

## Committee and Board Reports

### Permanent Board

The members of PB have been nominated, and serve on behalf of all NEYM Friends, to implement the decisions and priorities of the Yearly Meeting as directed by Sessions, when the Yearly Meeting is not in Session. Our work of collective spiritual discernment is dependent upon both our human efforts to fully engage in that work, as well as our individual and collective commitment to Spirit-led discernment and Listening.

Permanent Board's priorities during 2024 and 2025 were:

**Prayerful corporate discernment:** Nurturing a culture of inquiry and Friendly attentiveness towards each other and our differing perspectives, guided by Isaac Penington's words: "The truth will not lose ground by being tried."

**Quarterly Meetings:** Attending to the condition of quarterly meetings and supporting quarterly meeting leaders, with a concern to strengthen, sustain and nourish the spiritual vitality of our tradition, and our spiritual community so that Friends might continue to offer our ministry to the world.

**Development and Endowments:** Nurturing a stable and sustainable material foundation for Yearly Meeting so that Friends might continue to offer our ministry to the world.

**Service, Gifts and Leadings:** Strengthening the nominating process and fostering clarity of purpose among working, resource, research groups and committees in order to be faithful to their charge from NEYM Sessions; staying informed, supporting and guiding those carrying out charges from NEYM Sessions; attentiveness to the faithful work of those traveling in the ministry for NEYM, hearing their reports, and holding their service in prayer.

**Sessions Visioning 2026 and beyond:** Staying well-informed and supporting the work of planning and executing Sessions Visioning throughout NEYM during 2024 and 2025; being mindful of why NEYM Sessions needs to be re-envisioned, the impacts of change, and the opportunities presented.

**Friends Camp:** Attending to the work of the Friends Camp Committee and the Camp Director to support a faithful, stable and financially sustainable camp experience, approving the initiation of a 30-year limited endowment fund for Friends Camp camper-ships

Our work together is aided by knowing each other, so occasional informal gatherings of the Board have offered the opportunity for dialogue that is free from the discernment pressure to approve decisions for YM. These Zoom gatherings occurred in October and February. PB has also convened gatherings of quarterly

meeting leaders to foster peer to peer relationships among qm clerks and to offer opportunities to hear where the Life is moving within the quarters, their constituent monthly meetings, and throughout the YM.

By the May 2025 PB meeting, PB members also received 17 memorial minutes for approval to send to Sessions, with an additional 5 approved at the Called PB meeting in July 2025. This is tender work as we reflect on the extraordinary blessings showered on the world through the lives of these Friends who have died. May we strive to let our lives speak as faithfully and eloquently as they have.

—SUSAN DAVIES, CLERK, PERMANENT BOARD

### Archives & Historical Records

Early this year the Committee completed a set of guidelines for local meetings on retention and destruction of records. These were posted on the Yearly Meeting website. In March we held an online workshop to review the guidelines, attended by about 30 Friends.

The Committee worked with Danielle Kovacs at the UMass Amherst Library to review and update our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to provide more clarity regarding types of access to sensitive material and issues surrounding access to digital records. A revised MOU was approved by Permanent Board in May 2025.

The Committee assisted Danielle Kovacs and Tamar Gaydos to clarify the process for adding Yearly Meeting records to SCUA.

The Committee regularly reviews and supports Tamar Gaydos' work with local meetings and individual Friends, and as our liaison with SCUA.

The Committee also supported the work of the Indigenous Boarding School Research Group, including a joint meeting with SCUA about changing search metadata associated with the records regarding Indigenous tribes and schools. This was follow-up to work done in the summer of 2024 by intern Charlie Barnard.

For future work, we continue to look toward developing a closer relationship with the Maine Historical Society, which holds many records from Maine meetings and statewide committees.

—CAROL FORSYTHE, CLERK

### NEYM Outreach Archivist

Records transfer: Facilitated donation of records from Burlington Friends Meeting, Quaker publication from Caroline Stone to SCUA, records from the McCandless family, and transfer of electronic records from Northampton Meeting. Worked with Weare clerk to donate historical record books (drove them to SCUA).

Support to Meetings: Answered question from Friends' Camp archivist and Burlington Monthly Meeting. Worked with Mt. Toby on restrictions and policies so that they can decide on digital submissions and how to restrict records. Advised a member of Durham meeting about a donation from former Yearly Meeting Presiding Clerk Betsy Muench.

Outreach: Put out a news release of intention to offer a workshop. Created PowerPoint to be given at a workshop on records management and retention. Attended workshop.

Other: Attended presentations online at QSRA in England. Listened to FHA presentation on Indigenous Boarding School project in November.

—TAMARA GAYDOS

### Curator of Collections UMass Libraries (SCUA)

Summary of NEYM collection activities:

- Completed digitization project to scan and describe early meeting minutes of NEYM using funds generously donated by NEYM to support access to the collection. The digitized content was added to Credo, SCUA's digital repository in early 2025. In total, there are now more than 1200 items available via Credo from the NEYM collections.
- Met with the Archives Committee to review and update the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) governing our ongoing partnership.
- Updated all finding aids to reflect recent additions to collections; acquired and ingested digital accessions, communicated with meeting contacts to assist in acquisitions including digitized NEYM Minute books 1945–2011.

—DANIELLE KOVAKS

### Board of Managers

We are pleased to present our Annual Report for the Board of Managers of Investments and Permanent Funds for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025. This year marked a period of increased operational excellence and client growth.

Fiscal Year 2025 included a U.S. Presidential transition that has proven transformative to the stock market. One change that impacts the Board of Manager's role is the reduced ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) and DEI reporting requirements for public companies. The Board of Manager's adapted our core responsibility of corporate reviews to include a more data-centric approach. The changes have given us the ability to be more thorough and precise in our research despite the reduction of publicly available information. Additionally, we continue to enhance the operational and administrative aspects of the Pool, which have brought consistent and timely statement delivery, valuations, distributions and cashflows.

The Pooled Fund is a professionally managed investment fund which NEYM supports and makes available to its member meetings and other Quaker or Quaker-

like tax exempt organizations. As of March 31, 2025, 37 meetings and Quaker based organizations have total investments of \$12,960,053.12 in accounts ranging from under \$10,000 to over \$1,000,000.

In Fiscal Year 2025, ending on third month 31, 2025, annual income distributed to constituents from the Pooled Funds was \$0.017468 per unit paid in monthly installments for an annual distribution of 3.95%. The unit value decreased from \$5.311172 to \$5.3029, or -0.16% over the year. When combined with the distributions this resulted in a total return of 3.78% for the year. A history of the performance of the Pooled Funds, including income and capital appreciation, is posted with this report at <https://neym.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/FY25%20Annual%20Report-NEYM%20Board%20of%20Managers.pdf>.

Income distribution is based on a 3-year average unit value, so the distribution for FY2026 (April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026) will decrease slightly to \$0.206338 per unit. It will be paid at a rate of \$0.017195 per unit each month.

Total expenses during the fiscal year amounted to \$118,759, or 0.87% of the value of the fund at the beginning of the year.

For the benefit of the constituents, the Board of Managers manages the portfolio to provide income for our constituents and competitive appreciation in the value of the investment.

The Board achieves this by investing in companies whose businesses are aligned with Quaker values. The Board seeks companies that are making a positive contribution to the world's need for goods and services and are providing work in a healthy, equal-opportunity environment. Furthermore, the Board of Managers avoids investments that are inconsistent with Friends' testimonies, including companies that depend upon war materials, alcoholic beverages, tobacco or gambling, and companies that conduct unfair employment practices or pollute the environment. The policies and procedures are described in the Board of Manager Investment Guidelines & Procedures page which is available online at: [neym.org/board-managers-investment-guidelines-procedures](https://neym.org/board-managers-investment-guidelines-procedures).

The Board of Managers reviews each company proposed by the deBurlo Group, our financial advisor, prior to purchase based on these principles. All holdings (including preferred stocks and bonds) held in the portfolio are re-screened when data indicates a movement away from core Quaker values to ensure continued suitability.

The Board remains committed to investing a portion (approximately 2%) of the Pooled Funds in locally controlled community development funds throughout the New England states. These investments support affordable housing, small businesses, community facilities, education, farms, and fisheries.

—ERIK PHILBROOK, CLERK

## Coordinating and Advisory

The Coordinating and Advisory Committee (C&A) shepherds the work of the Yearly Meeting in alignment with the core purpose and the priorities articulated by the Yearly Meeting. It advises and coordinates the work of the various committees, quarterly meeting leadership, staff, and other initiatives within the Yearly Meeting. The members of this committee hold a particular responsibility to build a culture of inclusive and sustainable leadership development. The Committee holds close to our collective heart(s) the condition of the whole body of Friends in New England.

Made up of various leadership positions, C&A takes on work as requested by the Permanent Board (PB) or Sessions and may, based on our discernment, bring concerns or proposals to PB. It is important to note that C&A has no independent authority to make important decisions or policy changes. In our work we support each other, providing an opportunity to share our joys and concerns, to give feedback and encouragement. Underlying all that we do is our commitment to listening for the guidance of Spirit, the divine grounding which, when profoundly present, gives us the strength to engage in this challenging work. There is substantial synergy between service domains of the Yearly Meeting that is supported through communication among members of the Committee. The group often functions as a sounding board for creative responses to concerns that arise in the body of New England Friends.

Current committee membership includes: presiding clerk of the Yearly Meeting, clerk of the Permanent Board, clerk of Ministry and Counsel, clerk of the Finance Committee, clerk of the Nominating Committee, clerk of the Accompaniment Group, Yearly Meeting treasurer, Yearly Meeting secretary, the Yearly Meeting secretary's supervisor, and the Yearly Meeting program director. C&A meets monthly via Zoom and gathers in person for working retreats three times a year: fall, winter, and late spring.

Some of the shepherding work we engaged in this year:

**Ministry and Counsel:** Ongoing support for the flourishing of initiatives for care of the Yearly Meeting's spiritual health including the unfolding strengths of the Meeting Accompaniment Group and the formation of the Ministry and Elders Group. We provide encouragement and a sounding board for planning events such as the Meeting for Listening Day and the Day of Discernment, which afford Friends the opportunity to share our understandings of, and aspirations for, our faith community.

**Fiscal priorities and drafting of the Annual Budget:** This is a standing responsibility to support the Finance Committee and Yearly Meeting treasurer in their work and in gathering input on what Friends

consider to be priorities with potential impact on the budget.

**Development initiatives:** Overall concerns for fiscal prudence and responsibility have necessitated creative thinking about the stewardship of the organization through sustainable, creative ways of fund raising. The Committee supports the efforts of our Secretary and advisors in this work.

**Purposes and procedures:** Another standing responsibility of C&A is the periodic review of the purpose, procedures and composition documents of each of the standing committees of Yearly Meeting, as charged by Sessions minute 2019-46. Some of the committees whose Purposes, Procedures, and Composition have been reviewed fit well with the current needs of the YM and need only minor adjustments. A few other committees have needed more time to reflect on how their PP&C can responsibly meet the changing needs of our yearly meeting in these times. C&A recognizes that some committees are standing groups that support overall administrative work of the Yearly meeting, while others hold responsibility for serving and supporting the monthly and quarterly meetings and Yearly Meeting as these communities engage with and witness to specific concerns of peace and social justice.

**Permanent Board:** C&A works closely with this body to improve coordination of our responsibilities with the priorities and needs of the Permanent Board. We have witnessed an increasing sense of working together and enthusiasm for mutual support towards our common vision and goals. Communication between these bodies is increasingly more open and coordinated to the benefit of the Yearly meeting, local meetings, and quarters. Together we have explored how in our faith community, as a working partnership, we can be an example and witness of Spirit at work in the world.

**Nominating:** We recognize the vital role of this committee within the Yearly Meeting in helping us all live into our vision. We are keenly aware of how substantial volunteer service is essential for the health of our faith community. Friends who step in to help, connect and enrich us and strengthen our community. And by their efforts, Friends make an impact and expand the reach and effectiveness of our corporate witness. C&A is supporting the Nominating Committee as it transitions this year into new leadership. We affirm the Yearly Meeting's commitment to a healthy and faithful nominating process.

**Sessions planning for 2026 and beyond:** Sessions visioning over the past year has been an evolving and broadly consultative process supported by C&A. The process has given Friends in the Yearly Meeting the opportunity to engage with each other in deep discernment and imagining of new forms. The actual planning will move forward thanks to Sessions planners and staff, with continued engagement of C&A, and with clear communication to Friends of the status



of this work. More will be shared during meeting for business this week.

**Witness committees:** Support of current and emerging forms of witness (such as resource groups and mutual support opportunities) continues to be a part of C&A's work. We have had a number of conversations about how witness is (and sometimes is not) supported around the YM. How can our approach to witness better integrate with and build upon the discernment of local and quarterly meetings?

**Quarterly Meetings:** The nurture of the life of Quarterly Meetings through planned gatherings of clerks to share news, resources, and concerns has been a key initiative of the Permanent Board this year which C&A has supported through consultation and advice.

The above is a glimpse of the breadth and scope of the attention and care that the Coordinating and Advisory Committee brings to our Yearly Meeting community. We strive to hold a perspective which is Spiritually grounded and holistic, remaining keenly aware of the need for all Friends of New England Yearly Meeting to discern how and where each of us might lend our assistance in supporting our Quaker community and nurturing the presence of God's infinite love throughout New England and the wider world.

—REBECCA LEUCHAK

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### Faith & Practice Revision

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This year the Faith & Practice Revision Committee welcomed two new members. We are grateful for their fresh energy on the committee. One longtime member retired. Once again, we took time at the beginning of our year to review where we stand with the work still before us. This year we have continued work on a chapter on the meeting as a spiritual community and a chapter on testimony.

In 1999, the Review Committee which recommended the writing of a new Faith & Practice noted the need for an F&P that was descriptive, one that reflected the reality of the Yearly Meeting today rather than an authoritative, prescriptive document. They also noted that we are now largely a yearly meeting of Friends who came to the Society as adults. They fully expected this would mean there would be new topics in both the faith and the practice parts of the book.

We have taken to heart that F&P may be a significant resource for those newer to the faith; the book needs to be both a reference for monthly meetings and an introduction for newer Friends. We have begun work on a new chapter on the meeting as a spiritual community which, through a series of shorter sections—pastoral care, leadership, education, etc.—is intended to help a newer Friend see how the spiritual life of the meeting is tied to the faithfulness of its members and to a sense of community.

In response to a questionnaire the Revision Committee sent out in 2002, many monthly meetings asked for a more thorough discussion of the testimonies. The 1985 F&P does not have a section focused on testimony. In 2008 the Revision committee sent a draft chapter to the monthly meetings titled "The Meaning, Understanding and Use of Testimonies." The monthly meetings were clear that the chapter was not what they were looking for, and the Revision Committee put that draft aside. When we returned to the chapter last year, we worked to respond to the request for a more detailed description of SPICES as testimonies, all the while maintaining the understanding of early Friends that simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and stewardship are the outward manifestations of the fruits of the inward spiritual life. We will be bringing the chapter to Sessions this year for a listening session and sending it on to the monthly meetings in the fall for review.

Our committee remains small, yet we believe our membership reflects the theological diversity among Friends in New England. Our work together is not always easy but always contributes to our spiritual understanding and growth. We trust our chapters embody that seasoned discernment.

PHEBE MCCOSKER, CLERK; MARION ATHEARN, CAROLYN HILLES-PILANT, MAGGIE EDMONDSON, BRUCE NEUMANN, ERIC EDWARDS, ALANA PARKES, ELEANOR GODWAY, SUSAN REILLY, MARGARET HAWTHORN (CO-OPTED)

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### Legacy Gift

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Legacy Gift Committee, grateful for last year's approval to continue our ministry, has spent much of the past year faithfully improving our ability to support witness and ministry among us. Our 11th year was a transition year, taking time to implement the changes approved during Sessions 2024. As the Committee was down to just four members (of nine), we paused our usual grant cycle during the fall of 2024. This spaciousness allowed us to update forms and online documents for the newly combined Witness & Ministry Fund guidelines that now includes supporting meetinghouse projects, revise our purpose and procedures to match approved changes, shift (due to necessity) from co-clerks to a single clerk, and welcome and orient two new committee members. We enjoyed our first in-person meeting since the pandemic this spring, hosted by West Falmouth Friends. New support from Office Manager Sara Hubner is blessedly reducing the administrative load to a sustainable level.

The spring funding season supported the ministry of Virginia Swain's Quaker Reconciliation Leadership Program. Through a Time-Sensitive grant, we helped Gordon Bugbee and Mary Zwirner travel to Oklahoma to further lay the foundations of connection and communication between New England Yearly Meeting and the thirteen Indigenous Tribes and Nations most

directly affected by the Yearly Meeting's involvement in the Indigenous Boarding Schools of the late nineteenth century. We received several moving reports from prior grantees about ministry that was enabled by Legacy Gift Funds.

Is there a Spirit-led witness or ministry calling you? The next full funding cycle deadline is October 19, 2025, for applications up to \$10,000. Time-Sensitive applications for up to \$1,000 are available on a rolling basis. See our NEYM webpage for details and forms.

This was our third year of discerning the disbursement of Bodine-Rustin funds in support of programs that support LGBTQIA+ people. NEYM budgetary reduction of funds going to FUM meant that a smaller amount was redirected to the Bodine-Rustin Fund this year. As there was significantly less money to disburse (only \$201.41 was available, compared to the approximately \$4,000–\$5,000 during the initial two years), we did not request suggestions for recipients. Instead Legacy Gift recommended, and Permanent Board approved, giving all of the funds to just one recipient, an African Friend selected from the list of prior recipients, to receive the total funds available.

Legacy Gift Committee had agreed to shepherd Salem Quarter grant funds for two years through June 2024. As Salem Quarter has not yet resumed, Permanent Board has appointed a small group to explore Legacy Gift shepherding the funds again.

As noted in Sessions minute 2024-47: "One of the strengths of the Legacy Gift Committee's structure has been their ability to support ministries not only financially, but also more holistically and over a longer term, with prayer, accountability, support committees and accompaniment. These ministries have a direct impact on beneficiaries, but also a broader, indirect effect on enlivening the Life of Spirit among us all."

It is inspiring to witness the Divine moving amongst us and be able to help release Friends to faithfulness to their callings. Two seasoned committee members, including the clerk, will be stepping down in August and we'd welcome more members for this joyful work. Might you be led to join us?

—MARY LINK, CLERK

### Meeting Accompaniment Group

Sessions 2022 approved the creation of the Meeting Accompaniment Group to offer prayerful accompaniment and sustained care for the spiritual condition of the monthly meetings and quarters of our communion, one of the functions of Ministry & Counsel.

At the invitation of a monthly meeting clerk or clerk of Ministry & Counsel, members of the Accompaniment Group worship with and attend to the spiritual life and concerns of the body that invites us into this tender work. We are also sometimes asked for specific

resources. Some examples of this since Sessions 2024 include:

- hosting an informational Zoom gathering regarding the Yearly Meeting's participation in a lawsuit contesting changes to policy guidelines related to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) access to "sensitive locations,"
- coordinating administrative support for quarters with the Yearly Meeting office,
- sharing child safety "best practices," and
- facilitating connections among meetings with shared concerns.

Our work begins with awareness through listening. Members of the Accompaniment Group regularly attend the monthly Meeting Leader calls, annual Yearly-Meeting-hosted events including Meeting Care Day and Meeting for Listening, as well as topical gatherings such as Discernment Day and Sessions Visioning. We read all submitted State of Society reports and the newsletters of local meetings. The clerk serves on Yearly Meeting Coordinating and Advisory to regularly update that body on issues engaging our community.

At Sessions 2025, the Accompaniment Group will share, as requested, its three-year report on its service to date and some possible considerations to revise its Purposes, Procedures, and Composition. At our recent retreat, we also reflected on:

- how to respond to what is requested of us while being fully open to listen for what a meeting might more deeply need, and
- whether we have the capacity to worship regularly with every meeting in New England, perhaps in collaboration with the newly forming Ministers and Elders Group, members of Permanent Board, or of Nominating Committee.

Accompaniment Group meets monthly as a whole to hold the spiritual life and good order of our meetings and quarters in prayer and to report on the ongoing work which members of the Group are involved in throughout the months.

We are: members Gretchen Baker-Smith (Westport, Sandwich Quarter); Sarah Gant, Clerk (Beacon Hill, Salem Quarter); Hugh MacArthur (Hanover, Northwest Quarter); Liesa Stamm (Hartford, Connecticut Valley Quarter); Morgan Wilson (Framingham, Salem Quarter); Honor Woodrow (Putney, Northwest Quarter); ex officio members Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk (Providence, Southeast Quarter); Noah Merrill, Secretary (Putney, Northwest Quarter); Carl Williams, M&C Clerk (Plainfield, Northwest Quarter).

—SARAH GANT, CLERK

### Ministry & Counsel

*We need to recapture the sense that we are indeed working with God and to keep our hearts and minds open to his leadings—for he careth for us all and not one of us is in need but he knows. If we keep this attitude*

*of receptive dependence we shall be ready to obey his promptings, we shall become aware of the needs of our fellow members and be prepared in his strength to play our part in helping all our members to find their right place in the life of our Meeting.*—Stephen J. Thorne, 1959 (found in our new Faith and Practice)

Five years ago we came to understand our Ministry and Counsel committee structure was too encumbered to do the work it had been given. Although a number of Friends held deep concerns, at Sessions 2020 we committed to exploring new ways the Yearly Meeting could be served. An experiment. We stood aside from what had become M&C's traditional structure, with its at-large and meeting appointment members and pattern of periodically meeting with lengthy, complex agendas. We started with a number of understandings: that being faithful included listening to God and each other; that even if we didn't know exactly where we would end up, way would open; and that Yearly Meeting's work is to provide support, resources, and connections with and for monthly and quarterly meetings.

And way has, indeed, opened, with the tasks given to the old Ministry and Counsel Committee being taken up in new ways. The Meeting Accompaniment Group is active and faithful in supporting and walking with meeting communities around a number of issues they face. The Ministry and Eldership Group is being named at Sessions this year to support monthly and quarterly meetings in building systems to provide guidance and support Friends' leadings. Pastoral Care is active in connecting our joys and sorrows with each other (if you haven't already, do sign up for the emails!) An annual Meeting for Listening uses our State of Society reports to explore both where we've been and where the growing edges of our faith may be leading us. We have been successful in supporting each other at Sessions. There is a plan for Friends to come together periodically during the year to simply hold the Yearly Meeting in worship.

There have also been new opportunities not connected with our experiment but close in spirit to the old Ministry and Counsel. Some examples are Meeting Care Day, Discovery Day, and the Aging Resources Consultation and Help Program (ARCH). There are exciting, sustained gatherings around gospel ministry and extended worship that have come not from the Yearly Meeting but from Friends' leadings.

Are we done? Certainly not. Have we reached perfection? Absolutely not. Friends, myself included, continue to seek unity in a couple areas. At the same time it feels like the "experiment" stage of the journey is over and we have arrived.

—CARL WILLIAMS, CLERK

## Nominating

Thank you for the opportunity to serve Nominating Committee. The blessings of identifying other's gifts and skills, and encouraging Friends to grow into something new, brings joy to all of us. Each of us does our part to fulfill the vision of New England Yearly Meeting (sessions 2015):

*We envision a growing network of transformative, witnessing local faith communities in the Friends' tradition across New England.*

*New England Yearly Meeting supports and strengthens a vibrant and growing web of monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, and other Friends communities under our care, helping us do together what we cannot do alone. In all our work, we strive to obey the promptings of the Spirit to bring healing, wholeness, and transformation of ourselves and to the world.*

From the Nominating Committee PP&C: "This work includes, in its fullness, understanding the vision of the Yearly Meeting and what is needed to live into it; leadership development and capacity-building; nurturing a culture of healthy evaluation and feedback; and expressing gratitude and recognition for faithful service in its many forms."

What's been happening this past year? We are improving our database to track gifts and skills. We are shepherding a broad network of resource groups, working groups, and teams as well as standing committees and servant leaders. This makes it possible for Friends to serve for specific tasks with varied term lengths. Each opportunity for service includes a job description, current situation, and gifts desired. This specificity supports us when raising up names, and helps individuals seek clearness to serve.

We continue to discover new ways of serving Spirit together. The world around us is changing, each of us is growing and learning, each stage of life has different perspectives and needs with different availability of time & energy. We listen to what works while letting go of what isn't working or could serve in some new way. We do our imperfect best at all times.

What needs attention going forward? Some positions are barely manageable, and some committees are in transition to meet our vision in new ways. In particular we continue to explore new ways to support each other with ministry and witness resources.

Nominating Committee is enormously grateful to Sara Smith, who is ending her term, for her work with our committee, and to NEYM staff for all their support with record keeping, planning events, and introducing new Friends to us to cultivate gifts. We are excited to welcome Sadie Forsythe as our new Clerk. And, a variety of skills are needed for openings on our committee. Might you or someone you know be called to join us?



I am enormously grateful to be connected to all of you, sharing our gifts and reaching for our vision together.

With love and light,

JACQUELINE STILLWELL, DEPARTING CLERK

*A final note from Nominating Committee:*

*Please join us in thanking Jackie Stillwell for her many years of stewarding the work of nominating.*

### **Nurturing Friends Education at Moses Brown School**

For Moses Brown School's Committee on Nurturing Friends Education (NFE), 2024–25 has been a period of strengthened collaboration and deepened relationship with New England Yearly Meeting. NFE's chief work this year involved the following priorities:

- **Moses Brown School Faith and Practice:** The committee oversaw the ongoing development of this document, which is now in draft form.
- **Board Appointment Process:** The NFE collaborated with MB's Governance Committee and the NEYM Nominating Committee and Permanent Board to review and update the process for appointing Friends to the Board of Trustees and Board committees.
- **Envisioning Further Partnership:** in its work to build connections with Friends for future Board service and enrollment in the school, NFE is eager to continue pursuing opportunities for collaboration and outreach.

### **Process and Decisions**

A working group, including representatives from MB's Governance and NFE Committees, NEYM Nominating Committee (Jackie Stillwell and Chris Gant), and the NEYM Presiding Clerk (Rebecca Leuchak), convened to clarify the appointment process, revise recording duties, and identify further opportunities for collaboration.

The working group made the following decisions:

- **Collaborative Nominations:** Moses Brown School and the NEYM Nominating Committee will jointly nominate Friends for service as Trustees and Board committee members.
- **NEYM Approval:** The NEYM's Permanent Board will approve all nominations of Friends for MB service.
- **Recording Duties Clarification:** The bylaws' treatment of recording duties will be clarified, and the Board Recording Clerk position will be renamed Board Secretary. The Secretary's duties will involve overseeing minute-taking, allowing flexibility for school staff to support this work as needed.

### **Strengthening the Relationship between MB and NEYM**

Both organizations recognize the mutual benefit of a stronger relationship. Specific opportunities for connection include:

- **NEYM Sessions Attendance:** Moses Brown will attend NEYM Sessions starting in summer 2025. Head of School Katie Titus will address the Yearly Meeting

during Meeting for Business, and Director of Friends Education Jen McFadden (Providence Monthly Meeting member) and Trustee Val Reishuk (Providence Monthly Meeting member) will lead a workshop on Friends Education at Moses Brown.

- **Quaker Outreach:** Intentional communication efforts will provide Quaker meetings with a clearer understanding of MB's work, fostering relationships and aiming to increase enrollment of Quaker families.
- **Library Privileges:** Yearly Meeting Friends who express interest will have library privileges at Moses Brown.
- **Collaborative Programs:** MB will continue to explore opportunities to partner with NEYM in hosting programs such as the Discernment Discovery Day held at MB in March 2025.

### **Proposed Revision to Charge**

The NFE committee proposes one revision to its charge as outlined in the school's bylaws. The original charge states that the committee exists "to strengthen the Friends faith and practice of Moses Brown School ... ." The school has proposed replacing the word "strengthen" with "support," a change that removes connotations of weakness and affirms the school's current and ongoing commitment to Friends faith and practice. The committee is grateful for the trust, collaboration, and partnership it has built with the Yearly Meeting and looks forward to supporting Friends education together in the coming years.

—JENNIFER MCFADDEN, DIRECTOR OF FRIENDS EDUCATION

### **Moses Brown School Report**

In its second year under Katie Titus's leadership, Moses Brown is planning its next decade of work as a Friends school, guided by our "Lighting the Way" strategic vision. Priorities include: evolving the N-12 curriculum towards a skills-focused, inquiry-based, purpose-driven program that challenges students to become leaders in their own education; supporting teachers through fellowship programs, mid-career sabbaticals, and a master teacher track; and assessing and updating campus infrastructure, with attention to the Field House, Three Oaks fine arts building, and Friends Hall. (See the Moses Brown School website for more information.)

A significant development for Friends education at MB is the draft Faith and Practice document, which has been funded for a second year by the Obadiah Brown Benevolent Fund, and which aims to provide information, inspiration, and guidance for the Moses Brown community. This year's work involved collaboration from MB's Rustin Center for Peace and Belonging, the Committee for Nurturing Friends Education, and numerous faculty, staff, and students. Draft copies will be available for Friends to review at Sessions.

The 2024 election and its aftermath were an opportunity for Moses Brown students and employees to consider the importance of civil discourse. In early fall, all students, employees, and many parents engaged in discussions of how key Quaker beliefs result in com-

mitments to civil discourse, and used a variety of real-world scenarios to discuss how this looks in everyday practice. MB will offer a glimpse into this work as a workshop at Sessions this year.

The establishment of a Student Quaker Life group in middle school provided new opportunities for student leadership. Weekly middle school meetings for worship featured student-authored queries and often included mindfulness and grounding techniques. Student leaders have helped transform the experience of meeting for worship in the middle grades, creating space for engaged reflection through structured practice.

Another highlight is Moses Brown School's selection to host the annual student-run Quaker Youth Leadership Conference (QYLC), where students from Friends schools around the country gather for shared learning, fellowship, and worship. QYLC 2026 will take place on MB's campus January 29–31, and the students in MB's Upper School Quaker Life team have chosen the theme "Creat(iv)e Change" to explore the connections between art, advocacy, and activism. Friends Council on Education and community partners will help develop programs for about 200 guests. New England Friends who are interested in supporting the conference or have suggestions for possible speakers are invited to reach out to Jen McFadden.

The school's Business Office established a working group to recommend guidance for values-centered purchasing. The team's work resulted in queries for discernment around purchases, recommendations for purchasing practices (including bid solicitation) that invite reflection on our testimonies, and ongoing work to consider how our values inform vendor choice.

To learn more about any of this work, please contact Jen McFadden, Director of Friends Education (member, Providence Monthly Meeting) at [jmcfadden@mosesbrown.org](mailto:jmcfadden@mosesbrown.org).

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### Puente de Amigos

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It has been a busy year for the Puente de Amigos Committee. Since Sessions 2024, three delegations have gone to Cuba to visit their sister meetings. In October 2024 a group from Hanover Meeting visited Havana. In February a joint delegation from Dover, Portland, and Durham visited Holguín and Velasco. They also attended Cuba Yearly Meeting in Gibara. In April a group from Framingham and Wellesley visited Puerto Padre and Delicias. These trips have introduced new people from New England to our Friends in Cuba and enlivened the personal connection we have with our Cuban Friends. Each trip delivered desperately needed cash and supplies. All fourteen Quaker churches in Cuba now have solar panels, mostly delivered by New England Friends. These allow Cuban Friends to manage better with the daily electrical blackouts. The groups

also supplied essential medical supplies and over-the-counter medications.

Cuba has lately been experiencing a dire economic situation. There has been 300% inflation in the last few years, and wages and pensions have not kept pace. As a consequence, Cubans generally cannot purchase enough food or fuel unless they have a side business or family in the US who send money. We observed countless small businesses on people's front steps, and in a park in Holguín. The government has come to rely on these small businesses to supply items it cannot provide. The effect has been an increase in economic inequality. At a meeting with Jorge Luis Peña during the April visit, he shared with us information about this socio-economic and political context and how it affects the church which makes ever more important the relationship between our two yearly meetings. For more detail on this, please see the delegation report at [neym.org/news/2025/06/wellesley-and-framingham-friends-visit-cuba](http://neym.org/news/2025/06/wellesley-and-framingham-friends-visit-cuba).

Puente's mission is to enrich each other in spiritual friendship. This was easier when Cubans could visit us. Since 2017 no Cubans have been able to travel to the US; the personal connection relies on visits from the US. We cannot be good friends and ignore the dire economic circumstances in Cuba; they rely on us for funds to improve their decaying buildings and to supply items such as solar panels. We have wealth, and as good friends, we share it.

Technology has made it possible to connect in real time. We chat with each other on WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. We have provided Cuba Yearly Meeting with a VPN connection so that our Cuban Friends can join those in New England on Zoom. There are thoughts about having a shared reading group between meetings and possibly sharing our worship together through Zoom. These are some of the ways we can keep the Bridge alive.

Presently, we await Kirenia Criado's visit to New England to deliver the Bible Half Hours at Sessions. It is our and Cuba Yearly Meeting's hope that her visit will further enliven our connection.

—CAROLYN STONE AND RICHARD LINDO, CO-CLERKS

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### Sessions

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After reviewing feedback from attenders at Sessions 2024, it became clear that our current state of transition has left a great deal of uncertainty among Friends. We've had to say goodbye to Castleton after nearly a decade, trading a sense of familiarity and comfort for a new, unknown space at UMass Amherst. We left Sessions without knowing where we would be in 2025, and there were many opinions on the locations being considered. The Sessions Planning team set to work discerning our theme and speakers for 2025 before we even knew where we would gather. We simultaneously



worked on what our schedule would look like, keeping it mostly similar to previous years, while creatively addressing the need for some changes.

With the clear message that Friends in New England hunger for more opportunities for shared worship, we have worked to find ways to include additional time for Friends to worship together.

For several years, Friends have told us they would like more spaces for informal, casual gatherings. On the UMass campus, there are a number of spaces on campus where Friends can gather for meetings or conversations. The light-filled ballroom where we will gather is lovely, and there are many things about the spaces on campus that I think Friends will appreciate.

The work of the planning team wouldn't be possible without the generosity of those who have volunteered their time to join our meetings, as well as Friends who have stepped into crucial volunteer roles for our time on campus. I'm thankful for the structure put in place by my predecessor Phil Veatch, who has been extremely helpful and supportive as I've taken on this new role. I encourage everyone to consider how you can participate, as all of the advance planning requires people on the ground to make sure it all runs smoothly.

Like Streams in the Desert, we are all coming together to be a part of a larger body; each of us bringing our own thoughts, concerns, hopes, and perspectives. Whether residing on campus, commuting, or joining over Zoom, all are encouraged to join in the work of our Yearly Meeting. I look forward to being together with you.

—KRISTIN WILSON, SESSIONS PLANNING CLERK

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### Youth Ministries

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The committee welcomed Newt Bartletta, Melissa Becce, and Heather Gray as new members, and Nancy Corindia as the new clerk. This committee also includes ex-officio members Nia Thomas (Program Director),

Kara Price (Children & Family Ministries Coordinator), Anna Hopkins (Friends Camp Director), and Collee Williams (Teen and Outreach Ministries Coordinator). A cohesive committee has developed, working in love and light.

The committee's purpose is to support New England Quakers' youth ministries that enable young people to grow into adulthood with a full sense of belonging to both a local circle of Friends and the Yearly Meeting as a whole. The committee encourages ministries which provide a foundation of Quaker faith and experience, fostering an active spiritual life.

There are many ways this is accomplished. This committee is a place of collaboration with local meetings, Friends Camp, and retreats. It continues to use our Listening Project to personally connect with monthly meetings regarding the successes with youth ministry and the challenges they face. Committee members have been reaching out to youth ministries contacts across local meetings. Listening and then sharing these ideas and solutions among Meetings, is the goal and the core work of the committee this year.

Many committee members participate in Local Youth Ministers Supporting Each Other (LYMSE), which are regular video calls facilitated by Kara Price. These calls are a way to begin and continue conversations with youth ministry teachers at monthly meetings. Arising from these calls is another initiative of the committee. We are now exploring a resource library using information shared on these calls.

Growing Edges of Youth Ministries Fund, previously developed, has benefitted projects like John Back's Quaker Learning Queries project for children and youth, and the family retreat at Woolman Hill last May.

Going forward, the committee will continue work on the Listening Project, as a way to plan for interventions next year.

—NANCY CORINDIA, CLERK

## Reports of Representatives to Other Quaker Organizations

### Friends Committee on National Legislation

The FCNL General Committee met in Arlington, VA, on November 13–17, 2024. This was a change from previous years, when the meeting was held in downtown Washington, DC. The theme was, “Advocacy never gives up!”

The Quaker Public Policy Institute portion of the meeting was a lobbying effort on November 13 and 14. FCNL advocates from 35 states met with staff in more than 100 congressional offices. The ask was, “No New Weapons to Israel.”

The FCNL Annual Meeting took place November 15–17. The two major items of business were the approval of a new standing committee structure and the approval of the Legislative Priorities for the 119th Congress. In a departure from past years, the Legislative Priorities were approved on Saturday evening instead of spilling over into the Sunday morning business session. As usual, there were speakers, panels, and opportunities to meet with FCNL lobbyists. We were disappointed that George Lakey, the scheduled keynote speaker, needed to cancel.

FCNL has been running budget deficits and is working to cut expenses. Three ways that this will be done are to reduce staff size, to combine the Quaker Public Policy Institute (which usually occurs before annual meeting) with the Spring Lobby Weekend, and to make the Annual Meetings virtual every other year. Therefore, the Annual Meeting this coming November will be virtual. The following year we expect it to once again be hybrid, with Zoom attendees as well as in-person attendees.

—SCOT DRYSDALE, JOHN FLETCHER, JIM GRACE, SARA SMITH, MATT SOUTHWORTH, AND KAI TELENAR

### Friends General Conference

There are several changes to report this year particularly in personnel. First is the retirement of Vanessa Julye, who has led the Ministry on Racism and been a significant part of the FGC staff for many years. Her position will now be held by Alicia Nance. Another staff change is for Rachel Ernst Stahlhut, who has led the development of the Spiritual Deepening Program for 11 years; she will now be Associate Secretary of Events. While the Spiritual Deepening Program is scaling down, Cai Quirk will continue to add content, communicate with participants and facilitators, and send program evaluations. Rashid Darden, Associate Secretary of Communication and Outreach, sends out weekly emails about FGC programs and events, including news about new titles at Quaker Books. FGC

continues to network with Quakers Religious Education Collaborative (QREC) to support children’s and adult RE.

In 2025 there will be two Gatherings. The first, held in February 1–9, was a totally online Gathering. It was an experiment to see if people who could not attend a weeklong summer gathering would participate. The second Gathering will be YAY (Youth and Young Adults), July 2–6 to be held in Clarkston, Michigan. In 2026 the usual in-person Gathering will be held July 7–12 in Burlington, VT. The Gathering was moved off the holiday weekend and will run from Tuesday through Sunday in an effort to reduce the costs and wear and tear on the staff. There will also be only two plenary speakers. After the 2025 YAY Gathering, Kody Hersh, Youth & Retreat Coordinators, will be leaving FGC and his replacement is Cai Quirk.

General Secretary Barry Crossno and Presiding Clerk Marvin Barnes continue guiding Friends General Conference’s the Volunteer Revitalization “Project” and the Financial Stability of this longtime Quaker organization.

—SALLY FARNETH, REPRESENTATIVE

### Friends World Committee for Consultation

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) builds opportunities not affiliated with any of our Quaker branches for Friends to engage, “tapping into the Spirit which binds us together,” as one New England Friend describes. Another New England Friend shares that FWCC helps her “feel that my own service and struggles are part of a big and beautiful story.”

Seven New England Friends—Jen Newman, Jonathan Vogel-Borne, Judy Goldberger, Marian Baker, Mary Hopkins, Nia Thomas, and Noah Merrill—attended the Americas Section Meeting this past March. The theme was “Building the Future as Way Opens,” drawn from Isaiah 43:19, “Look, I am doing something new! Now it emerges; can you not see it? Yes, I am making a road in the desert and rivers in the wasteland.” (Sound familiar?) We shared and engaged with so many aspects of this theme in plenary, small groups, and individual conversation with Friends from across the United States, Canada, Mexico, Jamaica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Peru. Ask us about our life-changing experiences there!

FWCC offers so many other ways you and your meeting can take part in and be enriched by the global Friends movement, such as:

- Quaker Connect, bringing together two-year cohorts of Friends meetings and churches across the Americas to explore new experiments in faithful community life and more fully live into their unique callings. “When

we shared about what Friends 'back home' were facing, we found we had meaningful wisdom, prayers, and even much needed humor to offer each other," writes Nia Thomas of one cohort meeting. Applications for the 2026–2027 cohort are open! For more information or help applying, visit [quakerconnect.org](https://quakerconnect.org)

- World Quaker Day "Love Your Neighbor" (Gal 5:14) is October 5. For ideas, materials, and opportunities to share: <https://fwcc.world/worldquakerday>
- Traveling? Check out FWCC's Global Map & Directory, find out the dates of Yearly Meeting Sessions, and dwell in other Friends' experience of the spirit through their epistles.
- FWCC's Quaker Glossary is a living, breathing database which supports language interpreters building the bridges on which Friends meet, including NEYM's own Puente de Amigos with Cuba Yearly Meeting.

—JUDITH GOLDBERGER

### Quaker Earthcare Witness

Quaker Earthcare Witness held its annual in-person meeting outside of Albuquerque, New Mexico, in the fall of 2024, which I attended on Zoom, and a spring gathering held on Zoom. My primary connection with QEW has been as a member of the Spiritual Nurturance Committee, which meets monthly to honor the work of the spirit in the ongoing work of the organization.

We are particularly involved in preparations for gatherings; creating queries for worship sharing, insightful passages for contemplation in worship, and holding a worshipful spirit at meetings for worship with attention to business. In those sessions we are represented at the clerks table as support for the clerk and the manner in which business is addressed. We also work in the background to assist anyone that feels hurt or unfairly treated at a QEW session.

Since Keith Runyan took over as General Secretary of QEW, the organization has been infused with his energy. Keith started his tenure driving across much of the US visiting meetings and talking with people. He started weekly Zoom discussion groups, and has moved forward with a variety of initiatives to work with other organizations, with QEW endorsing several petitions for climate action as a result. Keith is currently working on a campaign to defend the Inflation Reduction Act, the largest climate legislation in US history.

Quaker Earthcare Witness publishes a quarterly newsletter, *Befriending Creation*; offers on-line workshops to meetings, groups, or organizations on earth-care topics; and provides mini-grants for earth-friendly projects. Details are available at [quakerearthcare.org](https://quakerearthcare.org).

—CHRISTOPHER HAINES