

## Staff Reports

### Secretary

*The Yearly Meeting Secretary's report will be presented at Sessions, and a text will then be available.*

### Accounts Manager

This year saw the refreshing water of some finished financial projects, offering sustenance for our journey through a transition time in our Sessions plans. Way back in 2020, we received a Group Exemption from the IRS, which was supposed to list member monthly meetings as tax-exempt in the IRS's publicly-accessible databases; but in the chaos of the pandemic, IRS workers seemed to have misplaced the task. Happily, this fall, our indefatigable treasurer Marian Dalton worked with her congressional representative's office to iron out that bureaucratic wrinkle, and our group exemption members are now listed, with new members being updated annually as expected. The other (almost) finished project brought further good news from the IRS, with the processing of most of our Employee Retention Tax Credit claim from the pandemic, adding \$52,667 to our reserves.

Each year, my work sees an annual cycle of closing the books and creating the annual fiscal year financial statements for the previous year in the fall, and then supporting the drafting of the coming year's budget during the winter—the stable work of providing truthful figures in the service of loving action. But this year saw extra work: with the transition of Sessions to UMass and then to a new structure next year, we needed new analyses of Sessions costs and Sessions pricing. And development work this spring involved updating and cleaning our giving data, as well as writing the text for the spring appeal postcard. In the coming year, I will be stepping back from my administrative support of development work, allowing me more time to care for my aging parents and my growing kids; I'm so glad that Elizabeth Hacala is able to take over that important aspect of our shared work.

Our theme this year is “Springs in the Desert,” although the times we live in, and the long haul of rebalancing our finances after reemerging from the pandemic, have left me feeling like Elijah in the wilderness sometimes. Instead of a spring, the angel gave him a simple jar of water. But it was still enough to bring him “forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.”

—FREDERICK MARTIN

### ARCH Coordinator

#### Journeying Together Toward Home

ARCH focuses on mutual accompaniment as newcomers and long-time participants in our groups and workshops explore aging and living with an awareness of death close by.

**End of Life Reflection Group** (monthly online): Participants share their diminishments and deepenings, received with attentive listening. On alternate months we engage in open sharing focused on personal experiences of living with aging and disabilities, or reflecting on death-related readings. The group decides what to read; members lead discussion on some sections.

Previously we read the six Pendle Hill pamphlets focused on death and dying. This year we reflected on a book written by one of our members, *The Light of Evening: Meditations on Growing in Old Age* by Gunilla (Gillan) Norris. Gunilla loved hearing of people's responses to her writing and the rest of us loved her spoken wisdom.

Now we are diving into *A Year to Live*, by Stephen Levine. Levine poses the question, “If you had only one year left to live, what would you do?” It will take as long as it takes to plumb this guide.

Next we plan to read *A Tender Time: Quaker Voices on the End of Life*, released last year by Baltimore Yearly Meeting. One experienced member, Dorothy Grannell, has led three reading groups on this book at her Portland monthly meeting.

We dive deep into an infinite ocean as we listen, talk, and hold one another. Some have become prayer or phone buddies out of this group's connections.

Come join us at 10 a.m. on the second Thursday each month by registering at <https://neym.org/events-calendar/2025/09/end-life-drop-reflection-group>.

#### Workshops

**Advance Planning Series:** Last winter I again presented a 3-part series online on planning for serious illness, death, and remembrance. This was well attended; some participants arrived with their partner or healthcare proxy. The questions from last year's participants led to honing of my materials and a greater focus on Quaker values in making decisions about healthcare and deathcare.

**Summer Sessions:** In my first year as ARCH Coordinator I designed and gave three workshops at Sessions. I intended to simplify my offerings in 2024. Instead I led three workshops and a lunch gathering!

We dressed up in hats, danced in the darkness, wrote our stories, and played a death deck card game.

**Monthly Meetings and Other Gatherings:** We all face the needs of our elderly members and those with health and disability concerns. Among Meeting responsibilities, NEYM's new Faith and Practice chapter on Dying, Death and Bereavement recommends that we encourage advance planning and aid by means of a clearness or support committee for those dying and those grieving. I'm eager to hear how you and your Meeting are facing these grave matters and how I can support you. I would be glad to come to your Meeting to support and strengthen your own mutual accompaniment. Please call/text me at 339-223-3300 or email me at [ARCH@NEYM.org](mailto:ARCH@NEYM.org).

—PATRICIA MULDOON

### Children and Family Ministries Coordinator

Retreats can be calm in the storm, a peculiar community, and as much of a bright light as a dark cocoon. These concepts were also the themes of this year's seasonal retreats for 2nd through 6th graders in Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) and 6th through 8th graders in Junior High Yearly Meeting (JHYM). Each weekend had about 25 JYMers or 15 JHYMers in attendance. This year we welcomed a total of 22 newcomers, half of which have already attended their 2nd or even 3rd retreat. Additionally, we have been blessed with 12 new volunteers between the two programs. A total of 60 children attended at least one of these retreats this year.

Beyond the retreat program, I have enjoyed a couple Saturdays with Quaker children this year. The NEYM mid-year gathering, Discernment Discovery Day, was held in Providence this year. The eight children in attendance played, snacked, discussed discernment, and practiced Quaker process. Then in May the CT Valley Quarterly Meeting hosted 10 children in Storrs, where we explored different types of activism. I look forward to supporting other quarterly meetings in planning and/or staffing the youth programs of regional gatherings as well.

Local youth ministers have continued to hold supportive sessions quarterly on Zoom under the acronym LYMSE for Local Youth Ministers Supporting Each Other. These sessions have spotlighted individual efforts such as a curation of Quakerly story lessons, a play about George Fox, and a collaborative project to generate queries for First Day Schools.

After participating in a visioning session at each retreat program, two virtual visioning sessions for parents and the Yearly Meeting's Visioning Day, I am eager to see what unfolds for the future of Sessions, with respect to the youth program in particular. I'm looking forward to having all the youth programs in one building for Sessions 2025 because it allows me to

be in closer contact with all the volunteers and coordinators who make the program possible, and all the young people who make it worthwhile.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the impact that the political landscape has had on our community this year. Our LGBTQ+ families are saddened and frightened by the concerted efforts to delegitimize transgender identities. Several of our adult volunteers are involved in rapid response teams to local ICE raids. The indignation that they feel for their neighbors is palpable in conversations among staff and I am proud of the example they are setting for our young people. The youth programs continue to be a haven and source of encouragement.

While the future shape of Sessions may be uncertain, the youth programs remain a priority. I am honored to be trusted with that anchor during the winds and waves of these times, blessed to be in the company of such a wise and devoted crew, and grateful to the One who can calm any storm.

—KARA PRICE

### Events Coordinator

Dear Friends,

As we prepare for our upcoming Annual Sessions at the University of Massachusetts, we are poised to gather in a new venue once again. In 2020 we made the sudden pivot to online gatherings and though that was an unexpected change and an unfamiliar setting,, we found new ways to gather together and connect.

Now we are on the doorstep of a meeting at the University of Massachusetts after many years in one setting. This is an exciting opportunity to embrace a new venue while we also work to discern the next shape of Sessions.

Some Friends may be wondering why we made the shift at all when the visioning process is still ongoing. In the end, circumstances made much of the decision for us. During one of my final 2024 pre-Sessions visits to Castleton the conference director shared that the University was starting a program of building refurbishment during the summer. The first building to be taken off line was Castleton Hall, our biggest group of air-conditioned and accessible dorm rooms, as well as the location of our childcare program. Without that building, we simply could not fit on campus.

Looking beyond this year, we find ourselves in a period of uncertainty about the shape of our Annual Sessions. I think most of us acknowledge that deep discernment and continued conversations will be critical in these next steps. As one Friend shared with me at Sessions Visioning Day, we need to let go of the pressure to get everything perfect right off the bat. That perspective gives us the permission to strive, reflect, refine, and be open to where Spirit leads us.

These years of transition present us with opportunities to adjust and refine our approach to worship, fellowship, and learning. Just as a stream in the desert carves its way through the sand, creating a lifeline for those who live near it, our continued discernment around Sessions will create channels and pathways for planning to flow. Hopefully, those currents and streams will lead to a lively and vibrant oasis and nourish all who visit it.

Thank you for embracing the move to the University of Massachusetts as a chance to grow and reflect on who we are as a community. By fostering communication and collaboration, we can shape a future for the New England Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions that resonates with our shared values and inspires us all.

In Light,

—ELIZABETH HACALA

---

### Friends Camp Director

---

Dear Friends,

I am writing to you from my cabin porch in South China, Maine. I hear frogs chirping in the pond and the chatter of camp counselors getting to know each other over ice cream in Big Bird (our camp dining hall). We are in our final preparations for the 73rd season of Friends Camp, and I am personally preparing for my 15th summer spent here. I can feel the magic setting in.

So much of what makes camp magical is simple, and it is the same year after year. It is breakfasts with your buddies, slipping into the cool lake, laughing so hard you lose your breath, the splendor of a Vespers sunset, arms around shoulders at the campfire, and finding your cabin at the end of a trail of glowing path lights.

And yet, creating this simplicity is increasingly complex. Operating Friends Camp requires multiple year-round staff people, intricate online platforms and systems, updated licensing requirements from the State of Maine, increasing demands on our Health Hut, extensive paperwork for accreditation through the American Camp Association, and so much more. As I navigate the busy months of May and June, it is possible for me to get lost in the details of health forms and scheduling for more than 450 campers and 50 staff people. I am grateful for the moments that bring me back to the big picture, like the call I received this afternoon from a former camper parent. This Friend recently met a teenager who “just needs camp” and is facilitating registration, transportation, and tuition for the teen’s family.

This year we have been blessed by increased volunteer participation—Friends throughout New England donated craft materials, cooked and raked at Volunteer Work Weekend, contributed on our Camp Committee and sub-committees, sold t-shirts on check-in day, maintained the Nature Trail at camp, and more. If you

have an idea for how you or your meeting could contribute to our community at Friends Camp, or ways we could collaborate, please reach out to let me know.

There are a number of accomplishments in this past year that stand out in our work at Friends Camp this year. In the face of troubling nationwide immigration policies, we have created an international community with staff from 4 continents. Through our tiered tuition model and additional as-needed camperships, we have provided financial support to about 50% of our camper families. We have established our first ever Campership Endowment Fund and begun accepting contributions.

Among it all, the thing I am most proud of is carving out a place for simplicity in the ever-busier lives of young people, for hope in a time of crisis, and—always—for Love.

With gratitude for all who make camp possible,  
—ANNA HOPKINS BULLER (CAMP DIRECTOR)

---

### Office Manager

---

Many Friends may know that last year I wasn’t able to attend Sessions on campus because I was recovering from several rounds of chemotherapy. I am fine now, and I am looking forward to once again enjoying the family reunion that happens at Sessions. As it turns out, office-managing Sessions from home is just as stressful as being on campus and doesn’t include hugs.

You may not know that Sessions will not end on August 6. Aspects of Sessions continue year-round (especially for Elizabeth Hacala and the planning team). After we go home, I have records to add to the database, tax receipts to send, notes to make for improvements for next year, and the minute book to compile. Before I know it, I’m working with our consultants to get the registration site ready, making changes to forms, updating the website, and compiling the advance documents.

Then of course there’s the year-round work: managing the database and the website, handling correspondence, sending tax receipts, answering phone calls and emails, sending fundraising appeals, editing the monthly newsletter. This year I’ve also collected statistics to aid the Sessions visioning effort, continued work with the Personnel Advisory Group, provided administrative help to the Permanent Board and the Legacy Gift and Nominating committees.

For the coming year, I expect more of the same, but will also be doing more documentation of my job tasks and office procedures, such as data entry standards and website styles that other staff can follow, and showing how to do certain tasks in my absence. I’m also working with Sarah Gant, clerk of the Meeting Accompaniment Group, on a handbook for quarterly meeting clerks.

Speaking of quarterly meetings, during the Sessions visioning process a number of Friends mentioned reviving quarterly meetings as opportunities for fellowship, social connection, and deepening our spiritual lives. I am excited to see the Yearly Meeting increasing work with the quarters, because I believe the quarters can more effectively support their constituent meetings and bring Friends together more frequently for shared work and discernment. Signs of a Stream in the Desert.

My personal Stream has been returning health, with energy and strength slowly rebuilding.

Streams start small. Raindrops gather into rivulets that follow the terrain to form a stream. Smaller streams join to form larger streams, then rivers. In the same way, our individual actions may seem small and insignificant, but the cumulative effect of all of our acts of kindness, of witness, of doing what we can to make our corner of the world a little better? They can change the landscape.

—SARA HUBNER

---

### Program Director

---

“Streams in the desert” is a fitting theme for Friends this year. Recent months remind us that harsh, arid conditions coexist with unexpected signs of life. Similarly, in my role as Program Director, looking out over the landscape of Friends’ activities in our region I see meetings holding challenge, uncertainty, loss, possibility, and renewal all at once.

There have been many refreshing streams this year, flowing through Yearly Meeting events. Last November, Meeting Care Day—a day-long gathering for training and consultation related to various areas of service in our local meetings—was held at Friends School of Portland. Thanks to the outreach and encouragement of Maine and New Hampshire meetings in particular, more than 60 Friends (about 15% of which were new to Yearly Meeting activities) joined for workshops focused on nurturing eldership, pastoral care, financial stewardship, and corporate discernment. As one participant reflected on the value of such events, “Friends are fed by fellowship and being with one another in our bodies, in worship, and in meaningful dialogue”.

The Midwinter Retreat for young adults was also a source of refreshment this year. Filling the beds at our beloved Woolman Hill, we explored the theme A gift to be received: covenant community, reflecting on the tensions and questions in our lives that lie at the intersection of the demands of an individualistic culture and the call towards a faith-based in community. About one in five registrants were first-timers to NEYM events, the majority of whom heard about the retreat through a personal invitation from someone at their meeting.

This spring, an exciting experiment took place. Based on listening to areas of need and interest among Friends, our day-long multigenerational gathering for learning was re-envisioned as Discernment Discovery Day this year. It was powerful to see about 100 Friends across the lifespan gather at Moses Brown School in Providence to explore and share experiences with discernment, both individual and corporate.

This June was our third annual Meeting for Listening, an event centered around lifting up the Life of local meetings, connecting meetings with one another, and aligning Yearly Meeting programs with this Life. Gathering this year in Hartford (with participants via Zoom and clustered in Portland and on Cape Cod as well), Friends explored three interwoven themes: renewal, loss, and “these times”—all under the banner of how Friends are turning towards community in this moment.

This year we also celebrated five years of Meeting Leader Calls, Zoom-based opportunities for Friends serving their local meeting to gather for worship, learning, resource-sharing, and small group conversations. To my joy and amazement, the calls have continued to bring 25 to 60 Friends together each month and it has been a particular blessing to see meetings that have never participated in the past join us this year. If you are carrying responsibilities for the overall health of your meeting, you are invited to join us at 7:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month (except August). To join the list that receives invitations featuring each month’s theme and speakers as well as the resource lists, email me at [nia@neym.org](mailto:nia@neym.org).

Beyond these touchstones of the annual program cycle, there have been special highlights this year. A large chunk of my time was spent supporting a highly participatory process for re-envisioning Sessions, which you can read more about in the Sessions Visioning report in these advance documents or at <https://neym.org/sessions-visioning>. It has also been a blessing to accompany the Youth Ministries Committee in returning with new members after a hiatus, stepping into a Listening Project you can read about in their report. This March, it was a special treat to be able to gather with Friends from across the U.S. as well as Jamaica, El Salvador, Peru, Guatemala, and Bolivia as part of the kick-off retreat for the first cohort of the Quaker Connect program. Quaker Connect is a congregational renewal program offered by Friends World Committee for Consultation Section of the Americas, for which I serve as the evaluation consultant, helping Friends to better understand how renewal happens in Friends meetings and churches. Learn more about the program at [Quakerconnect.org](http://Quakerconnect.org). This is an example not only of how Friends organizations are learning together but also how we are learning to partner on projects. Similarly, in May it was energizing to gather with Friends from across the country at Pendle Hill for



the Quaker Leadership Conference/Quaker Institute, themed Publishers of the Truth, where I gave my first ever plenary talk, speaking on Friends meetings as publishers of Truth.

This also has been a year of growing edges, “rivulets” I watch with hope and excitement. It has been a joy to see that the Yearly Meeting has been able to use our communication and registration channels to support an informal network of Friends carrying concern for Immigration Justice in connecting meaningfully with each other. I hope this model can be used to gather Friends for mutual support and resource-sharing regarding other areas of interest and witness as well. Similarly, it energizes me to see conversations around the health of quarters and more fruitful and intentional partnership between the Yearly Meeting and quarters bubble up with possibility. These both are examples of where there may be “light lifts,” utilizing existing Yearly Meeting architecture and relationships in order to make a significant impact.

In the coming year, I aim to find ways that Yearly Meeting programs can continue to enliven and enhance our living faith among Friends, with a particular focus at this time on reaching out and welcoming seekers, as well as witness and discernment. I wonder: Is there a new stream you are noticing that other Friends may want to know about?

—NIADWYNWEN THOMAS

### Teen and Outreach Ministries Coordinator

Dear Friends:

My name is Collee Williams. I have served Yearly Meeting in the role of the Teen & Outreach Ministries Coordinator since February 2024. My role has consisted of ministering to the needs of the Young Friends (high-school age) and young adults in our yearly meeting. There are differing intentions and objectives for both constituencies. In the Young Friends program I work with Resource People (adult volunteers) to provide youth with flexible opportunities for spiritual nurture, faith formation, loving care, and relationship building. During this past school year we have continued our tradition of hosting several big group seasonal retreats from as far north as Portland, Maine, to as far south as Providence, Rhode Island. We also continued our tradition of inviting Junior High Yearly Meeting youth who are 13 or older to join us at our annual Teen Retreat, which we held in tandem with Discernment Discovery Day. For young adults in our yearly meeting, we held a lively and fruitful extended weekend retreat at Woolman Hill during President’s Day weekend. Young adults can also look forward to continuing the tradition of having a shared dorm and activities at Annual Sessions this summer.

In April I received clarity that I am no longer being led to continue to serve the Yearly Meeting as the

Teen & Outreach Ministries Coordinator. In May I announced my departure to the Young Friends at our spring retreat in Framingham, MA. I’ve been grateful for the many connections that I have made through this service and have come to the realization that this position is not the right fit for my particular gifts and leadings. In my remaining months of service, I hope to pave the way for a steady transition and to complete the program year with joy and presence.

To identify the next coordinator, a search committee was formed and a search process has begun with the hope of being able to introduce the new coordinator by Sessions. If you have questions or comments regarding the search, please contact Program Director Nia Thomas (Nia@neym.org) or Yearly Meeting Secretary Noah Merrill (ymsec@neym.org). Kenzie Burpee, who has supported me with coordinating tasks at our Young Friends retreat this year, has graciously agreed to continue to support the next coordinator during the retreat year season of 2025–2026.

Based on strong feedback from Young Friends (and some parents, too), we have decided to adapt our approach to the Young Friends programming at Sessions this summer. Because of the leading Young Friends have expressed in recent months, at Sessions this year we will spend less of the day away from the wider Yearly Meeting in Young Friends specific programming. Instead, Young Friends will have the opportunity to spend time in “placements” based on areas of interest. These placements may include participating in the “adult” programming (workshops, business meeting, etc) or in a service role (helping with Junior Yearly Meeting, or with the bookstore, registration, the tech team, the office, and more). The focus of the Young Friends specific program will be on reflecting on these multigenerational experiences and how they relate to Young Friend’s lives. There will still be dorm space specifically for Young Friends and Resource People as well as time for long-cherished traditions.

Looking ahead to Annual Sessions and beyond, it is clear that Young Friends and young adults are in need of additional support from the wider yearly meeting community. With Young Friends, there is a need for more adults to volunteer as Resource People, especially from older adults at Annual Sessions. What are the implications for our yearly meeting if young adults are not able to participate equally in business meetings at Sessions due to filling the majority of volunteer roles for youth programming at Sessions? How can we step further into shared care and stewardship of our youth programs?

I look forward to working together to nurture the growth and faith development of the Young Friends and young adults in our yearly meeting. If you’re interested in being in further conversation you can reach me at collee@neym.org.

—COLLEE WILLIAMS