and it was feared that another year of having an online only meeting would be a significant blow to the programs. There is also a hope that, since Amherst is more centrally located, attendance might increase, reducing the potential deficit. The best thing we can do is to encourage widespread attendance at Yearly Meeting Sessions.

Friends **approved** authorizing the Yearly Meeting Secretary to sign a contract with the University of Massachusetts Amherst, for holding Yearly Meeting Sessions in August of 2025.

#### **24-97 Minute on the Cuba Embargo from Southeast Quarter.**

Beth Hansen (Westerly) presented the minute from Providence Meeting concerning the United States embargo on Cuba, here attached.

Friends **endorsed** this minute.

#### **24-98 Travelers to Cuba**

Susan Davies presented the report from the Puente Committee regarding a delegation to travel to visit Cuba Yearly Meeting, here attached. Because an opportunity to offer an Alternatives to Violence program has come up, Robert Watts now wants to leave with the rest of the delegation on February 15. He will be returning on February 26 and the rest of the travellers will return on February 24.

Friends **approved** the following Friends to travel to visit Friends in Cuba: Maggie Fogarty, Elizabeth Keane, Andrea Groft, Harvin Groft, Francis Groft, Severino Groft, Ananias Groft, Kristna Evans, Mimi Marstaller, Maggie Fiori, and Robert Watts.

#### **24-99 Peter Blood-Patterson to travel in ministry**

The clerk read the travel minute for Peter Blood-Patterson here attached.

Friends **approved** the Travel Minute for Peter Blood-Patterson.

#### **24-100 Kathleen Wooten Travel minute**

The clerk read the travel minute for Kathleen Wooten, here attached.

Friends **approved** the travel minute for Kathleen Wooten.

#### **24-101 Presiding Clerk's Report.**

Rebecca Leuchak, Yearly Meeting Presiding Clerk, gave an update on the work she has been doing. As she has worked with the various committees, working groups, resource groups of our Yearly Meeting she has been grateful for and encouraged by the faithful work that she has seen happening throughout the Yearly Meeting. As the Presiding Clerk, she also serves ex-officio on the Board of the Moses Brown School. She is currently involved in revising the by-laws of the school to better reflect Quaker values. She is also working with a small group to strengthen the participation of Quakers on the Board. She is hopeful that there will develop a closer relationship between the Yearly Meeting and the school.



She drew our attention to the report that the Quaker Indigenous Boarding School Working Group has prepared and the cover letter that will accompany it, both attached. These will be sent to Deborah Haaland, Secretary of the Interior, on Monday.

Yearly Meeting Sessions this summer also charged the Presiding Clerk and Yearly Meeting Secretary to send a statement to Senators and Representatives from New England in support of the Truth and Healing Commission Bill on Indian Boarding School Policies (S.1723). Rebecca is grateful to the members of the Quaker Indigenous Boarding School Working Group for drafting that statement and it will be sent out soon.

Rebecca noted that in the beginning of our meetings for business at Sessions in both 2023 and 2024, we as a body approved that the only minutes that would be submitted for approval at Sessions would be minutes of substantial action. Approval would not be sought for minutes concerning the regular activities of Sessions. Since there were some issues raised about that at the last Permanent Board meeting, she has been involved in a deep dive about this matter. We are engaged in an incredible amount of activity during our precious time together. We have been increasingly keen on encouraging people to volunteer for service to our Yearly Meeting who have significant other responsibilities that place demands on their time. This includes people who are working full time and people who are attending Sessions with small children. We are hoping that we can make service to the Yearly Meeting more manageable.

Rebecca will be asking the current Clerks Table, the rising Presiding Clerk and the clerk of the Faith and Practice Revision Committee to further consider our process for approving minutes. She hopes to bring a further report to our March Permanent Board meeting.

At Sessions last summer, Friends did not approve the charge for the proposed Conflict Response Team.

Rebecca is working on reconstituting the working group to continue work on this charge. She has had three people agree to participate and she is waiting to hear from two more people. Friends intend to hold a called meeting of the Permanent Board to consider these and any other nominations that may be ready at that time.

### **24-102 Thriving Ministry and Eldership Group report**

Carl Williams, (Plainfield), clerk of Ministry and Counsel, based on direction from Sessions 2024, presented the updated charge for the Thriving Ministry and Eldership Group, here attached. Friends **approved**.

### **24-103 Memorial Minutes**

The memorial minutes for John Preston, Ruth Hawkins, Muriel Farrar and Karen Cadbury, here attached, were **approved** for sending on to Sessions 2025.

Respectfully Submitted,

Willa Taber, Recording Clerk

- **Clerk's Comments on Outreach and Dialogue**

As Friends are aware, a concern to address “conflict at the YM level” has been raised repeatedly over the last two years. In 2023, Sessions charged the Presiding Clerk to establish a working group to develop a charge for a group that could “Respond to Conflict at the Yearly Meeting Level”. PB approved the draft charge in May 2024, but it was not approved by Sessions due to last minute, but valuable, requests for changes. Rebecca will bring a progress update in her Presiding Clerk's report.

- I want to inform PB that last month, the 3 members of the laid down PB Visiting Committee to Three Rivers, communicated to me that harms done to the 3-R community in the process of approving monthly meeting status, must be brought to PB to seek repair. On their own initiative, they prepared a second report, re-stating the recommendations of their February 2024 report to PB, with the admonition that it be posted in ADs for this meeting. I declined to post their report.
  - Permanent Board is charged by Sessions with an enormous amount of work necessary to the welfare and sustainability of our entire spiritual body. My reasoning in declining the VC's request is that Permanent Board is not a suitable body to publicly mediate a conflict when narratives differ about what happened and why.
  - In response to last month's message from the VC I reiterated my offer of last May to meet in dialogue, either with me, or with others they think might be helpful to respond to their concerns. I look forward to hearing their response.

In a similar vein, I have received many messages from individuals and groups expressing distress over perceived and experienced harm caused by actions or inactions of YM leadership. We, your appointed leaders, *have* led you imperfectly. The Three Rivers approval process *was* chaotic and disappointing or deeply painful to many and for that I am sorry. Other committees have expressed they felt unappreciated or unheard. I hold these concerns tenderly, as do all members of Coordinating and Advisory. I want to acknowledge, with deepest sincerity, that I know my words, actions, and inactions have upset or resulted in distress among some individuals and groups. This is a *life* lesson I (and I assume, *most* of us) have had to take in, not just the lessons of this particular role of PB clerk.

Yet I confess to you that I am of two minds about the common patterns and regularity of these complaints. On the one hand they indicate there exists a sufficiently robust relationship to say “That's not good enough”, “You can do better” -- and that is a good thing. Deep, humble and searching self-examination is a part of the core testimony of

integrity for each of us as Friends. If I have mis stepped, offended or neglected a responsibility I stand ready to hear it, to take it into my prayer life, and to aspire to improve in sensitivity, wisdom and action.

In another sign of strength amid differences, I am heartened by the frank, open and respectful dialogue modeled by Fresh Pond Friends when they invited Rebecca, Carl and myself into worship and dialogue with them at Fresh Pond in Oct.

At this time though I feel compelled to briefly step outside of my role as PB clerk to say a few things from “my person”, not from my role. I ask your indulgence in this departure from Quaker clerking orthodoxy—perhaps it can be attributed to my current COVID brain. These comments represent my own personal views as an individual, and neither Coordinating & Advisory, nor any staff should be held to account for them:

The regularity with which some complaints and criticisms convey suspicious, accusatory or “othering” messages about leadership should be troubling to all Friends.

I want to publicly assert my personal assessment that NEYM has, and has had throughout its history, Friends in leadership who are deeply anchored in their intention to listen and be guided by the Spirit of Truth, and the deepest wisdom of our tradition. NEYM has an astoundingly competent, caring, experienced and dedicated leadership, in both nominated volunteers and staff. The work is urgent, difficult, demanding and endless. It is a labor of love. The YM leadership is not perfect. YM leadership drops balls and is vulnerable to the blind-spots of our shared oppressive cultural conditioning; we all struggle with how to triage impossible competing priorities.

But to those whose pain causes them to portray those in leadership as uncaring, resistant, untrustworthy, spiritually deficient, incompetent, or engaged in hegemony, I strenuously disagree. There are so very many things to be anxious about in our world today. For what its worth, coming from me, speaking as an individual with “insider experience”, I assert that worries about misguided YM leadership should not be in your top ten list of worries. Please do bring your concerns, but please bring them with the expectation that your YM leadership strives to be trustworthy, spiritually disciplined, and to be open to dialogue.

*“We will now resume our regularly scheduled program”...*

As your “servant leader” it is an honor and a privilege to be entrusted by you with this service. I’ll now resume my role as your PB clerk by inviting you into a short break for:

***Arriving and Connecting “turn to your neighbor” Exercise, with a query:***

*“What practices help to hold space to express truthful critique while also expressing loving acceptance and encouragement?”*

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integrity for each of us as Friends. If I have mis stepped, offended or neglected a responsibility I stand ready to hear it, to take it into my prayer life, and to aspire to improve in sensitivity, wisdom and action.

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As your “servant leader” it is an honor and a privilege to be entrusted by you with this service. I’ll now resume my role as your PB clerk by inviting you into a short break for:

***Arriving and Connecting “turn to your neighbor” Exercise, with a query:***

*“What practices help to hold space to express truthful critique while also expressing loving acceptance and encouragement?”*

**Draft Minutes  
Called Meeting of Permanent Board  
Held on Zoom  
February 6, 2025**

**25-1 Roll Call**

Willa Taber (Fresh Pond), Recording Clerk, for Permanent Board took the roll from the Zoom attenders list.

Present: Susan Davies, Willa Taber, Travis Belcher, Thomas Brenner, Darcy Drayton, Elizabeth Hansen, Fran Lightsom, Allison Randall, Carole Rein, Morgan Wilson, Mary Zwirner.

Ex-officio members:

Marian Dalton (Treasurer), Sarah Gant (Clerk, Meeting Accompaniment Group), Rebecca Leuchak (Presiding Clerk), Noah Merrill (YM Secretary), Jackie Stillwell (YM Secretary Supervisor, Clerk of Nominating Committee) Phil Veatch (Rising Presiding Clerk), Carl Williams (Clerk of Ministry and Counsel).

Absent:

Scot Drysdale (Finance Clerk), Martin Forsythe, Carolyne Lamar Jordan, Meg Klepack, Edward Mair, Bob O'Connor, Martha Schwope, Newell Isbell Shinn, Liesa Stamm, Diane Weinholtz, Donn Weinholtz, Kathleen Wooten,

**25-2 Nominations**

Rebecca Leuchak (Providence) presented the nominations for the working group to prepare the Purposes, Practices and Composition for the proposed Conflict Resolution Working Group. Her written report is attached. Friends being nominated are: Becky Jones (Northampton), Maureen Lanan (Beacon Hill), Abby Matchette (Burlington) and Alysia Parkes (Cambridge).

Friends **approved** these nominations.

**To: Permanent Board**

**From : Susan Davies, clerk of Permanent Board**

**Date: February 24, 2025**

**Re: Proposed action to facilitate continued access to the Salem Quarter Grant Funds while SQM is on hiatus**

I have asked the Legacy Gift Committee (LGC) to discern whether they have the capacity to resume their former role (2022 through June 2024) of candidate recommendations for awards drawn from the Salem Quarter Grant Fund. LGC has affirmed that they are receptive to again taking this on, and the committee has documented a very helpful series of questions and issues that need to be addressed in order to resume and formalize the arrangement. I propose the formation of a small working group, ideally containing Friends from both Salem Quarter and from the Legacy Gift Committee, to determine good process responses the LGC's questions, as well as any that might be raised by Permanent Board. The following provides some background for this recommendation:

- Per 1985 Faith and Practice, fiduciary responsibility flows to PB when a quarter is unable to fulfill its functions<sup>1</sup>;
- It serves the wider interest of Friends to continue to make the SQM funds available to those with a calling to ministry and witness, while SQM is on hiatus. LGC has the administrative and discernment expertise and has ably fulfilled this function in the past;
- Although there are indications that some Friends in SQM are interested in convening an initiative to determine next steps for the Quarter, there is currently no entity in SQM that is fulfilling any administrative or financial oversight responsibilities, though the former treasurer of SQM retains banking privileges, and has stated to the PB clerk, a willingness to help with next steps.

**I am requesting that PB affirm the direction to appoint a small, short-term, working group to investigate the questions and issues raised by LGC to resume their administration of SQM grant funds. Following review by Coordinating and Advisory committee, recommendations will be brought to the May PB meeting.**

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<sup>1</sup> The Board inspects and perfects, when necessary, titles to lands and other estates belonging to any meeting. It attends to the appropriation of charitable legacies and donations except when these are cared for by persons appointed for the purpose.

Beacon Hill Monthly Meeting  
6 Chestnut Street  
Boston, MA 02108

2 February 2025

Dear Friends,

We send to you Gordon Bugbee and Mary Zwirner, members in good standing for many decades of Beacon Hill Monthly Meeting.

We hope that you will welcome them and hold them in your loving care as they travel with a concern to establish good and right relationship between Quakers of New England Yearly Meeting and the tribes most directly affected by our forebears who participated in the federal Indian boarding school assimilation project.

Throughout their years of ministry and service among us, Gordon and Mary have spoken with wisdom, grounded in deep connection to Spirit that connects us all. We have encouraged Gordon and Mary in their discernment to travel among you with hearts open to listen, to hear and to learn.

May you accept the love that they bear as they travel.



Katie Bond, Clerk  
Beacon Hill Monthly Meeting

Susan Davies, Clerk  
Permanent Board  
New England Yearly Meeting



From: **Len Cadwallader** <[lennycad@gmail.com](mailto:lennycad@gmail.com)>

Date: Sat, Feb 22, 2025 at 11:51 AM

Subject: adv docs Permanent Board 3/1/25 meeting re: **Puente action request**

To: Susan Davies, clerk, Permanent Board

22 February 2025

Dear Susan,

At a meeting of the Puente de Amigos Executive Committee held on 21 February 2025, the following Minute was approved.

After prayerful consideration, we ask the Permanent Board of the New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends to approve the delegation comprised of representatives of Framingham and Wellesley monthly meetings to worship and visit with Quakers in Cuba.

The members of the delegation are:

Carolyn Stone (Wellesley FM)

Richard Lindo (Framingham FM)

Erik Philbrook (Wellesley FM)

David Barabas (Wellesley FM)

They will travel from 24 April 2025 - 4 May 2025

The delegation will become part of a 35-year bridge of friendship that has fostered spiritual growth and understanding of the leadings of the Spirit between New England and Cuban Quakers.

Those present at the Executive Committee meeting were:

Abigail Adams, Em McManamy, Mary Ann Cadwallader, Leonard Cadwallader. Also present: Carolyn Stone, Richard Lindo.

Respectfully submitted,

Leonard Cadwallader,

Recording Clerk, pro tem.

## **Bodine-Rustin Funds**

**January 2025 Recommendations for Funding from the Bodine-Rustin Sub-Committee for 2025. Approved 2/20/2025 by Legacy Gift Committee and forwarded to Permanent Board for final approval on March 1, 2025.**

**The Bodine-Rustin Sub-committee:** Mary Link and Lucy Candib from Legacy Gift Committee, and Kristina Keefe-Perry NEYM FUM rep appointed by the NEYM Presiding Clerk. This is the **third round of distributions** from the NEYM Bodine-Rustin Fund.

**Total funds available** for distribution this year: **approximately \$300** This is much reduced from prior years' \$4,000- \$5,000 amounts, due to the NEYM Budget reduction/absence of funds to wider Quaker organizations including FUM.

**Change in process for this year:** Legacy Gift Committee, in consultation with the Permanent Board clerk, agreed to a simplified process for this year due to the significantly smaller amount of funds available to distribute. Instead of inviting suggestions from meetings and individuals across NEYM for LGBTQ+ organizations to support this year, the B-R subcommittee reviewed prior groups we have given B-R funds to with the goal of selecting one or more of them to receive this year's funds. With only \$300 to distribute we focused our selection particularly on the degree of need and potential impact this reduced level of funding might have.

The B-R fund will continue to be maintained so it will still be available at whatever point the YM budget is able to make distributions to FUM again. In addition, if Friends want to support any of the organizations we have been giving to, they are welcome to do so directly at any time.

**The process going forward remains the same:** 1. Consideration of these recommendations by the Legacy Gift Committee. 2. Legacy Gift then makes a recommendation to NEYM Permanent Board. 3. Permanent Board makes the final determination, instructs the Office on making funding payments, and announces the distribution of these funds on the NEYM website and in its newsletter.

In addition, the clerk of Legacy Gift will email some of the previously funded organizations to let them know that due to significantly reduced funding we are not able to support them this year.

**Here is the B-R sub-committee fund distribution recommendation for 2025:**

### **1. Individual Witness of east African Friend 2nd year**

Originally nominated by Frederick Martin, Kristina Keefe-Perry and JJ Smith, who are part of a group providing support and accountability. Funds to help release an individual called to faithful work in Africa. Last year we provided significant funding (\$2,250) reflecting a subsistence level of support. This year's funding will help extend that support a bit further.

A potential collaboration with another Friends meeting in the US will be explored in an effort to make the transfer of funds easier.

**Note that special care should be taken to protect the individual's identity when announcing this funding.**

Contact: Frederick Martin, Beacon Hill MM, 11 Half Moon Hill, Acton, MA 01720 (603) 562-7163

**Funding Recommended: \$300 (or the actual total amount of B-R funds available from 2024) for 2025**

### **Summary of Recommendations:**

**Individual east African Friend**

**Funding Recommended**  
\$300.00 (or total 2024 funds available)

## **Budget Subcommittee report to PB March 1, 2025**

### **(on behalf of the Finance Committee)**

In the normal financial flow of our Yearly Meeting, after the budget subcommittee meets to review input from staff the Finance Committee would bring a preliminary budget for the following year (FY26) to this PB meeting. However, the budget subcommittee decided that they were not ready to approve a budget to forward to the whole Finance Committee meeting, and therefore the Finance Committee is not ready to bring it to PB for a first reading.

This is a very uncertain time for our finances, with both income and expenses so much up in the air that budget estimates are more or less useless at this point. There are three reasons for this:

1) We don't know what a reasonable estimate of our income is. Staff's first tentative budget assumes modest growth, but NEYM will be launching a development effort before FY 26. Noah will be meeting with two development experts by April, and hopes to get some idea of what they think we might be able to raise.

2) Our current sessions model has not been fiscally supportable in recent years, so there is currently a Visioning process going on in monthly meetings and quarters to discuss how the Sessions model might change in the future in order to be more sustainable. It is not possible to estimate Sessions income and expenses until we have more of a sense re: the form Sessions might take in FY26. An additional complication is that we don't know where any residential sessions might be held, so expenses are a complete unknown. To complicate matters, FGC will be holding their now biannual gathering in Burlington VT that summer.

Reports from monthly meetings on their visioning sessions are due April 1 and there will be a gathering for discernment with representatives from meetings and other groups on April 12. There will be no final decision made then, but we may have a much better idea of what Sessions in 2026 will look like after that meeting. The description of this visioning process is at <https://neym.org/sessions-visioning>.

3 The tentative budget we reviewed in December is not balanced, even assuming an unrealistic level of the surplus historically generated by Sessions. (This is a surplus of income over direct costs, and helps cover the 31% of staff time that goes to planning and running sessions.) Because staff expenses are well over half of our budget and will continue to increase, as they do each year, there need to be discussions re: which of the programs Yearly Meeting staff has been producing continue to meet the needs of the Monthly meetings, and which we may consider cutting (including portions of annual sessions) in order to reduce costs, if it is not immediately apparent that development would make up the need.

The budget subcommittee will be meeting again in April and, with input from the processes mentioned above, Finance Committee will plan to bring a draft budget to the May Permanent Board Meeting.

## Board of Managers request to Permanent Board March 1, 2025

The NEYM Board of Managers (BoM) and the YM Secretary are requesting that Permanent Board approve our YM Secretary's signing of a contract between the NEYM BoM and the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), allowing the BoM to become a member of the organization.

### **What is the Board of Managers responsibility?**

The BoM is responsible for management and investment, consonant with Friends principles, of Yearly Meeting funds and funds entrusted to it by meetings, schools, and other Friends organizations for the purpose of maintaining a source of continuing income and growth. The Board uses the services of a professional investment advisor (The De Burlo Group, Inc.), a secure custodian (Charles Schwab) for protection and safekeeping of the assets, and an Administrator (ALTA Trust) to provide accurate and timely accounting. The board itself is responsible for discerning whether to accept or reject, based on Quaker values, companies the investment firm suggests for investment.

### **What is ICCR?**

Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) is a coalition of faith-and values-based investors who view shareholder engagement with corporations as a powerful catalyst for change. Their statement, "inspired by faith, committed to action" sets forth a pledge to be active owners, and to engage meaningfully with the companies in our portfolios through the process of shareholder engagement.

### **Proposed relationship:**

BoM is interested in pursuing membership with ICCR. The BoM, after participating in a tutorial of the ICCR platform, focused on two specific benefits to becoming a member:

1. Ability to engage as activist investors – If we saw fit, the ICCR platform allows us to formulate and submit corporate resolutions. It also allows members to support others' resolutions by committing shareholder votes.
2. Extensive database on corporate resolutions – The ICCR database houses information with documentation related to thousands of corporate resolutions that have been submitted by members over the last 50 years. Although we believe more recent data will be helpful for our purposes of researching corporate policies or actions that conflict with Quaker values, we believe the longer-term data could hold value as well.

### **What are the benefits of having this relationship?**

The BoM considers this an opportunity to both increase the quality of our quarterly holdings review process while also giving us the ability to engage with companies on an activist and policy level.

**Cost of Membership:**

At our current level of Assets under Management (AUM), which is approximately \$13 million, the cost would be \$2,000 per year. This cost would be charged to the Pooled Fund , divided proportionally among its constituents, and directly costing the Yearly Meeting itself nothing. If our AUM were to increase over \$25 million, the cost would increase as well.

**Some notable members of ICCR:**

Catholic Health Association of the United States

Congregation of St. Joseph

Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross

Everence Financial

Friends Fiduciary Corporation

Immaculate Heart Missions Inc.

Investor Advocates for Social Justice

Jesuit Conference of the United States and Canada

School Sisters of Notre Dame Investment Fund

To: The Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends  
From: Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, Putney (VT) Friends Meeting  
Re: Report in preparation for PB meeting on March 1, 2025.

Dear Friends,

For many of us, the first weeks of this new year have brought us and those around us into troubled seas. And yet, I hope many of us are coming to remember, even in glimpses, that there is a peace beyond the storms and tempests of these times, and a sure place to stand. I look forward to our time together, trusting in the nourishment and clarity that comes when we gather in worship, seeking to be met, shaped, and led as a community of faith and service, on behalf of Friends throughout our region.

### **Witness for Religious Freedom**

I hope Friends have seen the news that the federal district Court in Maryland granted a preliminary injunction barring implementation of the new administration's needless action permitting indiscriminate enforcement of immigration operations by armed agents in houses of worship. In recent weeks, we have received many communications and expressions of support from Friends and other groups across the country and beyond. I will give a further update on the status of the case and related communications and activities at our meeting.

### **Development**

Following Permanent Board's approval of up to \$50,000 to enable us to move forward with development efforts, I have some progress to report. We have engaged Michael Wajda of Bennington Meeting, a fundraising professional with a long track record of success in supporting Friends organizations, including most recently Woolman Hill, and many years leading development work for Friends General Conference. Michael has reviewed a significant amount of data on our development efforts, and has shared some preliminary assessment and possible ways forward. I will share more at our meeting.

Work with both Everence (on a feasibility study this spring) and our graphic design partner (on visual materials for use in communication and development) has also made progress. As approved in December, I am exploring the possibility of additional staff hours to ensure adequate support for our annual appeal cycle; I hope to have more concrete steps to report soon, as many factors (personal and organizational) have needed to be balanced and considered in making such a change.

Contributions have seen a significant uptick in recent weeks, in part as a sign of support and encouragement for the efforts of the Yearly Meeting in providing leadership in the witness for religious freedom, and the related increase in the visibility of Friends for many.

### **Financial stewardship & Budget planning**

Since we last met in December, I have convened two candid conversations regarding our finances, including both Friends currently serving in financial stewardship roles, as well as

Friends in our yearly meeting with significant and wide-ranging experience in organizational leadership, fundraising, and management. These conversations have affirmed our current direction and have been deeply helpful for seasoning of possible recommendations and plans for the next few years. I hope a more formal proposal for next steps in development and financial sustainability will be ready to come to Permanent Board for discernment in May.

### **Programs: Midwinter, Discernment Discovery Day**

I was blessed to join the midwinter retreat for young adult Friends a couple of weeks ago, held at Woolman Hill. I hope you have an opportunity to read Nia Thomas' brief update on the gathering—it is an exciting glimpse into the condition of many younger adults from across our region who are yearning to grow in their faith through exploring and living as part of Friends meetings and tradition.

As I led programming and participated in conversation with participants, the reorientation and increased intentionality of our programming for young adults in recent years was evident in the shift from a focus on a “community” of those with a long history of participating in retreats toward an exploration, tailored to the life stages and shared experiences of younger adults, of “covenant community” as experienced by early Friends, and as we are invited to (re)discover in our lives together as part of our meetings. I am encouraged by the searching, wrestling, curiosity, and deep worship I experienced as part of this midwinter retreat, and look forward to more opportunities.

Looking ahead, I am excited to join with many Friends from across our yearly meeting for “Discernment Discovery Day”, a shift from previous “Living Faith” efforts to offer an opportunity for a deepened engagement and exploration of what lies at the heart of Friends' spiritual disciplines of discernment of the Spirit's leading, both personal and corporate. Larger, focused opportunities for spiritual formation and religious education in Friends faith and practice feel to me like another important part of the programming we are offering, and the rhythm of the year in the Yearly Meeting's work supporting the thriving of local meetings.

### **Sessions**

After substantial additional clarifications that have resulted in limiting projected costs for Sessions 2025, and consistent with the approval of the Permanent Board in December, we have signed a contract with UMass Amherst. On the day before we meet, (Friday 2/28) Sessions planners and staff will visit UMass for a walkthrough. I will give a brief update on where we are now, and some related matters, at our meeting.

### **Quarterly meetings, meeting leader calls, and more**

I am joyfully encouraged by the strong participation and evident fruits of our continuing monthly Zoom calls for Friends in servant leadership roles in their local meetings. A recent call had more than 50 connections, several with multiple people attending. This practice, sustained with intention and care after its beginnings in 2020 at the threshold of the pandemic, continues to offer nourishment, companionship, resources, and affirmation to Friends across our yearly meeting, and help cultivate our ongoing conversations about servant leadership in Friends

tradition. These events are remarked upon with wonder and admiration by Friends from many other yearly meetings; we have been given a treasure in this sustained channel for life-giving connections, and I hope we will continue to tend and steward this important ministry of the Yearly Meeting.

Similarly, I am energized and appreciative of the intentional and steady work being led by our Permanent Board Clerk Susan Davies, Ministry & Counsel Clerk Carl Williams, and Accompaniment Clerk Sarah Gant in convening conversations among Friends serving as clerks or otherwise tending to the wellbeing of our quarterly meetings. I am especially excited by the evidence of nourishing connections among these Friends, the companionship I see being offered, and the willingness of many of these Friends to identify ways in which the wider Yearly Meeting can offer support to their service, and through them, to their quarterly meetings. One concrete fruit of these conversations is the provision (or availability), through the Yearly Meeting, of online file storage, email accounts, and Zoom accounts for each quarter.

In this, I am grateful to see the capacities we have built as a yearly meeting in recent years providing direct support to Friends serving their quarters, and I look forward to further ways we will discover synergies and collaborations in the time to come. Quarterly meetings play—and can play—a vital role in the nurture of Friends and Friends Meetings, and it is good to make more visible and tangible the partnership between those serving from the perspective of the yearly meeting and quarterly meetings in this time of turbulence and transformation.

I also want to share an exciting growing edge: We were invited to write a letter of support for an in-process grant application from Earlham School of Religion's Quaker Leadership Center, for what promises to be an exciting collaboration among yearly meetings to invest in leadership development and nurture of gifts in our yearly meetings in the coming years. This, coupled with the dynamic work Nia Thomas is doing with the Quaker Leadership Center (as part of the advisory board) is a sign of the appreciation many Friends feel for our Yearly Meeting's active encouragement of Friends more widely, and an example of the gifts available when we remember ourselves as part of a worldwide community of faith and service, learning and growing together.

In the Light that shows us the Way,



Noah

Noah Merrill  
Secretary  
New England Yearly Meeting of Friends



## Proposal for use of Mosher Book & Tract Funds

March 1, 2025

Consistent with our approved policy, the Office Manager and Yearly Meeting Secretary are bringing to the Permanent Board three recommendations for funding from the Mosher Book & Tract Fund of New England Yearly Meeting.

1. A grant of up to \$500 to support the publication printing, and distribution (to all local meetings of NEYM) of the address given by Lloyd Lee Wilson to Sessions 2024. This work would be done internally, but there are unbudgeted costs that could be helpfully covered by a use these funds.
2. A grant of up to \$1,900 to Maggie Fiori (Portland, ME Friends Meeting) to support the purchase, possible printing, and distribution of copies of her art pamphlet “STOP and *Listen*” a tract exploring the experience and practice of Friends waiting worship. Copies will be mailed to all local meetings, as well as other groups including for the use of each of the youth programs.
3. A grant of \$5,500 to support the urgent publishing and promotion of Brian Drayton’s (Weare, NH Friends Meeting) forthcoming book, “The Gospel in the Anthropocene”. This book has been accepted for publication by Barclay Press, a Quaker publisher in Oregon, but due to funding and other constraints would, without this grant, be delayed for several years. Given the climate and context in which we find ourselves, and the potential usefulness of the articulation of Friends’ message for these times, it seemed appropriate to use Mosher funds to ensure this book can reach a wide audience in a more timely way.

Request for action:

According to our policy, we request that the Permanent Board approve these three grants from the funds available for distribution of up to \$7900 from the Mosher Book and Tract Fund of New England Yearly Meeting, for the purposes described above.

## **Informational Update: Sessions Visioning Process**

February 2025

Submitted by: Nia Thomas, Program Director ([Nia@neym.org](mailto:Nia@neym.org))

### **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.

**Friends Camp**  
**New England Yearly Meeting**  
Fiscal Year 2024 Financial Statements  
Notes from the Treasurer & Camp Director on February 8, 2025

In Fiscal Year 2024, Friends Camp achieved a stable financial outcome, producing a year-end surplus in the general fund of \$16,000. This was about \$14,000 short of the budgeted surplus of \$30,000.

Notable circumstances affecting income:

- Gross tuition was \$13,600 below budget due to a higher-than-average number of late-season cancellations. This shortfall in tuition revenue was mitigated by the fact that we also spent \$12,000 less than planned on camperships and discounts. This resulted in our net tuition being only \$1,600 less than budget.
- Contributions from individuals and monthly meetings lagged approximately \$9,000 behind budget.
- Our grants income was \$11,000 less than budgeted. This was primarily due to a timing issue: grant money that was expected to be received in FY2024 was actually received in FY2023; this contributed to the exceptionally high surplus reported for FY2023.
- On the plus side, our investments performed unusually well in Fiscal Year 2024, outpacing expectations by \$21,000. It is important to note that the bulk of this income represents unrealized gains in long-term investments, and is not a cash return.

Overall, gross income was \$2,000 less than budgeted.

Notable circumstances affecting expenses:

- Health, general liability, and workers compensation insurance costs together increased by \$6,100 more than budgeted.
- Food costs continued to increase at a rate higher than general inflation, and outpaced our budgeted amount by \$6,000, even with lower camper attendance than expected.

Overall, expenses were \$12,000 more than budgeted.

Other observations:

In FY2024 we were able to support the Camp Director's paid parental and sabbatical leave, totaling 5 full months, and cover the costs of an acting director, which was a significant achievement for a small organization.

For FY2025 we have slightly reduced our annual development goals, to recognize the COVID-related "bounce" in contributions seems to have passed.

Camp expenses have increased in recent years, most notably in staffing costs, food, and utilities. Many of these costs are fixed, rather than variable, meaning that achieving high enrollment goals is essential to support the ongoing costs of operating Friends Camp. A number of New England

camps are struggling with enrollment recently, and Friends Camp should be aware of this trend. We have adjusted our strategies for waitlists and hiring for Fiscal Year 2025, but still these are important trends to remain aware of. Friends Camp currently budgets for 100% enrollment, which comes with risk.

Friends Camp needs to continue to budget for and achieve operating surpluses in order to have cash available to re-invest in our property. While we do budget for depreciation in accordance with standard accounting principles, we know that this annual amount is an underestimate of true needs; much of our property and buildings pre-date our depreciation schedule! We invested significantly in our physical plant this year, spending more than \$70,000 total on a major health hut renovation and many other property improvements. Consequently, even though we achieved an operating surplus in FY2024, we ended the year with less cash on hand than we started with.

We continue to see a need to establish an endowment fund to provide camperships for Friends Camp and to increase development efforts to make Friends Camp financially sustainable in the long-term; this has already been a major area of focus for the Friends Camp director and committee in the first several months of Fiscal Year 2025.

**Friends Camp**  
**New England Yearly Meeting of Friends**  
**STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES**  
Year Ended September 30, 2024  
Report Jan 21, 2025

	<u>Program</u>	<u>Management and Administration</u>	<u>Fundraising</u>	<u>Total</u>
Compensation	\$ 280,194	\$ 53,948	\$ 5,994	\$ 340,136
Benefits	16,096	\$ 9,152	1,017	26,265
Payroll taxes and fees	23,594	2,529	281	26,404
Contract services	4,145	11,632	-	15,777
Depreciation	40,058	-	-	40,058
Insurance	-	21,724	-	21,724
Miscellaneous	3,641	202	-	3,843
Food, kitchen and laundry	91,153	-	-	91,153
Program and office supplies	9,440	3,921	2,045	15,407
Professional dues and fees	-	11,398	-	11,398
Rent - off-season office	-	2,040	-	2,040
Repairs and maintenance	24,496	-	-	24,496
Utilities	15,507	-	-	15,507
Training	6,580	-	-	6,580
Travel, meals and lodging	13,024	554	62	13,639
Marketing	1,594	1,435	159	3,189
Merchandise	12,266	-	-	12,266
Bank and credit card fees	-	7,487	-	7,487
Total	<u>\$ 541,789</u>	<u>\$ 126,022</u>	<u>\$ 9,558</u>	<u>\$ 677,369</u>
Percentage of total	<u>80.0%</u>	<u>18.6%</u>	<u>1.4%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

**Friends Camp**  
**New England Yearly Meeting of Friends**  
**RESTRICTED FUNDS ACTIVITY**  
Year Ended September 30, 2024  
Report Jan 21, 2025

**Restricted Funds Activity by Fund**

	<u>Beginning Balance</u>	<u>Contributions Received</u>	<u>Released to General Fund</u>	<u>Ending Balance</u>	<u>Net Change</u>
Campership funds:					
General Campership Fund	\$ -	\$ 7,550	\$ (7,550)	\$ -	\$ -
Codman Academy Fund	-	-	-	-	-
One Child at a Time Fund	-	-	-	-	-
Total campership funds	\$ -	\$ 7,550	\$ (7,550)	\$ -	\$ -
Capital Improvement Fund	-	1,250	(1,250)	-	-
Grants	2,305	5,110	(4,061)	3,354	1,049
All restricted funds	\$ 2,305	\$ 13,910	\$ (12,861)	\$ 3,354	\$ 1,049

**Restricted Funds Income by Source**

	<u>Individuals</u>	<u>New England Yearly Meeting</u>	<u>Monthly &amp; Quarterly Mtgs.</u>	<u>Other Organizations</u>	<u>Total</u>
Campership funds:					
General Campership Fund	\$ 7,550	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 7,550
Codman Academy Fund	-	-	-	-	-
One Child at a Time Fund	-	-	-	-	-
Total campership funds	\$ 7,550	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 7,550
Capital Improvement Fund	1,250	-	-	-	1,250
Grants	-	-	-	5,110	5,110
All restricted funds	<u>\$ 8,800</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 5,110</u>	<u>\$ 13,910</u>



**Friends Camp**  
**New England Yearly Meeting of Friends**  
**STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES**  
Year Ended September 30, 2024  
Report Jan 21, 2025

	<u>Without Donor Restrictions</u>	<u>With Donor Restrictions</u>	<u>Total</u>
Program income:			
Tuition and fees:			
Gross tuition and fees	\$ 616,191	\$ -	\$ 616,191
Funded camperships awarded	\$ (7,550)	\$ -	\$ (7,550)
Unfunded camperships awarded	\$ (48,778)	\$ -	\$ (48,778)
Discounts Awarded	(3,530)	-	(3,530)
Net tuition and fees	<u>\$ 556,334</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 556,334</u>
Contributions:			
Individuals	\$ 46,441	\$ 8,800	\$ 55,241
New England Yearly Meeting	4,360	-	4,360
Monthly and Quarterly Meetings	4,353	-	4,353
Grants	-	5,110	5,110
In-kind	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-
Total contributions	<u>\$ 55,154</u>	<u>\$ 13,910</u>	<u>\$ 69,064</u>
Other income:			
Off-season rentals	\$ 27,926	\$ -	\$ 27,926
Merchandise sales	10,835	-	10,835
Other	1,032	-	1,032
Paycheck Protection Program loan forgiveness	-	-	-
Total other income	<u>\$ 39,792</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 39,792</u>
Net interest and investment income	\$ 29,451	\$ -	\$ 29,451
Earnings retained for operations released from restrictions:			
Camperships	\$ 7,550	\$ (7,550)	
Capital Improvements	1,250	(1,250)	
Grants	4,061	(4,061)	
Total earnings released from restrictions	<u>\$ 12,861</u>	<u>\$ (12,861)</u>	
<b>Total operating income</b>	<u><b>\$ 693,592</b></u>	<u><b>\$ 1,049</b></u>	<u><b>\$ 694,641</b></u>
Expenses:			
Program expenses	\$ 541,789	\$ -	\$ 541,789
Management and administration	126,022	-	126,022

Fundraising	9,558	-	9,558
<b>Total operating expenses</b>	<b>\$ 677,369</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 677,369</b>
<b>Net operating surplus/(deficit)</b>	<b>\$ 16,223</b>	<b>\$ 1,049</b>	<b>\$ 17,272</b>
Property and equipment valuation adjustment	-	-	-
<b>Total increase in earnings retained for operations</b>	<b>16,223</b>	<b>1,049</b>	<b>17,272</b>
Earnings retained for operations, beginning of year	1,690,926	2,305	1,693,231
Adjustment for prior years	-	-	-
Earnings retained for operations, end of year	<u>\$ 1,707,149</u>	<u>\$ 3,354</u>	<u>\$ 1,710,502</u>

**Friends Camp**  
**New England Yearly Meeting of Friends**  
**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION**  
September 30, 2024  
Report Jan 21, 2025

ASSETS

Current assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$	158,438
Accounts receivable		-
Investments		136,144
Total current assets		<u>\$ 294,581</u>
Property and equipment:		
Land and land improvements	\$	576,800
Buildings		1,081,473
Construction in progress		-
Furniture, fixtures and equipment		124,439
Vehicles		8,000
Less accumulated depreciation		<u>(370,683)</u>
Total property and equipment		<u>1,420,029</u>
<b>Total assets</b>		<b><u><u>\$ 1,714,610</u></u></b>

LIABILITIES

Current liabilities:		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$	508
Long-term liabilities:		
Loans payable	\$	-
Reserve for accounting review		3,600
Reserve for director sabbatical or leave		<u>-</u>
Total long-term liabilities		<u>3,600</u>
Total liabilities	\$	4,108

NET ASSETS

Earnings retained for operations:		
Without donor restrictions	\$	1,707,149
With donor restrictions		<u>3,354</u>
Total earnings retained for operations		<u>1,710,502</u>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>		<b><u><u>\$ 1,714,610</u></u></b>

**Friends Camp**  
**New England Yearly Meeting of Friends**  
**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS**  
Year Ended September 30, 2024  
Report Jan 21, 2025

Cash flows from operating activities:	
Increase in earnings retained for operations	\$ 17,272
Adjustments to reconcile increase in earnings retained for operations to net cash provided by operating activities:	
Depreciation	40,058
Valuation adjustment	-
Net realized and unrealized gain/(loss) on investments	(23,352)
Restricted contributions	(13,910)
In-kind contributions	-
Increase in accounts receivable	2,523
Increase in accounts payable	2,185
	<hr/>
Net cash provided by operating activities	24,775
Cash flows from investing activities:	
Net purchase of investments	-
Net additions to property and equipment	(72,272)
	<hr/>
Net cash used by investing activities	(72,272)
Cash flows from financing activities:	
Proceeds from restricted contributions	13,910
	<hr/>
Net cash provided by financing activities	13,910
	<hr/>
Net increase in cash	(33,587)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	192,024
	<hr/>
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year	<u>\$ 158,438</u>

## NEYM Nominating Committee Report to Permanent Board

27 March 2025

This week I discovered over 200 emails that were sent to the Nominating Clerk but hadn't been read. I apologize to everyone for my personal lack of technological understanding, and celebrate with gratitude the multitude of thought and support many Friends have been communicating. In reviewing these emails, it became clear that two people had agreed to serve some time ago, if Permanent Board approves. These nominations follow.

The process for approving nominations by Permanent Board during the year is to send **First Readings** in a written report a week or so in advance of the Permanent Board meeting. Any concerns, questions or affirmations should be communicated immediately to the Nominating Committee clerk at [nominating@neym.org](mailto:nominating@neym.org) or (603)933-2608.

The clerk will follow-up with a nominee to share concerns without naming who brought them forward. The focus will be on the concerns and how they may be addressed. Depending on the outcome of this exchange, the nominee will either be brought forward for second reading at Permanent Board meeting, or withdrawn from the nomination. Depending on the situation, there may be a brief mention of the concerns and response.

The following are all **First Readings**. They will come to the Permanent Board meeting on 1 March for Second Reading and hopefully approval. Please send any concerns (or affirmations) as soon as possible.

### Friends Camp Committee:

**Description of service for Friends Camp Committee:** *The Friends Camp Committee has stewardship of Friends Camp, supporting and facilitating the Camp mission of providing a unique outdoor camp for spiritual, emotional and creative growth. The Yearly Meeting delegates duties and responsibilities for oversight of the camp operation to the Committee. See full PP&C [here](#).*

**Gifts and Skills hoped for in the Friend serving in this role:** *Familiarity with Friends Camp and Quaker principles. Operational experience with business or non-profit organizations, and knowledge of youth and educational development.*

### Friends Camp Committee member – Ben Bingham 2027

Ben's relationship with Friends Camp started in 2011 when he was a camper in the Mott session. Since then, he has served as a volunteer, counselor, and program director. Ben works as a web developer for the Massachusetts Audubon Society. Camp has been a meaningful part of Ben's life, and he's excited to move into this new stage of responsibility with camp governance.

### American Friends Service Committee:

**Description of service for American Friends Service Committee:** *Friends appointed to the AFSC Corporation serve as one channel of communication to and from AFSC. The Corporation meets annually to appoint the AFSC Board, the Friends Relations Committee and Standing Nominating Committee and to hear reports regarding the programmatic work and financial status of the organization.*

**Background on the AFSC representative situation in reference to this nomination:** In April 2025 Becky Steele (Portland), who is currently serving as a rep from NEYM and clerking the AFSC Stewardship Committee, would be released as an NEYM representative to be named as a member to the AFSC corporation at-large. This leaves one vacancy of four on the NEYM representative slate. The continuing Friends are Mark Barker, Hal Weaver and Bob Eaton. In April at the AFSC Corporation meeting, Peter Woodard who is currently an at-large corporation member would step down from the corporation at-large membership and become a NEYM representative, if Friends approve.

**Gifts and Skills hoped for in the Friend serving in this role:** *Knowledge of AFSC program work and experience with peace and justice efforts in the US and internationally. Ability to understand financial reports and willingness to serve as a liaison between AFSC and local, quarterly and yearly meetings.*

### **Representative to AFSC – Peter Woodard (Portland) 2027**

Peter brings a long career in international peacebuilding, mediation and facilitation, and has recently served as clerk of Portland Friends Meeting. Peter has been working with the AFSC in various roles since 1968, and has held international and US-based staff positions intermittently from the 1960s to the 1990s. He has also served multiple terms on the Board, and as a member and/or clerk of various AFSC committees and working groups. Peter currently clerks an AFSC working group on internal dispute resolution procedures, participates in a working group proposing revisions to the Bylaws, and is considering serving on the Strategic Vision Committee.

Faithfully,  
Jacqueline Stillwell  
Clerk, NEYM Nominating Committee  
(603)933-2608 or [nominating@neym.org](mailto:nominating@neym.org)

Nominating Committee members: Sara Smith (Concord), Beth Hansen (Westerly), Chris Gant (Beacon Hill), Tim Lamm (Worcester), Martha Schwoppe (Wellesley), Leslie Manning (Durham)

**Report from Rebecca Leuchak, Providence (RI) Monthly Meeting  
Presiding Clerk of New England Yearly Meeting  
To the Permanent Board, March 1, 2025**

**365<sup>th</sup> Annual Sessions of New England Yearly Meeting, August 1 through 6, 2025**

Since last fall, I have been working with others in planning the scope and shape of our upcoming annual Sessions which will be held for the first time at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, a location at the center of our wide New England region. On Friday our Yearly Meeting Sessions planning team met for an on-site campus visit. The facilities are modern and attractive, perhaps with less of the rural charm of Castleton, but with advantages that promise for a very engaging and dynamic time together. The new site offers new possibilities. And we approach the planning tasks with creative enthusiasm. We went on a walk-through of all the spaces Friends will be using, reviewing the facilities from a perspective of anticipating Friends' needs. And we mapped out the possibilities for engagement of all age groups when we gather on the campus in community.

The Sessions planning team is moving forward also with the Sessions program schedule: the meetings for worship for the purpose of business, memorial meeting, celebrations, worship opportunities, play and rest and refreshment. The request for workshop proposals will come out later this spring and we hope that a menu of rich and timely topics will be offered.

Another joy of my work is my responsibility for inviting our plenary speakers and Bible-half-hour presenter to participate in Sessions. This year's plenary speaker is Gretchen Baker Smith of Westport Meeting, well known and loved by many in our Yearly Meeting. Our Bible-half-hour presenter will be Kirenia Criado Pérez of the Iglesia de los Amigos in Havana, Cuba. Kirenia is director of the Study Center for the Consejo de Iglesias de Cuba and is also on staff at the Centro Memorial Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. To extend our invitation to them, my meetings with these Friends, whether in person or on-line, are more than conversations about logistics. These conversations are deeply grounded in worship, where we explore together how we, as a Yearly Meeting, reside in Spirit and how Spirit moves among us in this time of many challenges. Our invitation to them is to live with us into the realities of our Quaker faith in the now, connect with us in that space, and to bring us what they understand of divine wisdom meant for all of us gathered. In addition to these two speakers, we intend in a continuation of recent tradition, to have a third "musical" plenary invited guest. And I have extended an invitation and will bring you news when that person has confirmed.

I hope to see you all at Sessions this year!

**Our Witness Concerning Religious Freedom**

In keeping with the Yearly Meeting's Policy on Time-Sensitive Public Statements, New England Yearly Meeting partnered with Friends in Philadelphia and Baltimore Yearly Meetings to file a lawsuit challenging new governmental policy changes which would allow immigration enforcement in houses of worship.

This action was taken with necessary timeliness and is an example of holding us all, the body of Friends in New England in the light of Divine guidance. With our own individual share of Light, we form part of the corporate body of all Friends living in connection with each other through the Divine. Our community has since its beginnings aspired to live into action its testimonies of equality, integrity, and peace. The assertion Friends are making together, as living witness to our faith, is that creating conditions that intimidate or prevent Friends—and all people—from gathering with members of their faith communities to share in worship together is a fundamental violation of the freedoms of religion and association guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

I take very seriously my personal responsibility to speak truth to power, but I also have the responsibility to do so as a representative of the beloved community of the Yearly Meeting. There have been times during my tenure as presiding clerk, where I was urged to take action by certain groups within our Yearly Meeting, but after prayerful examination of the spiritual condition of our community, I did not find there a sense of unity for the requested action. In this matter, however, both Noah Merrill and I, along with the members of the Coordinating and Advisory Committee, sensed that the way was clear and the path of action was consonant with the concerns and priorities that Spirit gives NEYM Friends to carry. Noah and I worshipped on this together and then brought it to the Coordinating and Advisory Committee before moving forward.

In this decision, we were very aware that the Yearly Meeting needs to hold our monthly and quarterly meetings in care and provide resources they may need. You will find much on the NEYM website, the regular monthly gatherings of support, and the Accompaniment Group's availability for consultation that can aid you in your local involvement with matters as they may arise.

### **Ex-officio Support of Committees and Working Groups**

Over the past few months, I have also been furthering the Conflict Response work with those Friends you approved at our last Permanent Board meeting. And I continue to attend and support committees and working groups of the Yearly Meeting, including the Right Relationship Resource Group, the Legacy Gift Fund, the Finance Committee, Spiritual Life Listening Group, and the Accompaniment Group.

All of the above brings me back to the appreciation of Friends' faithful service to our community and for our time spent together in our regular meetings of the Permanent Board and in our Annual gathering at Sessions. The vision we share and the seeds of change that we are nurturing, whether in our witness for social justice in this country where so much at risk, for our planet where change is accelerating, for our reimagined Sessions gathering, and our ongoing work of right relationship and working through conflict, these are all opportunities for Spirit to shine. This is fertile ground in which we grow. By coming together may we build ever richer soil for the discernment of right action. May we support each other in being patterns and examples in speaking truth to power. For doing God's work.



To: The Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends  
From: Rebecca Leuchak (Providence (RI) Friends Meeting) Clerk, Coordinating and Advisory Committee  
Re: Report in preparation for the Permanent Board Meeting on March 1, 2025

Since the last full meeting of the Permanent Board, the members of the Coordinating and Advisory Committee gathered for our annual winter work retreat at Thanksgiving Farm in Vassalboro, Maine on January 21 through 23, and met again in February, on our regularly scheduled first Tuesday of the month. We represent the breadth and width of our region and the monthly and quarterly meetings of our Yearly Meeting, and each of us holds aspects of the Yearly Meeting's activities as our specific area of service and attention. This diversity: regional, monthly meeting, and service role, affords us an aggregate and rich perspective on how Spirit is living among Friends in New England. And this range of perspective is engaged actively as we strive to fulfill the purpose of our committee to shepherd the work of the Yearly Meeting in alignment with the core purpose and the priorities articulated by the Yearly Meeting, and to advise and coordinate the various committees, quarterly meeting leadership, staff, and other initiatives within the Yearly Meeting.

We are: Marian Dalton (NEYM treasurer), Susan Davies (clerk of the Permanent Board), Scott Drysdale (clerk of the Finance Committee), Sarah Gant (clerk of the Accompaniment Group), Rebecca Leuchak (clerk of the Coordinating and Advisory Committee and Yearly Meeting presiding clerk), Noah Merrill (Yearly Meeting Secretary), Jackie Stillwell (clerk of the Nominating Committee), Nia Thomas (Yearly Meeting Program Director), Phil Veatch (rising presiding clerk), and Carl Williams (clerk of Ministry and Counsel).

Our work is primarily to support and coordinate the initiatives of the Yearly Meeting and the work of our many committees, working groups, and resource groups. Currently our attention is focused on: the revisioning process for our Annual gathering and the planning for this summer's gathering in August, supporting the evolving structures and work of our Yearly Meeting's Ministry and Counsel, the progress in planning for Yearly Meeting development efforts, the convening and encouragement of quarterly meetings in periodic gatherings, the ongoing work of oversight of our Yearly Meeting finances and the building of a sound annual budget, our youth programs, support of the health and prospering of our monthly meetings, creation of a Conflict Response Team, care for the process of nominations to Yearly Meeting service and concern for the adequate populating of the Nominating Committee in order for it to do its work. We are collaborating with and in the process of reviewing the purposes, procedures and charge of the Right Relationship Resource Group, Earth Care Witness, Puente de Amigos Committee, and the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group.

You will learn more about all of the above as topics of presentation/update/discernment during our time together on Saturday. We have in our Yearly Meeting, as in any complex organism, simultaneous, multifarious, ongoing areas of activity. Spirit is alive and synergistic in it all. Energy is moving in many directions. We are blessed by Spirit with the ongoing fullness of our challenges and the strength of the call to be faithful.

The challenge for Coordinating and Advisory and for all of us who serve in our Yearly Meeting is that ALL of this requires our love and attention. All is interdependent and can (as metal filings attracted by the magnet) compatibly align. The members of the Coordinating and Advisory Committee are keenly aware that in these unpredictable times, our moment so filled with uncertainty and change, it is important to hold to our center, to listen deeply to what Spirit is revealing to us. Our purpose is to bring forth in our community the most propitious avenues for the Divine to work in and through us to bring about a better world.

## **A Memorial Minute for Eden Elizabeth Parker Grace**

“On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

Revelation 22:2 *NRSV*

Eden Grace was a generous, fearless, and profoundly ecumenical public Friend who dedicated her life to a transformative ministry of reconciliation. Eden truly did walk cheerfully over the earth, greeting that of God in everyone she met, listening deeply to them, and sharing in response her Christian faith, progressive values, historical study of Quaker and Christian theology, and unshakeable message of encouragement and love. Consistently and indefatigably, Eden brought her reconciling approach and capability to every organization and challenge.

## **LIFE & EDUCATION**

Eden Parker was born on November 23, 1968 in Cambridge, Massachusetts to Lisa Frederick Parker and Lawrence (Larry) Parker. She and her sister, Wendy, grew up in Concord and Belmont, Mass. She was a resident of Ocean Park, Maine when she died.

In 1991, Eden married James (Jim) Thurston Condict under the care of Beacon Hill Meeting, both adding the surname Grace to their names. They had two sons, Isaiah Grace and Jesse Grace. They also joyfully accepted the invitation for Jim to be a known donor for some dear lesbian friends to become the biological father of M Stefan Walker and Serafina Walker. Later, Achieng Agutu and Justin Campbell each came to live with the Graces as teenagers, and became part of the Grace family along with remaining part of their families of origin. Eden and Jim opened their house in Medford, Mass. to friends who needed temporary housing, and had guests frequently stay with them when they lived in Kenya and Indiana. In Maine, they welcomed both individual guests and Quaker groups for retreats. Eden reveled in entertaining friends and extended family, and found that she was called to the ministry of hospitality.

Eden graduated from Concord Academy in 1986 and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in theater from Brown University in 1992. She received a Masters of Divinity from Episcopal Divinity School in 2001 along with an International Mission and Ecumenism certificate from the Boston Theological Institute. In the fall of 2022, Eden started a PhD program with the University of Birmingham (UK) through the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, intending to write a thesis on "Decolonizing Quaker Mission." From 2020 to 2022, Eden and Jim cared for Eden's mother Lisa at their home in Maine, until Lisa's death from Corticobasal Degeneration. This choice removed Eden from much of her work in public ministry. As her sister Wendy recalls, "It was a huge sacrifice for her, and another example of her incredible generosity and service to those she loved."

# QUAKER JOURNEY

## Beacon Hill Meeting and New England Yearly Meeting

Eden discovered Quakerism at the age of 13, when a school friend brought her along to a First Day School Committee meeting at Cambridge Friends Meeting; that friend remembers that Eden was eager to make a good impression, and dressed up in heels and makeup for the occasion. After participating in the meeting's lively program for middle-school-aged children, Eden became part of the New England Yearly Meeting Young Friends program and remained actively involved in NEYM from then on. Among other roles over her lifetime, she served as co-clerk of the yearly meeting's Young Adult Friends group from 1988 to 1989; as presiding clerk of Permanent Board from 2003 to 2004; and as a member of the New England Yearly Meeting *Faith & Practice* Revision Committee from 2020 until her death in 2023. From 1993 to 1996, Eden joined the NEYM staff as an administrative associate. At NEYM's 2009 annual sessions, she delivered the Bible Half Hour messages, beginning with the themes of Jubilee as rest and restoration, and concluding with Jesus and the prophetic tradition.

During their honeymoon in 1991, Eden and Jim attended the Friends World Committee for Consultation World Conference of Friends in Chavakali, Kenya, where they heard a powerful message from Miriam Were calling on Friends to turn to Christ to heal the divisions among us. This message, supported by other parts of the conference, had a profound impact on Eden and started her on a journey of Christian faith that continued and grew. It was a turning point that set the stage for her subsequent study of theology, passion for Christian unity, and vocation as a Friends' minister.

In 1992, Eden and six other NEYM Young Adult Friends formed the Free Grace Undying Love Full Gospel Quaker Choir Sing and Be Saved, an *a cappella* group that was to become another demonstration of her spiritual gift of kinship. When it came to comfort with singing about Jesus, the members of the choir reflected the full diversity of Friends in New England, but Eden's confidence preaching the Gospel — even before her career as a public Friend was underway — helped the group learn that sometimes Friends could sing words that they couldn't say.

Why and how did this living witness come to encourage and then initiate the ministries of reconciliation for which she is remembered? In many ways, Eden's remarkable witness can be traced to the beginning of her Quaker journey. Not long after joining Beacon Hill Friends Meeting in 1990, she began identifying as a Christian Friend in the heart of this unprogrammed, historically non-Christocentric Quaker meeting — sharing the joy of her growing faith which was not inconsistent with her feminism, her bisexual identity, and her regard and respect for the faith journeys of others, but in fact undergirded and supported these qualities. During the years of Eden's presence in the meeting, she was part of a core of Friends who were both openly gay or bisexual, and also openly Christian. These Friends' solidarity with each other was inextricable from their deep loyalty to the meeting as a whole, and from their care for the exacting traditions

of unprogrammed worship; they were a great light among us, and a source of support to Eden as she began to explore her calling.

Over time, as Eden became recognized as a leader, she drew on her own life and faith as examples of God's power to reconcile. Her courageous witness in each place she called home required sacrifices but yielded rich rewards, as her living testimony to our capacity to be one united Quaker movement kept hearts open to her message in many unlikely places.

Yet even as Eden traveled and her ministry far from Boston deepened, her active relationship with her home meeting dwindled, due to several factors — among them her own uneven care for the regular communication and visits that would have kept her better connected; BHFMs' lack of unity to formally record ministers, which foreclosed this option for Eden and was a source of lasting sorrow for her; and Friends' diminishing ability, in our meeting as in others, to fully staff committees. Nevertheless, there were times when Eden's ministry was a direct and welcomed gift to her home meeting, and also times when BHFMs provided real support to Eden and the Grace family.

## Friends United Meeting

When Beacon Hill Meeting received a letter from another Friends meeting with very different social values, Eden volunteered to help draft a response. This kindled an interest in reconciling differences among Friends, and led her to become involved with Friends United Meeting (FUM). Eden was a member of the FUM General Board from 1993 to 2002, serving on its Finance Committee, contributing to FUM's review and reaffirmation of its ecumenical commitments, and facilitating the creation of the Ecumenical Relations Task Group.

In 2004, Eden and Jim moved with Isaiah and Jesse to Kisumu, Kenya to found FUM's Africa Ministries Office together with John Muhanji as the director. As FUM field staff, Eden had a special heart for the most vulnerable. She was instrumental in establishing the Girl Child Education program in Turkana and Samburu, to enable girls to complete their secondary education and increase their life skills for themselves and their future families, instead of early marriage. When a meeting of Kenyan Quaker leaders was about to be canceled due to post-election violence in 2007, Eden strongly encouraged them instead to meet and repurpose the meeting to discern their response to the violence and resulting trauma. Out of that meeting was born the Friends Church Peace Team, which has since trained thousands of Kenyans in Alternatives to Violence, Healing and Rebuilding our Communities, trauma healing, nonviolent social change, transformative mediation, and more.

Eden closely supervised the administration of the Friends Hospital in Kaimosi and worked with the Friends Lugulu Mission Hospital on building staff housing and other projects. She was an ambassador for FUM throughout East Africa. She worked tirelessly to plan and host mission trips and conferences, and attended to the physical and spiritual needs of foreign visitors to Kenya, she and Jim often hosting them in their home.

From 2013 to 2020 Eden served as FUM's Global Ministries Director based in Richmond, Indiana. In this role, she encouraged and nurtured new leadership in FUM, especially by women, and maintained and expanded FUM's ministry of spiritual renewal and service to marginalized people. One volunteer recalls, "After returning from years in Kenya to her position in global ministry at FUM, Eden developed a compelling vision of the unfolding future of the Religious Society of Friends around the world and in North America especially."

## West Richmond Friends Meeting

When the Graces returned to the U.S. and made Richmond, Indiana their home, they became active in West Richmond Friends Meeting and remained so after they moved to Maine in 2020. Friends there recall that "she had a broad sense of what worship could be... and so she cared for every aspect of meeting for worship at West Richmond. She gave significant vocal ministry, both in prepared messages and out of the silence; she lent her soprano voice to the choir; and she served on our Worship Committee. Particularly in that group, she encouraged us to expect more from ourselves and from God in our time together: to truly seek the presence of the Divine, and not to be satisfied with routine." She gave special support and encouragement to young women exploring a call to ministry, or who might be nudged in that direction, and helped oversee the Richmond Young Friends youth program, in which Jesse found spiritual community and encouragement.

## Ecumenical Eden

### Friends Committee on National Legislation

From 2018 until shortly before her death in 2023, Eden served in governance roles for the Friends Committee on National Legislation, whose work she loved and championed. She is particularly remembered for diving in on a revision of the organization's bylaws, a form of service that became something of an Eden specialty. FCNL's general secretary during this period remembers: "Eden had a spiritual presence, a force of energy that could be both serious and playful — her energy attracted people to her. Eden's love of God and her ability to convey how God loves humans inspired us. She was a woman of faith who made Quaker life more vibrant for all those who knew her."

### Massachusetts Council of Churches

While studying at Episcopal Divinity School, Eden took courses in constructive theology at Andover Newton Theological School, missiology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and an independent study in Orthodox theology at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. Studying at these various schools both resulted from and reinforced her interest in ecumenism.

In the late 1990s, Eden joined the board of the Massachusetts Council of Churches, where she worked with dedication alongside staff and volunteers and studied the history, theory, and practice of the ecumenical movement. This involvement helped open the way for her later involvement with the World Council of Churches.

## World Council of Churches

Eden was an appointed FUM delegate to the World Council of Churches 1998 Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe. In a 2001 keynote address, she described what occurred at the Harare Assembly when 5,000 worshipping Christians from all over the world were gathered under one enormous tent. Tears began to flow "as our bodies moved together, and we were seized by the Holy Spirit" and "we became the body of Christ." Only then came their "baptism by fire" as a fierce thunderstorm began to shake the tent itself. This was Eden's "...point of no return for me on my personal quest for a vision of the reconciled Christian Church." Among the many threads of Eden's life, a bright one connected this transformative experience to her role, years later, as FUM Director of Global Ministries, where her work with Friends in East Africa — who have long struggled with deep cultural, tribal, and theological differences — became a proving ground for her steady, wise, and encouraging leadership. Friends back home in New England, too, were blessed by Eden's powerful encounter in Harare for years afterward through the quality of her participation in Quaker business of all kinds; she never forgot that vision of unity, and was often able, through both silent prayer and spoken ministry, to help those worshipping with her to glimpse it too.

At the Harare Assembly, Eden accepted appointments to the WCC Central Committee (1998-2006) and the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC (1999-2001), where she gained a nuanced understanding of Orthodox ecclesiology and ecumenical concerns. She used this understanding to help negotiate successful resolutions to issues raised by the Orthodox member churches, especially in the areas of worship and decision-making. In decision-making, the WCC had been using Robert's Rules of Order, whereas the Orthodox churches had always used a consensus-based approach. Eden contributed to this work a Quaker perspective on voteless decision-making and helped to shape the final proposal from the Commission for the WCC to adopt a consensus-based process, which was approved at the 2006 WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

At the 2006 Porto Alegre WCC Assembly, and again at the 2013 Assembly in Busan, South Korea, Eden was the minute-taker whose job was to capture the emerging consensus in decision sessions, typing on a computer whose screen was projected on monitors where the thousands of attendees could see every keystroke. In the editing following the sessions she often discussed issues with delegates to formulate clear language for dissenting opinions to the satisfaction of the individuals and churches involved. Sometimes this responsibility required listening and questioning to draw out the nature of the dissent, as well as counseling individuals in distress.

# Influence and Legacy

As one Friend summed up simply, “the gift of her presence was awesome. When you were with Eden, you knew that she was fully present with you and seeing things in you that perhaps you had not yet seen yourself. She taught seekers how to be better seekers, she taught students to be better students, she taught choirs to be better choirs, she taught preachers to be better preachers, she taught leaders to be better leaders.”

One of Eden’s longtime FUM colleagues recalled her personal strengths and challenges: “She was fiercely protective of her family, friends, and anyone vulnerable. She encouraged and empowered women and carried great hopes for the Religious Society of Friends, especially her beloved yearly meeting. Eden was challenged to balance her powerful intellect and personality with her tendency to overwork, sometimes frantically, and could occasionally be unconsciously critical of others. She occasionally described herself as a 'bear' or 'bull' when regretting saying or doing something that others found aggressive. Yet as a mother bear, she was protective — of people, matters of justice, good institutions, and meaningful work. And her bullish side also provided moral courage and strength of personality to make a difference in situations where others might be silent or still.”

Eden was a published author and sought-after speaker who delivered keynote addresses and prepared messages to dozens of gatherings of Friends. Much of this work is preserved online, available to seekers and scholars. Her final publication, *On Earth as it is in Heaven: The Kingdom of God and the Yearning of Creation*, was the basis of the 2019 Swarthmore Lecture, and is a synthesis of many themes from her life’s work: acknowledging the frightening scale of the world’s injustice and need; explaining, with erudition and clarity, the applicability of Friends’ core tenets to today’s challenges; lifting up the examples of diverse other ministers; and above all, calling us to surrender our fear and instead trust utterly, joyfully in God.

Eden’s early spiritual life was nourished by her yearly meeting and the wider world of Quakers. Her gift for leadership and vision were grounded not only in Friends’ practices and traditions, but also in the beloved communities that surrounded her. The values of equity and justice in the testimonies Eden learned and witnessed in all these communities surely influenced the hope expressed in her Ph.D. proposal to “decolonize Quaker mission,” a major piece of work she was just getting started on at the time of her death. She planned to trace the roots of settler colonialism in the Kenya mission and explore how we might strive against the internalized “colonialism” that prevents God’s intended right relationship between people and peoples.

All who had the good fortune to hear Friend Eden’s spoken ministry know that she was a praise giver! In her warm and generous spirit, we, too, say Hallelujah! Thank you, thank you, thank you to the Divine Inspirer who both liberated and guided her to serve.

*Approved by Beacon Hill Friends Meeting, December 15, 2024*

## **Vassalboro Friends Meeting**

### **Memorial Minute for**

#### **James Ramsey**

**November 23, 1946 - October 10, 2020**

Jim Ramsey lived a life in deep alignment with Quaker values. While he was not born a Friend, his early life was surrounded by echoes of Quakerism. That, combined with his own inclinations, drew him deeper and deeper into the community of Friends throughout his life. Jim's life was dedicated to service, peace, learning, teaching, and living with the earth. He was an educator, a writer, a father and husband, a part-time farmer and a low-key mystic. His principles of egalitarianism, creativity, and cross-cultural communication gave him a life of deep meaning. He also loved the Boston Celtics.

Jim was born in 1946 in Wilmington, Ohio. His parents James and Rosa were students at Wilmington College, a Quaker school. Though neither of Jim's parents were Quakers at that time, Rosa came from a family of Friends. Much later in life his father James, would return to Wilmington, attending the unprogrammed Meeting regularly.

Jim grew up mostly in Oxford, Ohio, a small college town that is home to Miami University. Jim always had an orientation toward teaching and education. He was also a passionate athlete, playing football, baseball, golf, and basketball. Throughout his life Jim assessed people not by society's educational, economic, or racial strata, but by the quality of their behavior. The same qualities of kindness and respect that cemented friendships with black playmates and teammates would lead him later in life to embrace people in rural Maine that others might have avoided or judged as beneath them.

A student of the humanities, throughout his life he was interested in literature, philosophy, religion, language, and history. Informed by these studies, and by his own sense of morality, he refused to participate in military training exercises, a requirement at the university. After an extensive application and interview process the university allowed him to take alternatives to the military classes. Three years later, he was classified as a Conscientious Objector by the draft board.

In the turbulent late 1960/70s, when busing was a controversial practice, he supported students of color in Dayton, OH who were subjected to aggression from white students. His efforts to connect in compassionate ways, and to speak out against overt racism, was not easy, and got him fired from teaching in one school.

Jim and his wife Liz, moved to central Maine in 1971. Jim took a job at Skowhegan Junior High as an English teacher, where he would stay for 40 years in various positions. He and



Liz bought a dilapidated, uninsulated farmhouse on 39 acres for \$14,000, where he spent the rest of his life, growing gardens, cutting wood, raising their two children, Caitlin and Ian, and working on the house.

Jim thrived as a teacher, ultimately achieving a master's degree in gifted and talented education. His influence in mentoring students was profound and lifelong, and many former students point to his teaching and high standards as having transformative effects on their lives. They remember him not just for his creative teaching style but because he always took an interest in their mental health and personal lives, riding in an ambulance with a student in crisis, or quietly visiting those who had been institutionalized or incarcerated.

Jim and Liz became members of the Vassalboro Friends Meeting in 1986. He appreciated the unprogrammed and unpretentious nature of the Meeting and found deepening value in Friends principals. He became a trusted mentor, an accepting friend and a supportive presence to many in the Meeting. Among other committees and services to the Meeting, Jim served on Ministry and Counsel, and as Clerk of the Meeting for several years. His kindness and steadfast good-humor, and his impish love of puns was a balm for any stress.

In later years he lived his values by taking part in a peace delegation to the Soviet Union. It changed his life and led to more international travel and activism, for international peace, food support for Africa, and other global concerns. Jim believed fervently that Americans needed to travel more, to appreciate the rest of the world and its differences in more nuanced ways, and to understand how we, as Americans are perceived by other nations. He sought to understand various cultures through their cinema, literature, history and art. He truly believed that there is something beautiful in every country and every culture.

Jim Ramsey's legacy is one of peace, compassion, activism, wacky humor and creative learning. He leaves behind a beautiful family that shares his values, legions of transformed former students, a well-loved acreage, and countless more people whose lives have been touched by his trips, his teaching, and his example.

*This memorial minute was read and approved by Vassalboro Friends Meeting at its Meeting for Business on November 17<sup>th</sup> 2024*

*And*

*Accepted by Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting on February 1, 2025*

VFM Clerk Joann C Austin

VQM Clerk Holly Weedner

Memorial Minute for  
Christopher McCandless  
(September 10, 1946 -- March 22, 2024)

We grieve the loss of our friend, Christopher McCandless, even while we celebrate his presence among us and the ministry he shared with us.

Christopher grew up in an active, devout Quaker family, educated in the practical and the mystical reality of Quaker thought and practice. He helped to build and tend the family homestead in the Eastern Pennsylvania woods, where his family intentionally lived below the poverty line as war tax resisters. Throughout his life, he lived into the importance of family, the importance of community, and the loving presence of the Divine in daily life.

Christopher's life of service began early. In 1965, at eighteen, he helped register voters in the South and supported the building of a community center in Canton, Mississippi, returning in 1967. Those experiences shaped him: he reflected on being schooled there in racial equality, humility, respect and the visceral impacts of white supremacy and its disruption until his final days. A conscientious objector to the Vietnam War, he counseled others about the draft in Chicago and in the Bay Area. He searched for and encountered "that of God" in everyone whose path he crossed. His theology embraced loving others; his vision was of joyful communion. He found a fierce, brilliant, and committed partner in building community in Jean Margaret (Watson) McCandless, his partner in activism, service and leadership for over 55 years. They imparted these values to their children, in turn.

Christopher had many talents. He used those gifts not to bring attention to himself but to bring together community and to celebrate the presence of Spirit in our midst. A pastor among unprogrammed Friends, he ministered to his community, nurturing curiosity, and insistent on the full participation and joy of children, young people and people with disabilities. A mentor to many, he consciously offered a model of gentle, engaged fatherhood. His strong singing voice, his memory and care for the details of our lives, his skills as a carpenter were all fodder for service. He approached clerking yearly meeting sessions or fixing a broken window in the meetinghouse with the same joyful zeal, drawing others into service with him.

Like his father before him, Christopher's witness was to "speak truth and do truth." He was stubborn in his own faith while embracing the differences of understating alive in the Religious Society of Friends. He believed that the Christ Spirit could manifest in anyone, in any place, of any faith tradition, and lived actively into that belief. He was a welcoming, loving presence—often the first person to greet a newcomer to meeting, always eager to enter in deep conversation. He held and freely shared the historic memory of our meeting and the wider world of Friends. His calm, competent manner, his centered presence underlined a love and respect for each of us and for our community.

Christopher asked that his memorial minute might simply read, "he was of some use." We would say more. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Matthew 25:21.

Approved by Burlington Monthly Meeting, 19 May 2024

Accepted by Northwest Quarterly Meeting, June 2, 2024

Jean Margaret McCandless  
(July 26, 1943 - April 27, 2024)

Jean often shared this “Old Quaker Prayer,” adapted from William Penn, with Friends who were grieving:

“We seem to give her back to thee dear Lord, who gavest her to us. Yet as thou didst not lose her in giving, so we have not lost her by her return. For what is thine is ours always; and life is eternal and love is immortal, and what we sometimes call death is only a horizon, and a horizon is nothing but the limit of our sight.”

A fierce advocate for peace and justice, champion of the vulnerable and disadvantaged, skilled therapist, mentor and guide to many individuals and families, coalition and community builder, Jean Margaret McCandless died peacefully at her home across from the meetinghouse in Burlington, Vermont on April 27, 2024.

Born to labor activist Ben Segal and city planner Ruth Urice, Jean was adopted at birth by their friends, educator George Watson and social worker and feminist theologian Elizabeth Grill Watson, newly convinced Quakers who were attracted to the peace and social justice testimonies of Friends. Jean grew up immersed in Quaker thought and action: Elizabeth and George went on to become leading lights of 20<sup>th</sup> century liberal Quakerism, through their writing and activism, leading workshops, traveling, writing and speaking amongst Friends. George became an educational leader at several colleges and universities, including Friends World College, and Elizabeth a respected author and minister.

During Jean’s childhood, the family settled in the majority African-American Hyde Park neighborhood in Chicago, where Jean and her brother John were the only white children in their elementary class. White flight enabled the Watsons to buy Frank Lloyd Wright’s Heller House. The children were taught to tell visitors that the house was ‘the flowering of his prairie style’; they skated on salt down the long hallways, and once spread toothpaste on the banisters. As a conscientious objector during World War II, George’s draft board assigned him alternative service as a janitor in a psychiatric ward, despite the fact that he was a father with three children under age 5. Elizabeth spent the war as a staff member for Jane Addams’ Hull House, modeling engaged community work while of necessity bringing the children with her. Afterward, Elizabeth drew on her experience to offer input into the curriculum, as secretary of the newly formed University of Chicago School of Social Services Administration. Jean later received her Master’s degree there.

Her parents’ lives and work served as patterns and examples to Jean: their commitment to making education broadly accessible, to service, social work, justice--and to ongoing revelation, throughout their lives, to care for all who are children of God. Her early years were steeped in Quaker thought and action, learning the essentials of equality, justice, hospitality and love. The family settled in the majority African-American Hyde Park neighborhood in Chicago, where Jean and her brother were sometimes the only white children in their elementary class. White flight

enabled the Watsons to buy Frank Lloyd Wright's Heller House. The four Watson children were taught to tell admiring visitors that the house was 'the flowering of Wright's Prairie style'; they skated on salt down the long hallways, and once spread toothpaste along the stately banisters. The local chapter of the Committee on Racial Equality gathered in the family's basement.

As a young woman, Jean attended Scattergood Friends School, where she loved to dance and tumble and edited the school paper. She successfully led the campaign to convince her parents to adopt three German sisters, the three Watson sisters' penpals, after the girls were orphaned in their teens. After an English degree from Grinnell College, she obtained her master's in Social Work Administration from University of Chicago School of Social Services Administration. She met Christopher McCandless through their active leadership in Young Friends of North America during the sixties and early seventies, organizing national gatherings and workcamps. Sparks flew, initially over a disagreement on a point of Quaker doctrine and practice. They married in the shadow of the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention's protests.

Jean created beautiful stained glass panels, sometimes installed alongside Christopher's fine woodworking. Some of her work still hangs in her home. With Christopher, she took part in civil disobedience, acting as a marshall in Civil Rights and peace demonstrations, and helping to organize humanitarian aid to North Vietnam, though it was Christopher who helped to deliver Thanksgiving dinner to American Indian Movement members during their occupation of Alcatraz Island. The bond the two formed, the family they created together, grew ever stronger as time passed and they advocated for their children and community.

Much of Jean's calling in the world—her ministry—was in fierce advocacy and service, centering the wellbeing of the marginalized and amplifying their voices and power. Jean worked with children, families and elders for over 60 years. In her professional life she developed and ran statewide programs that supported foster children, the elderly, people with disabilities, farmers and farmworkers. She was stalwart in providing safety, space, and support for those who had been abused or underserved. As the first executive director of the Burlington-area shelter for survivors of intimate partner violence, Jean gave out dragonslayer awards to those who had taken on particularly daunting challenges. She herself insistently integrated creative, trauma-informed approaches to build capacity for self-advocacy and independence, in her own family and in her work.

A tireless coalition-builder, in the last dozen years of her career Jean worked to integrate agricultural medicine into Vermont's system of primary care by creating and leading the Vermont Farm Health and Safety Coalition. She insisted that the Coalition include those serving the wellbeing not just of farmers, but also of farmworkers. That and other cross-fertilizations the coalition fostered broadened and deepened services and safety for those working in Vermont agriculture. The trainings she designed and delivered with nationwide experts inform the backbone of the Milk with Dignity Code of Conduct, an equitable labor code that protects hundreds of Vermont farmworkers each day.

In our Society she worked tirelessly to support children's and adults' learning and inclusion, both in our monthly meeting and in New England Yearly Meeting. She loved our meeting's library, frequently rolling out selections of books before worship to tempt worshipers, as well as being the moving force behind a delightful and expansive Children and Family bookstore at Yearly Meeting Sessions. She served on and clerked many Yearly and Monthly Meeting committees. Whether as Session's clerk, co-coordinating Yearly Meeting anchor groups, sitting on Permanent Board, offering workshops with Christopher throughout the Yearly Meeting on youth and adult religious education, facilitating the inclusion of children with special needs at Sessions, or redistributing Quaker resources in her co-leadership of the Legacy Gift Committee, Jean always had an eye on providing places where Spirit could thrive.

We have an enduring image of Jean's hospitality, even during the pandemic, as her memory was failing. At the close of meeting in the parking lot on cold winter mornings, wool hat pulled snugly, she would be smiling broadly while handing out hot cider and encouraging conversation. As in the Psalm she helped First Day School children to dramatically act out:

If I take the wings of the morning,  
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;  
Even there shall thy hand lead me,  
And thy right hand shall hold me. (Psalm 139:9-10)

We grieve Jean's passing even as the echoes of her presence continue to reverberate. Jean's ministry lives on—in our library, in our First Day School, and whenever we share food and a bit of conversation after worshipping together. We are so grateful for her; we are so blessed. Her passing, so soon after Christopher, reunites their combined energies, restored undimmed in a joyful burst into the universe. May we draw on it to help sustain our own fierce commitments to nurture communities in the service of peace and justice.

Approved Burlington Monthly Meeting, 19 May 2024

Accepted by Northwest Quarterly Meeting, June 2, 2024

Rose Law Miller  
September 8, 1920-June 7, 2021

Rose Law Miller, a beloved and devoted Friend who shone her light of love in the world, died on June 7, 2021; she was one hundred years old. Born in Pullman, Washington, Rose was raised in the Methodist faith, and later came to Quakerism by conviction in 1960. She was a long-time dedicated member of the Radnor Friends Meeting in Villanova, Pennsylvania and was revered by those who knew her.

The decision to leave Radnor Friends and move to Kendal-at-Hanover in New Hampshire was necessitated by her husband Harry's need for long-term care. Rose had grown deeply into her Quaker faith during her time at Radnor and had immersed herself in her community there. The move to Hanover presented challenges as well as opportunities.

Rose's feelings of loss about leaving Radnor Meeting gave way to her innate joy in life and love of people. She allowed the Spirit to open her to that of God in this new spiritual context, in the people, in the interactions, and in this Meeting's journey. Rose gave herself to this opening of spirit, a gift to her and to our Meeting.

This turned out to be an immensely rich time of growing into her new faith community and in turn, being deeply treasured by these new (f)Friends. Rose became a loyal attendee at Hanover Friends Meeting where she participated fully in worship, Meeting for Worship for Business each month, planning for renovations of the Meetinghouse, and other activities. Rose found herself being loved and at the same time loving her new spiritual home. This phase of her life stretched into decades as we were blessed by her longevity.

Rose was a living testimony of the power of love to be equally present in agreement as well as in disagreement. Her honesty and tendency to be outspoken empowered her willingness to address controversy. She listened deeply, and also understood when it was best to yield to the larger sense of truth held by those present. She was influential to many in her warm, welcoming greeting and outreach to those of all ages.

As Rose settled into the community at Kendal, she became increasingly involved in various projects and activities there. She advocated for the inclusion of others and reached out to newcomers and those she did not know well. Her creativity was appreciated as she chose paintings and artwork to decorate the many hallways. In her later years, she became a faithful attendee of the Quaker Worship Group at Kendal. She served as clerk of the Worship Group for a number of years, initiated having Meetings for Business, and always warmly reached out to encourage and welcome new attenders.

Rose's many involvements with progressive political causes are a testimony to her living faith in action and her deep Quaker values, love of justice, commitment to the integrity of women, and her care for the community. She was active in the AFSC-New Hampshire Office, ACLU, Planned Parenthood, and other progressive causes. She "let her life speak" boldly in her many endeavors.

Rose loved her family and often spoke of their whereabouts and involvements. She is survived by her son Todd Miller and his wife Suzanne Gordon, her daughter, Sarah Morenon and husband Pierre, son Bruce Miller and wife, Loraine Michaelson, and five grandchildren and one great grandchild.

We miss Rose's warm, loving nature and the sparkle of light and love in her eyes. She remains close in our hearts.

Approved by Hanover Friends Meeting, July 24, 2022

Accepted by Northwest Quarterly Meeting, September 11, 2022



2025-1-12-1 **Ministry and Council** brings us a memorial minute for our late Friend Rud Ham. Having heard the minute (which is attached to the end of these minutes) we accept it with pleasure and our thanks to Esther Wheeler for preparing it. Our clerk is asked to forward it to the appropriate place.

### Memorial Minute for Rud Ham

Rudman J. Ham was a longtime member of Wellesley Friends Meeting, who served the Meeting as Presiding Clerk at least once, and contributed to the life of the Meeting in countless other ways.

Many words have been used to accurately describe Rud – dignified, wise, gentle, dedicated, warm, and quick with his wonderful sense of humor. He was a conscientious leader. When Rud retired from Children’s Hospital, one of the physicians told him to never let retirement get in the way of his work. Rud’s life demonstrates that he took this advice to heart.

He was born in Dover, New Hampshire on July 22, 1931 to a Quaker family who were members of the Dover monthly meeting. He was a proud alumnus of Westtown School in West Chester PA. After graduating from the University of New Hampshire he registered as a conscientious objector with his draft board. He did his alternative service with the International Volunteer Services (IVS), helping bring livestock and farming assistance to a Kurdish village in Northern Iraq.

He and his wife Ruth (Alden) raised a family of five children in Natick, Massachusetts, spending summers in Wells Maine. Ruth passed away after a long illness in 2000. Subsequently he met and married Judie (Beard) under the care of Wellesley Meeting. He frequently remarked that he had the good fortune to marry two wonderful women.

Rud’s entire professional career was at the Boston Children’s Hospital, where he retired as Vice President of Operations in 1995. He loved to recount how he applied the Quaker principles of consensus to the many projects that he shepherded to completion. During and following his career at Children’s Hospital, Rud took on numerous volunteer leadership responsibilities. Rud was a member of the Fidelity Non-Profit Management Foundation Board from 1979-2015. He was a founder, board member, and the first Chair of the Fidelity Charitable Board, serving from 1991 until 2010. In recognition of his invaluable service, he was named Trustee Emeritus in 2010. Rud served on the board of the Lincoln and Moses Brown Schools in Providence, RI, as a representative of the New England Yearly Meeting. He was a founder of the Board of Trustees for the Fenway High School, a public pilot school in Boston. He also served on the boards of the Martha Eliot and Dimock Community Health Centers in Boston.

Locally he served on the Middlesex Savings Bank Board of Trustees where he established the Middlesex Savings Charitable Foundation. He also served on the boards of the Bacon Free Library, the Foundation for MetroWest (formerly Crossroads Community Foundation) and the Natick Historical Society. Rud was instrumental in starting the Natick Community Organic Farm Advisory Board and served as both a member and Chair. He was previously a member of the Natick Center Associates and The Center for Arts in Natick boards, and served on the Leonard Morse Hospital Building Committee.

During his final illness small groups from Wellesley Meeting gathered weekly to worship with him at the residences that provided his care. Rud passed away quietly at the Mary Ann Morse Nursing Home on Monday, January 24, 2022. Rud woke up that morning singing and in good cheer – exemplifying how he lived his entire life of 90+ years.



Anne E. G. Nydam, Clerk, Wellesley Friends Meeting  
Marty Grundy, Recording Clerk

## **Informational Update: Young Adult Friends Midwinter Retreat**

February 2025

Submitted by: Nia Thomas, Program Director ([Nia@neym.org](mailto:Nia@neym.org))

I write to share the joyful news that our annual midwinter retreat for young adult Friends (ages 18-35) took place this February 14-18 at Woolman Hill Retreat Center in Deerfield, MA.

The retreat was fully enrolled with a participant expected for every available bed at Woolman Hill however after a higher than usual number of last minute cancellations due to a particularly bad flu season, extreme weather conditions, and family emergencies for some Friends, we ended up with a fabulous but smaller than expected group of 30. About one in five registrants were first timers to NEYM events, the majority of whom heard about the retreat from a personal invitation from someone at their meeting. Friends came from twelve meetings across New England, with concentrations of participants from the Boston Area and Western Massachusetts. Care for the gathering was shared across a coordination team of myself, Teen and Outreach Coordinator Collee Williams, and Program Assistant Kenzie Burpee, with many participants taking on key roles such as small group and interest group facilitators. In addition, Tim Dzurilla (Storrs, CT) served as a pastoral care presence and James Golden (Hartford) was our fabulous cook.

The theme was “*a gift to be received: covenant community*” and the program explored how Friends' understanding of the role of community in one's spiritual life is in dialogue with our lives now. Although icy conditions kept some of our guest presenters away, we were grateful to be joined by Abby Fitzpatrick (Northampton, MA) who led the group in an “Elements of Quakerism” style reflection on Tom Gates' Pendle Hill Pamphlet *Members One of Another*. We were also joined by Noah Merrill (Putney, VT) who guided a spacious conversation about how early Friends experiences can offer wisdom to us regarding the cultural tensions we find living into spiritual community today.

In addition to the rich program and time spent in worship, the group spent its evenings in “semi-structured fun” sitting around the woodstoves sharing craft projects, games, songs, poetry, jokes, and even a push-up competition (which I lost).

In closing, I include a cheering group photo and would also like to express our continued gratitude to the dedicated Woolman Hill staff who were hard at work day and night keeping the paths free of ice and snow throughout the weekend-long storm.



Report to meeting 1/15/25

Dear Friends,

The quiet of winter is a good time to stop and consider how things are with us. The farmers have bought their seed for the coming season, and laid out their planting calendar, considering what plots will be planted, and what left fallow, and what experiments or new tasks might best serve the life of the farm organism in the coming year. These annual reports to the meeting can sometimes feel like a similar process of clearing, preparing, sorting, and imagining, on my own small allotment of time and space

Every year I ask myself in prayer, "Does this concern continue, is there life in it?" I believe that it does. As always, I am accountable to you, the meeting. If you see any evidence that my discernment about my calling is wrong, or the gift not being carried faithfully, it is right for you to say so, and guide me in love into a better path.

I am going to excerpt here from last year's report, in characterizing my concern; I don't find any better way of putting it this year:

I understand my calling to be "gospel ministry," and I want to say a little thing about what that means, as I have come to see it. A minister is a servant, who acts under orders, but often must figure out how best to understand and implement those orders, and this (sometimes scary) freedom may grow as the minister's experience grows. A minister of the gospel is one who serves the life of the gospel, which is Immanuel – God with us – in ourselves and others; and calling it "gospel" indicates that this living God is inextricably linked with the character and person of Christ, before, during, and after the revelation in and through Jesus.

While the implications of this commitment are not always obvious or easy to identify, still it does constrain us, because thereby we know that we are seeking to know and live by a spirit whose commandment is love of God and of neighbor, who calls us to a perfection as articulated in, for example, the sermon on the mount, and whose being embraces life and death, joy and suffering, human and non-human, now, in the past, and in the future. The minister's "job" is in support of this search.

Traditionally among Friends, the ministry of the gospel was in prayer and speech, under the immediate guidance of the spirit of Christ. But the work of the ministry as Friends understand it is not in preparation of ideas or messages, nor in "leadership," but in listening and inward travail (travel). From this inward work, ministers may find themselves led into a wide variety of modes of working – in meeting, or in homes, or other settings, drawing near to the witnessing Light of Christ in companionship with others, and acting, speaking, or keeping silent as led. When I open a new travel journal, I copy in these famous words of John Woolman, as a reminder of what the work consists in:

*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 might be in any degree helped forward by my following the leadings of truth among them.*

Well, this has been my intent, my understanding of the work I am called to. Sometimes I have been adequate to it, often not.

### **Looking back**

Writing. Last year, I foresaw continued writing, both on my blog *Amor Vincat* ([amorvincat.wordpress.com](http://amorvincat.wordpress.com)) and in other forms. Although the frequency of posting on *Amor Vincat* has

been slower than in past years, it has continued. I have also revived another blog, *Bloghaunter* (*bloghaunter.wordpress.com*). This originated in an extended series of short pieces on science education and policy, for some projects at my work. The focus includes also related issues (at least issues I think are related), such as public understanding of science, climate change, and related politics and policies.

However, the big project on hand, the last time I reported was a book, *The gospel in the Anthropocene: Letters from a Quaker naturalist*. I felt it was reaching final form, and I was beginning to seek a publisher for it. Since my report, the book (with input from my oversight committee) underwent some more revisions, and I am glad to tell you that I have entered an agreement with Barclay Press which will publish the book this year. Darcy Drayton has been creating a large series of remarkable illustrations for it, designed to support and encourage meditation. Although the project is moving more slowly than I'd wish at the publisher's end, it is moving ahead, and I am trying to do what I can to speed it along.

Along with this report, I will attach some of the introductory pages in case Friends are curious.

Other writing projects have emerged. I contributed to the Winter issue of *Illuminate*, Barclay Press's quarterly Friends Bible study series. The theme for this issue is "Christ in Creation," and I contributed notes and commentary on *Genesis* 1 and *John* 1. I also am writing an introduction for the Yearly Meeting's publication of Lloyd Lee Wilson's address to last year's annual meeting – and I am late getting it done!!

Ministry to ministers. Last year, I also indicated that my concern to encourage ministers continued, both in contacts with individuals and in convening (with Noah Merrill) gatherings for gospel ministers around the yearly meeting. This has borne fruit. We have met roughly quarterly, and moved our location around the yearly meeting, so as to be in reach of the whole territory. In the period of this report, we've gathered at Hanover, Durham, East Sandwich, Hartford, and Putney meetings. These meetings have been welcoming and hospitable to our gatherings, and local meeting members have joined us who might not otherwise have been aware of the opportunity. We meet from mid-morning to mid-afternoon, and the time is spent in worship, in telling each other about how it has been with us since the last time— what we have done in the line of ministry, and what blessings and challenges we have encountered. Over a relaxed lunch time, conversations continue informally and very usefully; and we spend some time in the afternoon in consideration of a topic or two that has seemed of particular interest or importance in the morning session. There is a core of Friends who are typically there, but it is open to anyone who is carrying a sustained concern for vocal ministry, and attenders are encouraged to invite others for whom the gatherings may be appropriate.

Other travel. Finally, I felt an opening to further travel and teaching, as way opened. This also has borne fruit. I have given two workshops on the work of the recording clerk – one for our yearly meeting, and one for New York Quarterly Meeting of NY Yearly Meeting. I have also led two sessions on James Nayler's "last words," at the request of Falmouth QM and of Connecticut Valley QM.

Midweek meditations. I have continued this year with my "midweek meditations," which have been some use to Friends over the past few years.

### **Looking ahead.**

Writing. I am expecting that my book will take up much of my time this spring, at least, as the book is edited and prepared for publication. Moreover, since the book is not intended only for Friends (though it includes some Quaker material, for sure!), I will need to take an active hand in helping the

Press publicize it in circles beyond the Quaker press. When promotional materials are available, I will make sure that all my friends can help spread the word if you want!

I expect to continue writing on my blogs, and though I cannot claim a huge readership, I do find that they are read with interest, and sometimes quoted or passed on, which is encouraging. I also will be considering if there is material accumulating for another book.

The work that I began on an edition of William Dewsbury's works, in which Gordon Bugbeen joined, has been on hold because the *Gospel in the Anthropocene* seemed urgent (and since the election seems even more urgent!) However, this still feels like a live concern, and I hope to return to it this year.

Ministry to ministers. This seems likely to continue this year, as the leading for it continues to have life for me and for Noah.

Travel. I continue to feel that I should be visiting meetings around New England as way opens, so that (as min the Woolman quotation above) *haply I might receive some instruction from them, or they might be in any degree helped forward by my following the leadings of truth among them.*

I also am very open to invitations to lead workshops or retreats on topics from Quaker history or spirituality.

Midweek meditations. These monthly sessions will continue for this year (2024-5) (the theme is "Quaker sermons") and next year (2025-6, drawing from memorial minutes) which I see will be the last in this series.

Personal news that relates to all this. If things go as we foresee, Darcy and I will be putting our house up for sale in late spring/early summer, and (assuming a sale) we will be moving to Massachusetts in early fall. This will be a strenuous project, as you can imagine (involving heart, soul, strength and mind). and will take top priority much of the time. If all goes according to plan, we will be transferring our membership to a meeting near our new home, and my report next fall will be to two meetings – Weare, our spiritual community since 1996, and the next meeting we join.

When we married in 1975, Darcy and I told each other that we would always make our home within the bounds of New England – both because of our love of the land and sea here, and because New England Yearly Meeting has been in many ways "home" for us no matter where we have lived. I am very grateful that we have been able to do this, and it makes the anticipation of this move much less daunting.

Moving to a new meeting, whenever that happens, will require me to reflect on my service to ministry in a fresh context, and so I will be especially grateful for counsel and questions during this transition.

In Christian love your friend,  
Brian Drayton

The gospel in the Anthropocene:

Letters from a Quaker naturalist

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Note: Translations herein are by the author, unless otherwise noted. Translations from the Jewish Scriptures ("Old Testament") and the Apocrypha are from the Septuagint (abbr. LXX), the version most often quoted by the Greek Scriptures ("New Testament"), unless otherwise noted.

## A note to the reader

The ecological, social, and political crises of the Anthropocene are multitudinous and pervasive: They already are affecting every corner of the world, and at every level of organization, though in some cases the effects are barely perceptible.

Your response must grow authentically out of your situation, your worship, your love, and your learning, and according to your measure of preparation and of faithfulness. This book, therefore, is not a "how to" book. It is intended to support, encourage, and perhaps goad you as you pray, observe, and act — and learn from the doing. In writing, I have sought to do my work in such a way as to leave space for you to do your work. I am speaking as a Christian, to other Christians, not to make barriers against those of other faiths or none, but to help individual Christians to see that the challenges of the Anthropocene require us to live up to the gospel of love we profess to follow. But I mind William Penn's comment, based on the confidence that the Spirit we call Christ is at work in all times and places:

*The humble, meek, merciful and just are everywhere of one religion; and when death hath taken off the mask they will know one another, though the divers liveries they wear here make them strangers.<sup>1</sup>*

In what follows, you will find several elements which have grown integrally together. Each needs its own kind of time. You, reader, are similarly a compound — heart, soul, strength (body and action), and mind (knowing and willing). Try to bring each of these in as view-ports and also as sensors in your exploration of these materials.

1. Meditations. These, mostly vignettes from nature or the boundary between human life and the rest of nature, are not optional or superfluous to the message. Indeed, as I suggest below, they are theology, because they reveal God's truth in ways that words can only paraphrase.

Though they are written in words, they will, it is hoped, move beyond words. Sit with each of them first as an exercise of the imagination, in quietness and reverence of mind and body: give them time. Bring to bear all your senses as you enter the scene. Be also alert to responses from your heart (emotional self), your soul (your spiritual commitments), as well as your mind. As with meditation on the words of the Scriptures, try to see the scene from more than one point of view. Do not fret because you do not know all the details. Let ignorance, like reverence, beauty, fear, and delight, be one of the frontiers of wonder.

Make sure not to leave any of these times of meditation without seeking beauty and for love, for these are closely allied with knowing.

When some idea or image arises in your meditation that arrests your attention, stirs emotions or other reactions, sit with that for a while, until you feel released. So does *contemplatio* arise from *meditatio*.

This kind of seeing must be part of our spiritual practice in the Anthropocene, and you are surrounded by an infinite host of materials. So think of these as samples, to which you will add your own.

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<sup>1</sup> and Origen teaches "God is always giving a share of his Spirit to those who are able to partake of him." *Contra Celsum* vi : 70.

2. Drawings. The drawings are additional material for meditation and experience, helping to support the sense of immersion in the world.

3. Letters. I have written a series of letters to you, not a systematic treatise. The introductory letter explains the intent behind them all, and the reason I wrote letters. The "Aphoristic spine" or "Overview of main points," may help make the underlying framework clearer.

In the searching that these letters draw from, I have read things. Short notes about references on particular themes appear at the end; a full bibliography is available on request. In addition, there is an appendix briefly explaining the twin crises of climate change and biological extinctions.

4. Reflections. These are offered as seeds for reflection and discussion privately or in your community, as you seek and follow your own path forward, your own work.

## Overview, or an aphoristic spine: The gospel in a time of desolation

1. The Creation is incarnation; incarnation is revelation, and revelation comes as Nature, as the living Word experienced as the active Holy Spirit, and as words, in Scripture and other reports of encounter with the Holy One, no matter what the language, the faith, or the culture .
2. Life is process, including healing and growth, whether in individual organisms — in body or in spirit — or in communities.
3. Worship is founded on encounter with the divine Presence. In it, we can find an increasing integrity among heart (desire and love), soul, strength (will and action), and mind (will and understanding).
4. The Presence is the love active in creation, transformation, and reconciliation; and it is also the truth and justice that dwell with love; and the suffering that love knows.
5. Encounter with this Presence leads to knowledge, to grief, and the taste of joy, and through them to *metanoia*.
6. We are always acting, taking action, *Metanoia* leads to clearness and whole-heartedness in action.

7. For Christians: If we are in Christ, we are one body, a body with diverse members and always in process. So that each and all can stay attuned to the Presence, gospel community requires embodiment in forms and processes that facilitate that tuning and re-tuning.

8. God in Christ is reconciling the world to Godself, and all creation waits for our reawakening into this wholesome, holy work. We are to participate in heart, soul, strength, and mind. Wonder, and the reverence that follows it, are to be cultivated, as indispensable roots of Christian witness. Wonder, delight at the givenness of the world and each individual, are sources of love, and love sharpens the sight and casts out fear.

9. Reconciliation is a re-ordering of relationship, and a kind of healing. It is thus an intentional, loving, and truthful transformation of understanding and of valuing. Reconciliation with nature and with other humans requires also our own inward reconciliation. This inward work of Christ includes our daily living in the Cross.

10. In this time of desolation, hope *is in, and takes the shape of,* this work of reconciliation. In this choosing of life, we receive power to act or to wait, to forgive and be forgiven, to mourn truthfully, and to discern the springs of joy. How and what we worship give formation for our actions on behalf of life, and bread for the journey. In true worship we can feel the common life that all humans, and all creatures, share, and learn how we may act in love to support that life.

## Meditation<sup>2</sup>: Devil's Hole Pupfish

You move across a semi-arid landscape, sparsely vegetated, punctuated by rocky hills and outcrops. You pull off the road at a sign, and then climb up to an outcrop through warm March mid-day sun, till you reach a simple metal platform, from which you can look down into a cleft in the rocks. There's water a few yards below, much of it shadowed by the steep walls of the cleft. Sunlight happens to fall on a rock shelf that lies about a foot below the surface, about 3 yards wide by 5 yards long; beyond the edge of the shelf the still water is black, the depth unguessable.

On the shelf, there is green algae fuzz, and a few dozen small blue fish, perhaps an inch in length. They do not dart and school, like some little fish do in the sun, but each moves about, foraging for tiny things according to its own preference. Sometimes a fish swims off the rock, and over the depths, but it does not dive, nor stay there long, soon returning to the shelf and the sun.

You are seeing at a glance the entire population of the Devil's Hole pupfish. For them, the landscape, the subterranean water bodies, and the whole supporting earth are focused on the fluctuating conditions of water and sun as experienced on that 15 square yards of rock, suspended over an inhospitable abyss.

Since you do not cast a shadow on their shelf, you don't exist for the pupfish. Though we are ignorant about fishes' mental powers, it is likely that their future, the time beyond sundown, casts no shadow on them, either.

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<sup>2</sup> See appendix N for some suggestions about how to use these meditations

## 1. An introductory letter

Dear friend,

We have entered a time when global warming, the destruction of biological diversity, and other ecological crises are intensifying (and mutually reinforcing) in ways that will make the earth we have always known increasingly hostile to human society and human life. Even though many refuse to accept what's happening, climate anxiety, even despair, are becoming widespread, and young people are especially affected. There is still time to avoid the worst futures, but even the less dire future will be transformational, dismaying, and grievous.

How can we live in this era, the Anthropocene, in durable compassion, prompt in doing well, steady in truth-telling, patient in disorientation or desolation, willing to serve, to wait, to suffer, and to enact mercy? How shall we seek and receive, childlike, what we need to grow towards liberation, and become ever clearer (to ourselves and others) where our hope is founded; ever more aware of and grateful for our place in Creation, and harmony with the Creator?<sup>3</sup> How shall we — you and I — remain spiritually tender in the years that are coming towards us? How shall each of us recognize what action is next called for from us, and how does our acting — and our *way* of acting — draw from and enrich our worship?

We humans are as subject to the laws of nature as any slime-mold, fish, or oak-tree; yet we have fashioned cultural tools that, combined with our great numbers, make us a world-shaping force. Unlike the jet-stream or the landscaping beaver, we know and see in part what we do, and how we choose, and what the consequences may be. In our knowing and

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<sup>3</sup> I use "Creator" and "Creation" to indicate the world as experienced in prayer, poetry, or other states of wonder: direct encounter, with some of its transformations.



choosing, we can feel grief, judgment, and remorse. These can embitter and dishearten, to the point that simple survival in a harsh competition becomes the sole imaginable prize.

The desolation of the Anthropocene is harder to bear as we come to see how we humans have inflicted it on ourselves and others of our kind; across several centuries, we have prepared a different and less welcoming world for future generations of humans and other species, most of which remain unknown. Our culture, despite clear opportunities to take a different path, has helped ensure fear and loss for millions now alive, and millions more to come. If we live in the arrogance of cultural amnesia which is a principal product of our economic system, we will see nothing instructive in wisdom, and in the resources that human experience and memory can offer for times of desolation.

I ask myself, and you: Does your worship, your spiritual practice, equip you to see truths like this, to accept the failure of conventions and systems that have been foundations of your world view? Does it support you in a time of catastrophe to respond reverently, constructively, advisedly, with an enlarged charity? We shall have ever more need of such love!

Though every witness or story teller 'sees' meaning-rich events in their own way, we humans have enough in common that we enjoy or benefit from hearing or seeing what others make of things.

This at least in part is why I am writing to you: I feel compelled to make something out of my experience of the early Anthropocene, in case it may be of help to others. This event, still unfolding and gathering momentum, is so comprehensive and intense, so full of unrealized meanings, as to challenge our minds, our emotions, and our ethics or morality — our decisions and judgments about our doings and our relationships, now and in future. Beyond this, the

Anthropocene and its implications present a disturbing spiritual challenge — and, I have come to believe, a very great spiritual opportunity.

These letters are a report from my response to this challenge. They do not constitute a treatise, but reflect my here-and-there search for the opportunity. I did not seek to create a "how-to" manual, with recommendations for specific actions to take. Rather, as action is urgent, I am concerned to understand how recognizing our calling, and taking action, are today inseparable from becoming a more faithful follower and companion of Christ, alive and teaching among us.

Perhaps if I explain my title you can get a glimpse of me as a companion, my point of view and my intent.

\* \* \* \* \*

*The Anthropocene.* By the middle of the 20th century, human activities began to leave a distinctive signature in the geologic record. The atomic bombs that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki opened this new epoch by initiating our ever-growing radioactive signal. As the century went on, however, the sheer number of individuals, the nature and scale of our environmental impacts, altered almost every aspect of earth's systems. We have worked lasting (and continuing) changes to the land, to atmospheric chemistry, and the distribution and abundance of species. As our use of fossil fuels and of the land altered the earth's temperature regime, the durable ice on seas and land began its march towards effective extinction, weather patterns have begun to change radically; so also the chemistry of oceans and of fresh water.

As I am writing these letters, people on the whole have not changed their behaviors in ways that could prevent the world that supports us from becoming far less hospitable to *Homo sapiens* and many other species that it has been for all of human history so far. It is true that many individuals understand what's happening, and are working to respond, but large-scale action is so far wanting. After all, "behavior" includes politics and policy, commerce and agriculture, and all the other organized activities whose designs include the protection of participants from individual responsibility for negative effects that might be caused (note the use of the verbal voice that might be called "the impersonal of avoided culpability" so common in our public discourse). We have powers now that we cannot really control, and that influence overwhelming natural processes that we hardly understand, like a child that learns to use a match, a sliver of wood that makes a tiny fire, then applies it to light a fuse that will eventually ignite dynamite. We have only a dim idea of what the next few centuries will be like, but science tells us that we have ruled out most comfortable scenarios, and it is very likely that we stand at the dawn of an epoch of upheaval, instability, and impoverishment.

*A Naturalist.* Just as a good cook is led by the flavors, textures, and meaning of food to take an informed interest in their craft, so a naturalist, out of delight and curiosity pays increasingly informed attention to organisms and the lands or seas they inhabit. With this attention, this allowing oneself to be involved, come emotional and spiritual costs. As Aldo Leopold wrote:

One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his

shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise.<sup>4</sup>

I can tell you from my own experience: A naturalist, watching and loving the natural world, holds this anguish alongside the deep, renewing experience that comes from wonder and an engaged curiosity. A naturalist knows, indeed, the complexity of the world, the opening flower, the darting flight of bird and dragonfly, the wonderful contrivances of life and the grandeur of landscapes and heavens — and the dying prey, consumption, decay, the processes of generation and regeneration.

It is part of the naturalist's practice, also, to become familiar with unknowing, with waiting, with anomaly, with being wrong, and these are among the tools needed to riddle through the book of nature.

*The Gospel.* Many who have some awareness of the earth — farmer fisher bird-watcher hiker hunter landscape-painter gardener — are sharing in the dismay, and feeling the wounds in the world. Treebeard speaks for them, for us, when he says, as he takes leave of two representatives of wisdom, , "...the world is changing: I feel it in the water, I feel it in the earth, and I smell it in the air."<sup>5</sup> The wounds and the fear of what is coming are the more bitter in the face of human indifference, misguidedness, and evil that are shaping the dawning epoch. Grief and rage are already abundant fruits of these times, and the burdens are falling most

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<sup>4</sup> *Round River.* New York: Oxford Univ. Press 1993, pg. 165.

<sup>5</sup> In JRR Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, "Many partings."

heavily on the powerless, and on those whose power is not yet come — our children and grandchildren.

To mitigate the worst versions of the Anthropocene will require massive changes from us willy-nilly — changes in expectations, self-image and values, as well as ways of life. But the challenge of living with the world we have reshaped (in our own image?) will require of us resources of mind, emotion, will and orientation. Here is where "gospel" enters the picture.

Now, I know that some people, perhaps including you, will have been put off at first by the word "gospel" in my title, because you belong to another faith community, or to none. Others may take reassurance from it, at least at first; but the gospel is not a comfortable matter, though comfort can be found in it. Both the comfort and the discomfort stem from the demanding constraint of love, the love whose momentum is towards wholeness, hoping "to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself."<sup>6</sup> It is a love that cannot exist apart from truth, and from courage. It means a recognition of woundedness, of failures and of sin, as well as a growing experience of healing and power.

For the gospel is not a *thing*, but a living process, a workshop, a place — God working within us for our liberation, so that we are more and more available to that Spirit whose effects are joy, courage, peace, truth, and the heart and works of compassion. It is the continuing work of creation, and therefore before and beyond any expression in words.

Through it, we come to understand that our own wholeness is not separate from the wholeness of the world. Just as the Anthropocene is an epoch that has to do with the state of the whole earth, not just the human part, so we must recognize that our own wholeness or

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<sup>6</sup> James Nayler *Works* vol 4, pg. 382

liberation is connected with that of the systems we depend on, and have been reshaping. To put it another way, we now need to recognize that Christ's business is not now, and never has been, solely focused on human affairs, (nor only on those who call themselves Christians). The Incarnation gave the cosmic Lord a human face, but God did not thereby cease being Sustainer of Creation.

This realization entered Christian thought and piety from the beginning of the movement, and a central element of Christian apostasy has been the denial of this understanding. Here and there, from time to time, little groups or individual souls have been rooted in that broader understanding, but doctrine and worship have focused almost entirely on the "divine-human" relationship.

Now is the time to reclaim the early insight, the felt knowledge, that the work of Christ in *me, or you*, so intimate and individual, is continuous with the power that created and sustains the cosmos. In so doing we can (must) learn to live in the spirit of love and justice that Christians call the spirit of Christ, in the Anthropocene, which otherwise seems more and more to be an insuperable challenge, for that Spirit is against despair and indifference, or wrath and contention.

*A Quaker.* I am not writing about Quakerism, but as a Quaker I will, from time to time, draw out some discoveries from Quakerism's traditional interpretation of Christian faithfulness, which has been described as "ethical group mysticism," and also as a kind of "nonverbal Christianity." It has led us to some specific practices and understandings of worship and its consequences in community and action that I believe offer resources to these times. Actually,

some of what I write will be as unfamiliar to many Quaker readers as to nonQuakers, and this, I think, is a good thing, if surprise encourages renewal.

Further, if anything I write can encourage open dialogue among groups, or within groups (such as churches or Friends meetings); and if that dialogue opens any one towards a way of living more truthfully, justly, and hopefully in the Anthropocene, I will be very grateful.

Christianity in many forms, including Quakerism, has bred disunity within itself, with other humans, and with the earth; and in its perversions of the gospel has perpetrated great evils. It has thus often shown itself to be anti-Christ. Yet that despised and rejected One continues to call us to acknowledge our derelictions, and come back to our right mind. It is still not too late.

*... so far as [our gracious Creator's] love influences our minds, so far we become interested in his workmanship and feel a desire to take hold of every opportunity to lessen the distresses of the afflicted and increase the happiness of the creation. Here we have a prospect of one common interest from which our own is inseparable — that to turn all the treasures we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives. John Woolman<sup>7</sup>*

**Reflection.** What are you afraid of, when you think of the next 50 years? For what do you grieve? How does your worship relate to these fears and griefs? Does your worship, your spiritual practice, equip you to see truths like this, to accept the failure of conventions and systems that have been foundations of your world view? Does it support you in a time of catastrophe to respond reverently, constructively, advisedly, with an enlarged charity?

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<sup>7</sup> *A Plea for the Poor.* in Moulton, P.P. *Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, OUP 1971 . pg. 241.