

# Advance Documents — 2025 New England Yearly Meeting

## Streams in the Desert

---

Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk, New England Yearly Meeting  
*Providence Monthly Meeting*

---

Dear Friends,

What a time to be alive!

The gift we are given is to hold gratitude and grief, wonder and woe, awe and anguish, simultaneously.

As we bear witness to this time of great trials, as we long for healing of this broken world, let us come together. To face our challenges, we know that we cannot succeed alone. Our community in the eternal power of the Spirit, that power rising and dwelling within us and among us, is what brings us strength and gives us hope in these times.

I am holding you in my heart and I am praying for the grace of the eternal Divine to dwell among us. May we prepare ourselves in Spirit as we make our arrangements to attend the 365th Annual Sessions of New England Yearly Meeting, August 1st through August 6th.

Let me invite you in your journey, whether over the physical miles between home and the University of Massachusetts campus, or the short hop to the room in your home where we will be connecting virtually, to consider this pre-Sessions time as the travel of a pilgrimage. Moving toward Sessions, each of us will be coming from one of the four directions of Turtle Island in anticipation and preparation for the Spirit-filled joining of hearts and souls in one space and place and at one time. It is a journey that takes preparation in a mindful manner.

And this year an opportunity toward that preparation will be offered in a time of extended worship on Friday, August 1, starting at 12:30 p.m. It will be held on the 8th floor of the Campus Center at UMass and more information is available at: <https://neym.org/sites/default/files/2025-07/NEYM%20August%201%2C%202025.pdf>

This option to enter into a time of deep centering and listening is intended to encourage connection with the Living Presence. I hope you will consider whether you are drawn to participation as a way to strengthen Friends' corporate yielding to the true power and purpose of our Yearly Meeting gathering to discern and to do God's will.

We each have the responsibility that God has bestowed upon us to bring our Light fully, to participate wholeheartedly, and to enter into communion with each other in Spirit-led attention to all that we do. In waiting worship, Bible half-hour, plenary sessions, memorial meeting, corporate discernment in the meetings for worship for the conduct of business, Spirit is present through us and among us. Indeed, even in our times of rest, and social connection, and meals together—and yes, even in the skits performed and goofy jokes told at the evening coffee house—Spirit will hold us and be palpably present.

In community this August, whether present via Zoom or in residence on the University of Massachusetts campus, I hope you will come to Sessions with that sense of an all-hallowed reunion. I pray as I prepare to join you in our annual gathering, that together we will seek the wisdom that the eternal divine Presence offers us as we work, play, rest, and rejoice together.

So to that end, I encourage you to spend time in the coming days refreshing your understanding of Friends' practice of corporate discernment as a way of conducting our business. (Re)read Chapter 3 of New England Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice (<https://neym.org/faith-and-practice/decision-making>) and read carefully all the preparatory information contained in these Advance Documents—the committee/resource group/working group reports and the NEYM budget detail and explanations of all that we will be considering in our meetings for worship for the conduct of business. These documents represent the faithful work of so many Friends across our region in all our monthly and quarterly meetings over the past year.

Of particular import is our prayerful preparation for considering how we are called in the ongoing issues involving Israel-Palestine. I urge you to read and think about what Friends around our Yearly Meeting have discerned and minuted. Find relevant minutes of monthly and quarterly meetings' faithful discernment at <https://neym.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/MInutes%20on%20Israel-Palestine%20conflict.pdf> and together we will endeavor to discern way forward on the matter.

In deep gratitude to you all for the Light and Love you bring and in expectation of divine communion in our gathering, I am faithfully yours,

Rebecca Leuchak  
Presiding Clerk

## Table of Contents

2025 Sessions Coordinators, Officers, Speakers and YM Staff . . . . .	6
2025 Youth Program Coordinators and Staff . . . . .	6
Elders serving to support ministry at Sessions this year . . . . .	7
Guide to Business at Yearly Meeting Sessions . . . . .	7
2025 Sessions Business Agenda . . . . .	9
Unity Agenda . . . . .	10
2025 Sessions Business Materials for Gathered Discernment . . . . .	10
Faith and Practice Revision . . . . .	10
Final Report—Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools Research Group . . . . .	10
Sessions Visioning . . . . .	12
Treasurer’s Report . . . . .	15
Budget Commentary . . . . .	16
Public Statements . . . . .	17
Unity Agenda Materials . . . . .	18
Present Concerns in Our Quarters . . . . .	20
Falmouth Quarter Minute of Solidarity with the LGBTQIA Community . . . . .	20
Israel-Palestine Conflict . . . . .	22
Budget . . . . .	23
Nominating Slate . . . . .	26
Staff Reports . . . . .	30
Secretary . . . . .	30
Accounts Manager . . . . .	30
ARCH Coordinator . . . . .	30
Children and Family Ministries Coordinator . . . . .	31
Events Coordinator . . . . .	31
Friends Camp Director . . . . .	32
Office Manager . . . . .	32
Program Director . . . . .	33
Teen and Outreach Ministries Coordinator . . . . .	34
Committee and Board Reports . . . . .	35
Permanent Board . . . . .	35
Archives & Historical Records . . . . .	35
Board of Managers . . . . .	36
Coordinating and Advisory . . . . .	37
Faith & Practice Revision . . . . .	38
Legacy Gift . . . . .	38
Meeting Accompaniment Group . . . . .	39
Ministry & Counsel . . . . .	39
Nominating . . . . .	40
Nurturing Friends Education at Moses Brown School . . . . .	41
Puente de Amigos . . . . .	42
Sessions . . . . .	42
Youth Ministries . . . . .	43
Reports of Representatives to Other Quaker Organizations . . . . .	44
Friends Committee on National Legislation . . . . .	44
Friends General Conference . . . . .	44
Friends World Committee for Consultation . . . . .	44
Quaker Earthcare Witness . . . . .	45

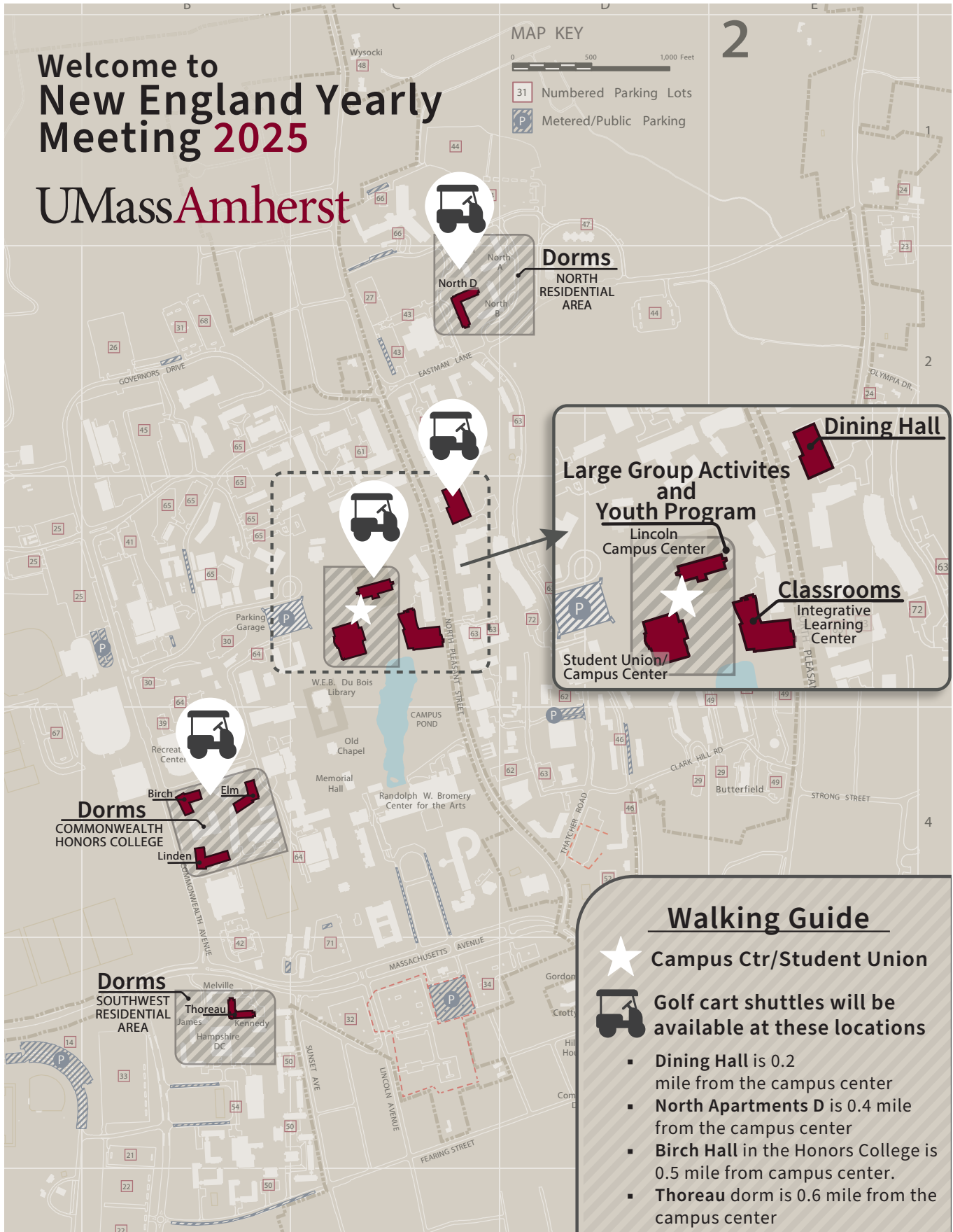
## DRAFT Schedule 2025 Annual Sessions – Streams in the Desert

	Friday 8/1	Saturday 8/2	Sunday 8/3	Monday 8/4	Tuesday 8/5	Wednesday 8/6
6:30 to noon		6:30–7:00 Early Morning Worship				
		6:45–8:45 Breakfast				
		9:30–10:15 Opening Celebration*	9:00–10:00 All-Ages Worship*	8:30 Bible Half Hour*	8:30 Bible Half Hour*	8:30 Bible Half Hour*
		10:30–11:30 Bible Half Hour*	10:30 Bible Half Hour*	9:15–11:15 Meeting for Business*	9:15–11:15 Meeting for Business*	9:15 Meeting for Business* 10:15 Final closing, youth epistles, and celebration*
Noon to 3:00	12:30 Extended Worship, Campus Ctr 804-808	1:15–3:15 Meeting for Business*	1:15–2:45 Plenary*	11:30–1:30 Lunch		
				1:15–2:45 Choices <sup>1</sup>		Check-in (Campus Center, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor):
3:00 to 7:00		3:30–5:00 Choices <sup>1</sup>	3:00–5:00 Meeting for Business*			Friday: 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. and 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.
	4:45–6:45 Dinner					Saturday: 9:00 to 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
		6:00–6:20 Vespers	6:00–6:45 Vespers			
		6:30–8:00 Memorial Meeting*	7:00–9:00 Meeting for Business*	7:00 Musical Plenary 7:00 Choices <sup>1</sup>	7:00 Coffee House* 7:00 Choices <sup>1</sup>	To check in at other times, contact the registrar at 207-402-1773
7:00 to 10:00	7:00 Central Welcoming and Tours (Campus Ctr)					

Items marked with \* will be hybrid events held in the Ballroom. Locations of other events will be posted in the *Yearly Meeting News*.

<sup>1</sup>Choices is a period for workshops and reflection groups at Sessions. These 90-minute offerings provide an opportunity for Friends to explore our Quaker faith and make meaningful connections. Find listings at <https://neym.org/choices>  
*General and Family Bookstore hours will be posted in the Yearly Meeting News*

## Campus Map



## 2025 Sessions Coordinators, Officers, Speakers and YM Staff

<b>Accounts Manager</b>	Frederick Martin*
<b>Bible Half Hour Speaker</b>	Kirenia Criado Pérez
<b>Children &amp; Family Ministries Coordinator</b>	Kara Price*
<b>Clerks</b>	Rebecca Leuchak (presiding), Megan Jensen and Mark Conley (recording), Jesse Grace and Beth Bussiere-Nichols (reading)
<b>Health Coordination Team</b>	Ginny Kristl, Sara Kelly, Michelle Wright
<b>Events Coordinator</b>	Elizabeth Hacala*
<b>Office Manager</b>	Sara Hubner*
<b>Office Assistant</b>	Jessica Shelton
<b>Plenary Musician</b>	Kim Moberg
<b>Plenary Speaker</b>	Gretchen Baker-Smith
<b>Registrar</b>	Martha Hinshaw Sheldon
<b>Sessions Committee Clerk</b>	Kristin Wilson
<b>Tech Team Coordinator</b>	Neil Blanchard
<b>Yearly Meeting Treasurer</b>	Marian Dalton
<b>Worship Coordinator</b>	Kristina Keefe-Perry
<b>Yearly Meeting News Editor</b>	Liz Yeats
<b>Yearly Meeting Secretary</b>	Noah Merrill*

\* = YM Staff

## 2025 Youth Program Coordinators and Staff

### Under-5s

**Coord:** Rainer Humphries

Abigail Adams  
Carol Baker  
Erica Bowden  
Brooke Burkett  
Jerry Carson  
Peter Colby  
Paula Rossvall  
Erica Bowden

### Junior Yearly Meeting

**Coord:** Kenzie Burpee

Annie Bingham  
Darien Brimage  
Bart Czyz  
Rebecca Edwards  
Martin Eller Fitze\*\*  
Charlee Gorham  
Tyler Green  
Newell Isbell Shinn  
Craig Jensen  
Leah Kelley

Katy MacRae

Susannah McCandless

Joli Reynolds

Arnie Saulnier

Emily Smith

### Junior High Yearly Meeting

**Coord:** Amy Greene

Anne Anderson

Buddy Baker-Smith

Dave Baxter

Merritt Bussiere-Nichols

Jessica Eller

Chris Fitze

Tristan Ahern Hess

### Young Friends

**Coord:** Collee Williams

Isaiah Grace

Sara Kelly

April Merleux

Kristin Sprague

\*\*Young Friend volunteer



## Elders serving to support ministry at Sessions this year

In Friends tradition, an Elder supports, encourages, and challenges the minister and helps them to be faithful. During preparation and during our week together, these individuals are holding and grounding specific Friends in their work and ministry.

**Elders for Noah Merrill:** Viv Woodland, John Leppman, Julie Forsythe, and Sarah Gant

**Elders for Rebecca Leuchak:** Deana Chase and Michelle Wright

**Elders for Kirenia Criado Pérez:** Carolyn Stone, Richard Lindo, Minga Claggett-Borne, Marybeth Toomey, Fritz Weiss, Jonathan Vogel-Borne, Cynthia Ganung, Maggie Fogarty

**Elders for Gretchen Baker-Smith:** Marian Athearn, Anne Anderson, and David Baxter

## Guide to Business at Yearly Meeting Sessions

NEYM Sessions are larger than our other experiences of discernment, and again we will be hybrid, so a few reminders may help us proceed gracefully.

We encourage Friends who are joining us online to become familiar with Zoom before Sessions; you can find an instruction video on the Yearly Meeting website at <https://neym.org/zoom-how-tos>.

The physical room and the Zoom “room” will open for worship about 15 minutes early. Friends are asked to enter silently, to confirm that you are muted if you are on Zoom, and to sit in worship with the Friends gathered.

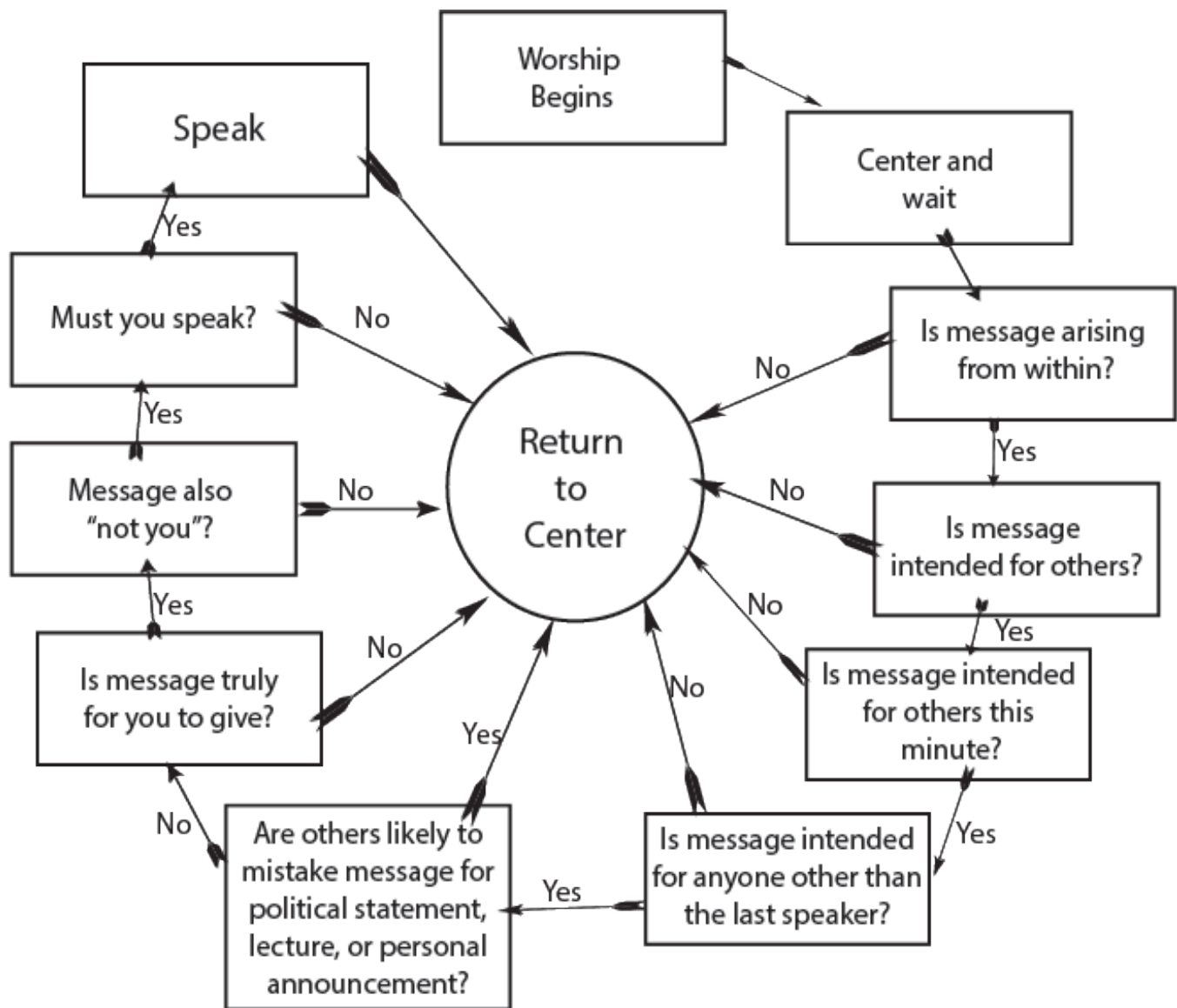
### Worship with a concern for business:

- The Spirit may speak through a less familiar voice if our oft-heard Friends refrain from the urge to speak too quickly.
- The order of business items is subject to change, depending on the Holy Spirit and Friends’ self-discipline.
- We seek not compromise nor a grumbling “well, OK,” but clarity on what God calls us to do here and now, knowing that we may be led later to some further action, understanding, and love.
- Please look for text being presented. If it was ready by press time, look in these Advance Documents. Otherwise, it will be displayed on screen.
- The doors to the physical room will be closed to late-comers for 5 to 10 minutes while Friends settle into worship. Please wait quietly outside the plenary room. Please silence your cellphone. If you are on Zoom, please silence your cellphone, landline, and any other potential disruptions.
- For those joining worship with a concern for business in person:
  - Enter quietly!
  - Sit toward the front and center of the hall.
  - Leave room on the ends of the rows for late arrivals.
  - Reserve the wheelchair-accessible space for those who need it.

### During worship with a concern for business:

- Stand (or raise your hand high) to be recognized. Use “Raise Hand” in Zoom (on the Reactions menu) to be recognized (on the phone, press \*9).
- Remember that the clerk does not always call on people in the order in which their hands appear.
- When the clerk has called on you, wait for the wireless microphone to come to you. For those on Zoom, unmute yourself (on the phone, \*6).
- Say your name and meeting.
- Speak slowly and briefly, limiting your remarks to the question at hand.
- For those in person, please be seated while someone else is speaking. For those on Zoom, consider lowering your hand—the person speaking may address your concern.
- Ordinarily a person should speak only once to an item of business, unless to answer a direct question or to signal a significant change of heart.

- If you are a Friend who does not speak easily, be bold if called. Your leading may be the way the Spirit has chosen to speak to us.
- Please do not try to argue the clerks (or anyone else) into your position.
- While the clerks are trying to formulate a minute, help by holding them in prayer. Remember that the minute will rarely be worded precisely as you would have said it.





## 2025 Sessions Business Agenda

### Saturday afternoon, August 2

#### 1:15 to 3:15 p.m.

- Welcome and Presiding Clerk's opening remarks
- Waiting worship
- Message from the Yearly Meeting Secretary
- Faith and Practice Revised Chapter: Testimony
- Introduction of the Unity Agenda
- Closing reminders of Upcoming Business

### Sunday Afternoon

#### 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

- Waiting Worship
- Friends Camp Report
- Moses Brown School Report
- Nominating Report

### Sunday Evening

#### 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

- Waiting Worship
- Message from Jorge Luis Pena, Presiding Clerk of Cuba Yearly Meeting
- Friends World Committee for Consultation Report and Reflections
- Quaker Indigenous Boarding School Working Group Report and Reflections

### Monday Morning

#### 9:15 to 11:15 a.m.

- Waiting Worship
- Our Year-Round Work
- Sessions Visioning
- Planning for Sessions 2026
- Ministry and Spiritual Life Updates and Recommendations
- Development Initiatives and Financial Stewardship

### Monday Afternoon

#### 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. Waiting Worship

- Yearly Meeting Treasurer's Report
- Presentation of the Proposed Yearly Meeting Budget
- Permanent Board Report
- Legal Action on Immigration and Religious Freedom
- Waiting Worship
- Message from Rania Maayeh, Head of Ramallah Friends School

### Tuesday Morning

#### 9:15 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.

- Unity Agenda for Approval
- Waiting Worship
- Reflections on the Role of Quarterly Meetings
- Present Concerns in Our Quarters

### Tuesday Afternoon

#### 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

- Waiting Worship
- Yearly Meeting Budget for Approval
- Yearly Meeting Epistle—First Reading
- Nominating Committee Slate for Approval

### Wednesday Morning

#### 9:15 to 10:15 a.m.

- Waiting Worship
- Remaining business

#### 10:15 to 11:15 a.m.

- Epistles from Youth Programs
- Reading of the Yearly Meeting Epistle
- Sessions Coordinator Report on Sessions
- Presiding Clerk's reflection and sending forth

## Unity Agenda

The items on the Unity Agenda are proposed for consideration on Tuesday morning. Before then, Friends are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Unity Agenda, to read the information pertaining to each item, and to consult with the Friends named for each matter, if need be. General questions can be brought to the Presiding Clerk, Rebecca Leuchak. If there are significant concerns that remain, items can be removed from the Unity Agenda for further corporate discernment earlier in the week.

Decisions and Actions Concerning...	See	Friends Available for Consultation
Accepting staff reports	page 30	Staff
Accepting board, committee, working & resource groups, and representative reports	page 35	Report authors
Accepting Memorial Minutes	booklet	Carl Williams, Ministry & Counsel clerk
Accepting the Purposes, Procedures, and Composition for the Meeting Accompaniment Group	page 19	Susan Davies, Permanent Board clerk
Approving nominations from YM Nominating Committee	page 26	Jackie Stillwell, Nominating clerk
Approving bank resolutions	page 18	Scot Drysdale, Finance clerk
Approving clerks' authorization to make edits and corrections	page 20	Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk

## 2025 Sessions Business Materials for Gathered Discernment

### Faith and Practice Revision

The Faith and Practice Revision Committee will present a draft chapter on Testimonies, which you can read here: <https://neym.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/Testimony%20chapter%2006.23.2025.pdf>

### Final Report—Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools Research Group

At Sessions 2024 NEYM approved four tasks for this Group for the ensuing year:

- to draft and file a formal account of NEYM involvement in Indian Boarding Schools;
- to continue to engage with other researchers through the Quaker Indigenous Boarding School research network;
- to continue collaboration with the NEYM Archives committee;
- to suggest next steps, including further exploration of the “why” of NEYM’s involvement in the boarding schools.

The members of the NEYM QIBS Research Group believe we have completed the tasks with which we were charged in August 2022, to research and report on the involvement of NEYM in the Indian Boarding Schools of the nineteenth century. The roles of New England Friends as teachers, matrons, and missionaries, and the donation of money, directly and through the Associated Executive Committee of Friends on Indian Affairs and the Womens’ Foreign Missionary Society, materials, and clothing was documented in the report we submitted to Yearly Meeting Sessions in 2024 ([https://neym.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/NEYM%202024%20QIBS%20final%20report%20%26%20sources\\_0.pdf](https://neym.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/NEYM%202024%20QIBS%20final%20report%20%26%20sources_0.pdf)) and to the Department of the Interior in January 2025 (<https://neym.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/NEYM%20DOI%20report.pdf>). That report has also been shared with the Indigenous Nations and Tribes most directly affected.

Members of the Research Group continue to participate actively in the national QIBS research network. Several of us presented our work at a workshop for the February 2025 FGC Gathering, together with working groups from Alaska Friends Conference and Baltimore Yearly Meeting. A similar workshop was presented under the auspices of Beacon Hill Friends House in April 2025, which drew more than 55 Friends from around the country (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpAtN6mcP9A>). In addition, Gordon Bugbee presented a talk based on the August 2024 report to the November 2024 public meeting of Friends Historical Association.

Members of the Research Group, with the assistance of the NEYM Archives Committee, provided the NEYM Archives curator at UMass-Amherst with a list of search terms to be marked as metadata for the use of future researchers looking for boarding-school-related materials in our archives.

At Sessions 2024, NEYM also approved our leading to open communications, as way might open, with the Indigenous Peoples of Ottawa and Pottawatomie Counties, Oklahoma (what had been the Quapaw and Sac and Fox Agencies), and explore possible steps towards offering a collective apology and asking what might be acceptable in their view. In furtherance of this work, Gordon Bugbee and Mary Zwirner traveled to Oklahoma in March 2025, with a travel minute from Beacon Hill Friends endorsed by Permanent Board (in lieu of Salem Quarter). Before traveling they sent copies of the NEYM 2024 report and an invitation to conversation to the 14 tribes most directly affected by NEYM's work. During their trip they were able to make some personal connections with tribal members, and visit two of the largely Native American Quaker meetings in Hominy and McCloud, Oklahoma. They envision a return trip as way may open.

We further believe that while the task has been completed, the work is not done.

In the course of our research, we learned how deeply implicated New England Friends were in the larger assimilation project. From John D. Lang and Samuel Taylor Jr's 1842 report of the "conditions of Indians West of the Mississippi" and John Milton Earle's 1860 report on the status of "Indians" in Massachusetts, to the advocacy of Albert Smiley and Myra Frye for the disastrous policies of forced assimilation, suppression of Indigenous languages and cultures, disruption of the relationships between children and parents, and the taking of Native land, New England Quakers were not just cogs in a larger system. They were among that system's architects and vocal champions.

The endorsement by these faithful and generous people of the prevailing ideas about how best to help Indigenous Peoples is not hard to understand. They were, like we are, creatures of their time. More difficult to comprehend, in light of Quakers' historically complex relationship with the State and our beliefs about how God works in the lives of individuals and communities, is their willingness to employ coercive measures and endorse necessarily cruel practices. How and why did Quaker discernment practices lead Friends into such harmful endeavors?

Answering this question will involve delving into the journals and correspondence of individual Friends and close reading of minutes from local meetings and relevant yearly meeting committees from the 19th and 20th centuries. Some monthly meeting records are available at UMass-Amherst Special Collections and at the Maine Historical Society. One of the next tasks, to be accomplished with the help of local monthly meeting members and attenders, will be locating relevant documents that will shed light on the thinking and motivations of 19th-century Quakers.

The NEYM QIBS Research Group asks to be laid down and recommends that a new group be charged with encouraging and coordinating the work of individual Friends called to take up this next step in understanding this disturbing and consequential period in the life of Quakerism. We would encourage this working group on "New England Friends and the forced assimilation of Indigenous Peoples" to publish or otherwise disseminate salient research findings whenever practical. We expect that this research and the findings of the NEYM QIBS Research Group will provide the basis for further addressing Friends' roles in the assimilationist project.

Contact with several of the Tribes identified through this research has been promising. We are hopeful that a renewed sense of kinship between New England Friends and the Modoc Nation, the

Wyandotte Nation, and others will emerge and lay the groundwork for respectful relations going forward. We have entrusted this work to the Right Relations Resource Group for support and guidance.

We are grateful for the support the research group has received and encouraged by the interest shown by many members of NEYM. Members of the current research group will be available for consultation and help in identifying members for the new research group.

JANET HOUGH, BETSY CAZDEN, ANDREW GRANT, MERRILL KOHLHOFER, AND GORDON BUGBEE

New England Yearly Meeting Committee Minutes to Review:

Committee on the Western Indian

Women's Foreign Missionary Society

Monthly Meeting Minutes to review:

Dover, Dover Qtr, Durham, Fairfield, Lynn, New Bedford, Newport, Portland, Providence, Sandwich (NH), Starksboro (VT), Swanton, Uxbridge, Vassalboro, Winthrop Center, Worcester

New England Friends' correspondence and papers to be reviewed:

Alford, Mary Grinnell, Starksboro, Teacher; Avrill, Sidney, Swanton, Teacher; Aydelotte, Phebe S., New Bedford, Womens' Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS); Bailey, Hannah J., Winthrop Center, WFMS; Battey, Thos. C., Starksboro, Teacher; Beede, Cyrus, Sandwich, Agent; Buffum, Thomas F., Newport, AEC; Earle, John Milton, Worcester, Mass Indian Comm, NEYM/CWI; Earle, Edward, Uxbridge, AEC; Earle, Anne B., Worcester?, NEYM/CWI; Elliot, Eliza Grinnell, Starksboro, Teacher; Frye, Myra E., Portland, NEYM/CWI; Frye, John J., Portland, NEYM/CWI; Grinnell, Fordyce, Starksboro, Physician; Hoag, Enoch, Sandwich, Superintendent; Howland, Edward, New Bedford, AEC; Hussey, Timothy B., Dover Qtr, AEC; Jones, Augustine, Providence, AEC; Kimber, Anthony M., Newport, AEC; Kimber, John S., Newport, AEC; Lang, John D., Vassalboro, BIC; Lang, Anne Almira, Vassalboro, NEYM/CWI; Lunt, Lina B., Durham, Teacher; Newhall, Wm. O., Lynn, AEC; Sherman, Mary, Rhode Island, Teacher; Smiley, Albert K., Vassalboro, Mohonk; Smiley, Alfred, Vassalboro, Mohonk; Swift, Sarah J, AEC; Taylor, Samuel A. Jr., Fairfield, NEYM/CWI; Thorndike, Henry, Dover, Teacher; Thorndike, Anna B., Dover, Teacher; Thorndike, Alice, Dover, Teacher; Tuttle, Emeline H., Dover, Teacher; Tuttle, Asa, Dover, Teacher; Varney, Sumner B., Dover, Physician; Wood, Henry T., New Bedford, AEC

### Sessions Visioning

Friends, thank you. Two years ago the Yearly Meeting initially minuted the need to re-envision our Annual Sessions. We set out to re-align, revitalize, and "right size" Sessions to reflect current needs and resources. We were very ambitious in the way we sought to do this re-envisioning, approving a plan last Sessions to invite all local meetings and quarters as well as participants in our youth programs and other life-stage groups to participate not in an individual survey, as many groups might, but in extended worshipful conversations reflecting together on the possibilities and challenges before us now. Looking back on this process in which we sought to prioritize connection (with God and other Friends), set the table for broad participation (with clear information and thoughtful facilitation), and grow towards unity (even as our individual experiences and preferences differ), it is clear we have much to celebrate.

Meeting throughout the winter months, there were 36 Listening Groups composed of approximately 450 Friends with representation from all eight quarters. Most of the groups were based in local meetings, while some consisted of quarters or pairs of local meetings working together. Others were organized around life stages, including groups for elementary-age youth (JYM), middle-school-age youth (JHYM), high-school-age youth (Young Friends), young adults (ages 18–35), and Friends

who are currently parenting children and teens. In addition to age diversity, we heard from Friends with varied experiences related to Sessions. Between one quarter and one third of the groups included Friends who have never participated in Sessions, and almost all groups included someone who had participated in or volunteered for the youth programs at Sessions.

Many Friends who are longtime attenders at Sessions expressed heartfelt appreciation for various aspects of Sessions, including worship, spiritual nourishment, joyful multigenerational experiences, and small-group settings for connection and shared witness. Shared meals, informal community-building, and programming for youth and families were celebrated. Friends cherish the opportunity to connect across meetings and feel part of something larger than themselves.

While many Friends recalled transformational memories and enduring friendships formed at Sessions, there was widespread acknowledgment of the need for practical change and experimentation with new approaches, especially in light of increasing costs distributed across a smaller participation base.

Another key theme in Listening Groups was tension around the role of Meeting for Business. Some Friends see it as the central purpose of Sessions, as it has historically been, while others consider it just one component. Many Friends expressed a desire to reduce the time spent on business and/or to focus more deeply on fewer, more substantive agenda items. Suggestions on how to make this change included shifting some business to other bodies such as quarterly meetings, relevant committees, Permanent Board, or other gatherings of New England Friends, with stress across these suggestions on the importance of smaller or varied decision-making groups remaining meaningfully connected to local meetings.

Barriers to participation in Sessions were another frequent topic. Friends noted that cost (even with pay-as-led), distance, the length of Sessions, and life commitments (such as work and caregiving responsibilities) often limit attendance. Many newer Friends were unclear about why they should attend Sessions in the first place. This highlighted a need for both broader communication and more personal outreach by individuals and local meetings to encourage and support first-time participation.

While Listening Groups were not uniform in their reflections, a number did express interest in the Yearly Meeting experimenting with an alternative model for Sessions consisting of a shorter, long-weekend format. Although aware of the loss it may bring, particularly for youth (if other opportunities are not created), Friends felt this could lower costs and make attendance more feasible.

Another oft-affirmed model was a limited housing option, which would allow some Friends to have a residential experience while enabling others to commute. Again, this was seen as a way to reduce financial barriers while maintaining the spirit of Sessions. With this idea, however, came many questions such as how more fractured participation would impact the cohesion of the event and the need for volunteers, whose housing needs would be prioritized, and what logistics it would be realistic for individuals and families to take on themselves outside the bounds of the organized event.

Although this Visioning process was designed to inform planning for Sessions beginning with Sessions 2026, it strikes me that NEYM's move from Castleton to UMass this year creates a natural experiment to the theory that a location with commuting options for a wider proportion of Friends, paired with increased outreach to meetings, might increase attendance. As I write this report, registration numbers are hopeful but not conclusive.

In tandem with these suggested alternatives, many Friends also expressed enthusiasm for shorter gatherings throughout the year—especially those focused on worship, learning, and connection. At the same time, they raised questions about how simplifying Sessions might affect mid-year discernment and the activities of quarters.



If you are interested in a deeper understanding of the conversations held across our region, the compilation of all notes received from Listening Groups, listed in the order in which they were received, is available at <https://neym.org/sessions-visioning>.

On April 12, 2025, 52 Friends came together from the eight quarters of the Yearly Meeting, gathering at Wellesley Meeting for a Visioning and Distillation Day. Discernment, sharing, exploration, and reflection took many forms during the day. Periods of the day were spent in worship-sharing.

We were reminded that our shared foundational work as Friends coming together as a Yearly Meeting is both personal practice and the care for relationships across meetings. As we prayerfully reflected on what is required of us as “a people” on a shared pilgrimage of faith, we wrestled with ongoing questions including: *What is the most essential use of our time together at Sessions? What experiments is God calling us to now? How do we hold insights stemming from meaningful dialogue while listening for the call of the Spirit?* If you have not yet read the report summarizing the rich reflections arising from that day, I strongly encourage you to read the full report available at <https://neym.org/sessions-visioning>.

Although there were areas of unity and shared insight that emerged from both the Listening Groups and Visioning Day, extensive dialogue did not lead to agreement about the one best model for Sessions or the one ideal way to allocate our limited time together. While there is some understandable disappointment God didn’t deliver us clarity on the one true and right way to hold our Annual Sessions, I find it helpful to remember the insight we began with. We set out on this process to foster meaningful dialogue that would bring increased clarity about possible short-term experimental changes to Sessions. But more than this, we hoped to pray and dream together in order to build up our shared sense of how we are led to nurture our relationships with one another and with Spirit. As the plan for this process described, the goal is not to use market research to “fix” the current model to please more potential attenders, but rather to step into broader imagining and discernment about how Annual Sessions relates to the wider work of the Yearly Meeting now. With this deeper intention in mind, we have been deeply faithful and fortunate. That being said, we have learned that there is deep interest among Friends in examining practical barriers which impact attendance at Sessions (especially financial).

In discussing the shape of Sessions, we also learned that many Friends are ready to explore adaptations to our approaches to corporate discernment. Friends desire more spacious discernment at Sessions with fewer agenda items. Friends recognize the importance of the living connection between local meetings, quarters, and Yearly Meeting as well as of looking at how we approach corporate discernment throughout the year. Beyond corporate discernment, Friends see our relationships, worship, fellowship, and programs as a year-round commitment, expressed in diverse ways and at different points in the year, not just during Sessions.

Holding both what we know now and the questions we still hold, as we adapt the shape of Sessions in coming years, we will need to approach changes as experiments, with learning and growth (rather than perfection) as the goal. These experiments do not mean starting from scratch each year but rather continuing our practice of iteration and reflection.

So what else have we learned (or been reminded of) via this process? We have learned beautiful and tender truth about our condition. Many Friends in our Yearly Meeting feel a deep call to relationship with Friends across the region. We understand ourselves as “a people of God,” called to a shared journey of faith. As we step into new experiments related to the form Sessions takes in the coming years, we must remember that many of the Friends who have attended Sessions regularly cherish many components of Sessions and have powerful, precious memories of Sessions. Change comes with both hope and a sense of loss.

Sessions Visioning has also taught us about process. It was a happy surprise that so many Friends (of many ages) and from many meetings (both small and large) said yes to participate in this process, even though it required a real commitment of time and energy. Rather than reporting that



participation was a drain, many emphatically shared that the listening process in and of itself was of value and led to a greater sense of clarity and connection within the Yearly Meeting. While I am deeply grateful for this, it behooves us to remember the investment this process required. Undertaking a process of this scale requires much time and energy. Adding up the approximate number of “people hours” spent by Listening Group participants, Visioning Day participants, and Yearly Meeting staff, New England Friends spent at least 1,800 hours on this process and that didn’t even involve the actual planning of Sessions! Clearly, going forward we need to hold the reality that there is both significant spiritual potential and significant capacity required for such an undertaking.

Although the form that Sessions takes remains a “tough nut to crack,” this process shows us that there is both much to celebrate and important questions to continue to hold. As we adapt how we do things, what’s needed for us to experiment well and with love? As we live in a world with rapidly changing conditions, how do we maintain a healthy relationship between unrushed, ongoing discernment and time-sensitive organizational decisions?

In closing, let us remember the wisdom of Friends in regard to the Listening Group prompt, “As the Yearly Meeting moves towards new approaches, what indicator that we are on the right path feels especially important to pay attention to?” Friends named various signs that we are on the right track: increased and diverse participation and volunteering in Yearly Meeting activities, stronger collaboration between local meetings, spiritual sustenance, flexibility, a clearer sense of shared purpose, and grace as we move forward together in God’s care.

NIADWYNWEN THOMAS

---

### Treasurer’s Report

---

So this is the point in our advance documents where we get to look at numbers. Aren’t you excited?

Our Yearly Meeting approved a nearly balanced general fund operating budget for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2025. And, as in FY24, this was only possible by retaining the hold on all contributions to “Other Organizations” (e.g., FGC, FUM, AFSC, FCNL) and adding again a hopeful “contingency” clause, providing that *if* we were to meet the FY25 budget, 50% of any surplus would be used to make some portion of these donations happen. As I write this, the variability of Sessions costs and income in a new venue makes it hard to predict our end-of-year results.

We found it difficult to put together this current FY25 budget since a significant portion of our budgets is the cost of staff; a third of staff time is devoted to planning Sessions, and we had no idea as we were preparing the budget where Sessions would be located. That information was not available until December, when Permanent Board approved moving forward with the move of Sessions from Castleton (who could no longer host us) to UMass at Amherst. With limited options, and no experience of Sessions at this location to go by, Permanent Board approved this more expensive option in the hope that the change in location would draw additional attendees to help cover the fixed costs of Sessions.

This will be important as FY24 ended with an even larger deficit (\$57K, after a budgeted \$5K transfer from reserves) than FY23 (\$35K, after a budgeted \$30K transfer from reserves), despite increased monthly meeting donations and despite focused appeals during and after Sessions in August of ’24. Mostly due to the costs of Sessions, we ended the year having dropped our reserves from 6% to 3% of the following year’s budget, well below the recommended 25%. (The full set of FY24 closing reports are available on the Yearly Meeting’s website in the section Who we are/How we’re doing/Financial statements.)

Additional complications for FY25 include the fact that much staff time has been devoted to preparing and executing a process for discerning (visioning) a potential new structure for Sessions, in hopes of “right-sizing” our biggest event, as well as to planning for Sessions at an unfamiliar location.

One bright spot is the belated receipt of \$52K of IRS reimbursement from the pandemic era ERTC (Employee Retention Tax Credit) program. In addition, our Yearly Meeting Secretary has been working to create a new structure for development in the Yearly Meeting office. Consultation with a couple of development specialists suggests that we are doing the right things, but we need to do more of them.

Recognizing the need for a focus on development, and that our operational reserves having been nearly depleted, we turned to non-operational funds to support this work. The Future Uses Fund was created from a portion of the Legacy Gift Fund at Sessions FY24 for precisely this type of situation (leaving the newly renamed Witness and Ministry Fund with as much capital as it had when it first started).

Permanent Board has since approved the use of up to \$140K from the Future Uses fund (over the next three years) to increase our Event Coordinator's hours to full time in order to relieve the Accounts Manager and the Yearly Meeting Secretary from the need to coordinate development work. An estimate of an additional \$25K was brought for administrative expenses for development work (copying, mailing, etc.) for those same three years.

In addition, up to \$50K has been approved for more fundraising consultation over the same time-frame. The first fruits of this consultation include the pulling together of a group to visit local meetings to present an overview of the work of the Yearly Meeting, in order to focus on strengthening the relationship with both local meetings and the individuals within them. The group will meet this summer and begin their visits in the fall.

This funding was approved at the May Permanent Board meeting, so is not likely to affect this year's development efforts significantly. Which means it's up to each of us individually to recognize the need to support the work of the Yearly Meeting between now and the end of the fiscal year (September 30th). In particular, there is a need for equalization support, to encourage new attendees at Sessions in a year when we all need the connection and support of the Quakers in our wider circle. Together may we design responses to the difficulties visible in the world around us.

MARIAN DALTON

---

### **Budget Commentary**

The Finance Committee met quarterly, and also had a number of Budget Subcommittee meetings. We spent most of our effort on the FY26 budget. This was complicated by a number of factors, which are described in the budget commentary below.

The Finance Clerk, Treasurer, Yearly Meeting Secretary, and Accounts Manager also worked on updating the Financial Handbook. This effort is still ongoing.

This brings us to the FY 26 budget. The first thing to note is that without knowing what form Sessions will take in summer 2026, we cannot come up with good estimates of either its costs or its income. The budget spreadsheet has a rightmost yellow column entitled "FY2026 Rough Draft Sessions." These costs are hypothetical, projecting the continuation of costs and income that we have seen in recent years. However, the model that we have been using in recent years is the least likely outcome of the Sessions Visioning Process that the Yearly Meeting has undertaken. We don't know at this time what model will replace it.

Fortunately, we do not need to know what model will replace the current Sessions model in order to estimate its effect on the budget. Sessions fees have been set to cover direct Sessions costs, plus a small fraction of the staff time that goes into planning and running sessions. Historically the amount of income above the direct Sessions costs has usually been around \$30,000. Therefore the important figure in the yellow column is \$31,000, the amount that appears in the Net Operating Income line for that column. This can be viewed as a guideline. Whatever Sessions model is chosen should generate \$31,000 of income in excess of direct costs to cover a small part of the staff time de-

voted to Sessions. Finding a sustainable model for Sessions should relieve budget pressure in future years.

A second thing to note is that for the third budget in a row we budget no funds to other organizations. We regret this, but other cuts that we considered were even more painful.

A third thing to note is that the bottom line of this budget is a small surplus. This does not begin to rebuild our reserves, but it is better than a deficit.

The Secretary has consulted with Michael Wadja, a professional fundraiser who is a member of our Yearly Meeting, to estimate the amount of individual and meeting contributions that we can expect to receive with the fundraising efforts that staff and some volunteers intend to make. Footnotes 1 and 3 explain the reasoning behind these numbers.

NEYM has budgeted some of the Future Uses Fund to support development efforts. The plan is that in future years we will grow our income at a rate faster than our spending increases, and thereby get to a surplus budget that will begin to restore our reserves to the level specified in our policy and to allow us to again give to other organizations.

A lot of effort went into cutting costs. As noted in Footnote 7, some mutually agreed-upon reductions in staff hours and COLAs (Cost of Living Adjustments) kept the increase in staff expenses lower than previous years. We are suggesting a cap on travel expenses. The Honoraria for Volunteer Leadership has dropped from \$15,000 to \$4,500, and will go to \$0 in a few years, after the volunteers who were offered this when they accepted their jobs rotate out of those jobs. (Laying down these honoraria was approved at last Sessions, but other methods of encouraging volunteer leadership may require additional spending.) As noted in Footnote 12, we are asking Friends Camp to pay for their accreditation expense, which saves a few thousand dollars.

We also propose to add an administration fee of 0.6% on the income from the Pooled Funds that goes to the Yearly Meeting (but not that that goes to monthly meetings or other investors in the funds). This would cover part of the time that the Accounts Manager spends allocating this money to various endowed funds and accounting for it, part of the time that the Secretary spends administering these endowed accounts, and part of time that the Office Manager's spends supporting the Legacy Gift Committee and arranging Mosher Book and Tract Fund publications.

In the last few years we have run deficits, in spite of making assumptions that seemed reasonable at the time. Why should this budget be different? Our Yearly Meeting is mounting a new development effort which will be much more extensive than we have done in recent years. We are also looking for a new, sustainable model for Sessions that we expect to eliminate the shortfalls in our budgeting for Sessions over the last two years. If these do not prove sufficient to balance our budget, we will have to look at deeper cuts in program and staff in future budgets.

SCOT DRYSDALE, CLERK OF FINANCE

The budget appears on **page 23**.

## **Public Statements**

### Legal Action on Immigration and Religious Freedom

February 25, 2025

Dear Friends,

As many of you may already have learned from media reports, yesterday the U.S. District Court of Maryland granted the request filed by New England Yearly Meeting, our neighboring yearly meetings, and other people of faith challenging the new administration's policy allowing indiscriminate immigration enforcement in houses of worship. This means, in part, that the Department of Home-

land Security is now barred from conducting immigration enforcement activities in Friends Meetings, except under very limited circumstances, and only then with explicit authorization.

While the current injunction is for the time being limited only to Friends meetings, Baptist churches, and Sikh gurdwaras which were plaintiffs in the suit, this is a small but meaningful step forward—and this witness continues.

New England Friends, alongside our neighbors in Philadelphia, New York, and Baltimore Yearly Meetings, as well as our Baptist and Sikh friends and co-plaintiffs, now have the opportunity to affirm, as we have since the beginnings of this lawsuit, that all people—not only Quakers, Sikhs, and Baptists—have the right to participate in worshipping communities without fear of indiscriminate immigration enforcement or intimidation by armed government agents.

A press release on behalf of our shared efforts from Democracy Forward, the nonpartisan legal advocacy organization which is providing legal representation for our Yearly Meeting and our co-plaintiffs, which includes more details and quotations from several of the plaintiffs, is [available here](#). Resources supporting your local meeting and further information about the lawsuit are being maintained on the Yearly Meeting's website [here](#).

If Friends in New England have further questions about this most recent positive development in the lawsuit, or about the implications for your meeting, please contact Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, at [ymsec@neym.org](mailto:ymsec@neym.org).

We are deeply grateful for the Court's acknowledgement, in part, of this fundamental right. We look forward to the opportunity to continue to pursue this witness in whatever ways we and our partners may be led and able in the coming days and months, both as this case moves forward, and through other means. And we give thanks for the prayers, letters and minutes of support, financial contributions, and partnership of so many Friends and meetings in recent weeks. And we give thanks that we are in this together as a community of faith.

In the Light that shows the way,

REBECCA LEUCHAK, PRESIDING CLERK

NOAH MERRILL, YEARLY MEETING SECRETARY

## Unity Agenda Materials

### Yearly Meeting Nominating Report

The nominating slate appears on **page 26**.

### Bank Resolutions

The following resolutions are brought by the Finance Committee:

1. That Marian L. Dalton be appointed New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (NEYM) Treasurer until a successor is appointed and qualified.
2. That Marian L. Dalton, NEYM Treasurer; and Noah Merrill, NEYM Secretary, be individually authorized to open and close bank accounts in the name of NEYM as needed.
3. That Noah Merrill, NEYM Secretary; Marian L. Dalton, NEYM Treasurer; and Phillip Veatch, NEYM Presiding Clerk; be designated as alternate signers, individually, of all bank accounts in the name of NEYM.
4. That Kate Thornburg Monahan be appointed Friends Camp Treasurer until a successor is appointed and qualified.
5. That Kate Thornburg Monahan, Friends Camp Treasurer; and Anna Hopkins Buller, Friends Camp Director, be individually authorized to open and close bank accounts in the name of NEYM for the benefit of Friends Camp as needed.

6. That Anna Hopkins Buller, Friends Camp Director; Kate Thornburg Monahan, Friends Camp Treasurer; and Natalie Bornstein, Friends Camp Committee clerk, be authorized, individually, as signers of accounts held in the name of NEYM for the benefit of Friends Camp.

### Meeting Accompaniment Group Purpose, Procedures and Composition

#### Purpose

The Meeting Accompaniment Group, charged with a function of Ministry and Counsel (M&C), works closely with the M&C Clerk, Yearly Meeting Secretary, and Presiding Clerk to bring sustained and prayerful accompaniment to local meetings and quarters, with particular attention to walking alongside Friends serving their meetings in leadership roles.

#### Procedures

Accompaniment Group seeks to support and increase the capacity of meetings themselves to respond to the challenges they encounter. As needed or requested by Friends serving in local meetings, Accompaniment Group, meeting monthly and working in partnership with quarterly meetings, where possible and appropriate, assists with referrals to other Friends, including local meetings with relevant experience, and resources related to a wide range of concerns

Friends serving as part of this body:

- Connect with clerks of meetings and quarters, as well as clerks of their M&Cs, regarding the life of the meeting
- Visit meetings
- Provide specific support and presence with monthly and quarterly meetings in times of a particular need for accompaniment
- Read and reflect on state of society reports
- Pay attention to news shared in local meeting newsletters
- Consider reports of Friends traveling and visiting
- Participate regularly in monthly meeting leader calls, and contribute insights to planning for these calls
- Support and attend wider NEYM events, including Meeting Care Day, Meeting for Listening, Living Faith and Sessions
- Ensure appropriate information sharing with relevant partners (M&C Clerk, Secretary, Presiding Clerk, staff), in ways that are consistent and timely while maintaining appropriate confidentiality
- Coordinate and consult with the Ministry and Eldership Resource Group
- Invite Friends to join in this work as needed, in support of particular situations or needs for accompaniment.
- Offer insights to inform the annual NEYM State of Society report

#### Composition

Five to seven Friends, nominated by the NEYM Nominating Committee, with a clerk also nominated by the NEYM Nominating Committee, approved by the Yearly Meeting.

In consideration of the diversities of context across our region, local meetings and quarters are encouraged to suggest Friends with relevant gifts for consideration by the Nominating Committee to serve as part of this group.

The Presiding Clerk, Clerk of NEYM M&C and Yearly Meeting Secretary serve ex officio as members of this group.

The clerk of this group serves as a member of the Coordinating & Advisory Committee and ex officio on the Ministry and Eldership Resource Group



**Term of Service:** Given the importance of ongoing trusting relationships, context, and experience in this work, Friends will be nominated for staggered, renewable five-year terms.

**Gifts and experience needed:** Spiritual and emotional maturity, gifts in oversight, pastoral care, and accompaniment, conflict resolution, prayerful holding, boundary-setting, communication, and administration. Capacity for holding sensitive matters in confidence, with consultation as needed. Experience (past or present) serving in leadership roles in their own local meeting. Experience walking with those in servant leadership roles, mentoring, being a non-anxious presence. Joy in connection with Friends, love for and commitment to the nurture of local meetings as the foundation of Friends' life together..

### Minute to Authorize Edits and Corrections

Friends authorize the presiding, recording, and reading clerks to make and approve edits, clarifications, and corrections to the minutes of NEYM Sessions 2025.

### Present Concerns in Our Quarters

#### Falmouth Quarter Minute of Solidarity with the LGBTQIA Community

We received with appreciation the minutes in support of our queer community and family from Brunswick and Durham and the letter of concern from Portland, and wish to state the view of Falmouth Quarterly Meeting that as Quakers we unite in celebrating our belief in the diversity of God's creation. We ask all meetings in NEYM to discern the appropriate actions to be taken in this time of urgency.

We ask our clerk Fritz to share this minute and these documents with the Presiding Clerk and request time at Sessions to discuss this issue.

Friends approved this preamble and the minute requesting Fritz's role at Sessions.

#### **Brunswick Friends Meeting Minute of Solidarity with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) Community<sup>1</sup>**

People who would extinguish freedom have historically targeted others in society who are the most vulnerable and disregarded—individuals and groups with the fewest allies who are willing to defend them. Today's attack is directed at members of the LGBTQIA community—and especially trans people, this minority-within-a-minority that does not conform to conventional norms of gender expression and gender identity, and who can most easily be "othered."

The viciousness and danger of this assault is reflected in the threats that are now issued publicly without shame or qualification. "Transgenderism," a recent speaker at a Conservative Political Action Committee [CPAC] meeting proclaimed, "must be eradicated from our public life," a chilling use of the language of hatred. And in grim confirmation of the seriousness of this intent, the flood of recent state laws prohibiting gender-affirming care (not only for children and adolescents but also for adults) will, to a certainty, multiply the cost in trans lives beyond the already intolerable levels of violence, murder, and suicide that plague this beleaguered community, effectively eradicating trans individuals.

Brunswick Friends Meeting deeply value the advances in civil rights for the broader queer community and are aware this vulnerable group is under attack. Opponents to LGBTQIA rights call on the Supreme Court majority to re-legitimize anti-sodomy laws and to reverse marriage equality. Furthermore, not content with crusading domestically, some US-based anti-LGBTQIA activists have actively supported anti-LGBTQIA laws and campaigns beyond our shores—most alarmingly in

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from a similar minute by Quakers in Germantown Monthly Meeting and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in Pennsylvania



Uganda, where the recent “Kill the Gays” law imposed the death penalty for so-called “aggravated homosexuality.”

In such a climate, mere assurances of tolerance, acceptance, goodwill, and even support are no longer enough from those who stand for justice and equality. Brunswick Friends Meeting commits itself to stand in solidarity with LGBTQIA people everywhere, in ways including:

- Declaring to the world that all individuals are by right entitled to the sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression that are authentically theirs, and actively campaigning for laws and policies that reflect this testimony;
- Promising to provide a safe space for all LGBTQIA members, attendees, and other individuals who reach out to us;
- Pledging to continually educate ourselves on issues of concern to the queer community and charging our committees to consider how LGBTQIA issues impact their work and how they can contribute to advancing justice and equality;
- Pledging to be allies in word and deed.

### **Minute, Durham Friends Monthly Meeting (NEYM), June 15, 2025**

Durham Friends Meeting considered the Brunswick Friends Meeting on Solidarity with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) Community at its June 15, 2025, Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. Broadly in unity with the concern of the Brunswick Minute, we approved the following statement.

Durham Friends Meeting approved a Minute on Sexual Orientation in February 2004 (see below). We are distressed that the issues it addresses are still contentious and that there are those who seek to establish and enforce a different understanding, one that would denigrate some among us.

Today, in 2025, we celebrate the wonderful diversity of human beings in this world, including diversity in sexual orientation and gender identity.

We affirm our commitment to seeing all human beings as children of God. We decry any denial of this diversity, and decry recent efforts through law and shaming to insist on the binary classification of all human beings as only “male” or “female,” established at birth.

We believe that the laws and policies of the United States should reflect and affirm this diversity of human beings with respect to sexual orientation and gender identity, and should accord equal respect to all.

### **Portland Friends Meeting Letter to the Editor of the Portland Press Herald and Affiliated Publications**

To the Editor:

Portland Friends Meeting (Quakers) affirms that our transgender and nonbinary siblings are beloved children of God, and we know that the World is a better place because of them. As people of faith, we feel called to work for justice, including for trans people.

We are living through a terrifying moment, in which people in power are using fear to create enemies out of minority groups for political gain. The focus now is on trans people and immigrants, yet we all stand to lose if we accept the demonization of any child of God. In such a climate, mere assurances of tolerance, acceptance, goodwill, and even support are no longer enough from those who stand for justice and equality.

We have a banner that reads: “We met God: they’re wicked Queer,” made by Queer members of our community. This is true to our experience. God is beyond gender; God is all genders. God is speaking through our transgender and non-binary siblings.

We commit ourselves to act in Maine and everywhere, in ways including:

- Declaring to the World that every individual is entitled to the sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression that is uniquely theirs;
- Actively supporting laws and policies that reflect this truth;
- Promising to provide safe space and refuge for Queer people; and
- Pledging to continually educate ourselves and others on issues of concern to the Queer community.

We urge all people to share in these commitments.

Mary Bachman DeSilva and Jim Grace, Co-clerks of Portland Friends Meeting

#### Israel-Palestine Conflict

Friends are encouraged to read this collection of minutes from the Yearly Meeting and local meetings: <https://neym.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/MInutes%20on%20Israel-Palestine%20conflict.pdf>.

Friends are also encouraged to read the Statement of Conscience from Intermountain Yearly Meeting at <http://bit.ly/4eYJsn6> and minute from Northern Yearly Meeting at <https://bit.ly/3IZiOOU>.

## Budget

<b>New England Yearly Meeting</b> <b>FY2026 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed - SUMMARY</b> Version of 6/18/2025 - Approved by Finance Committee 6/26/2025							
Category	FY2024 Actuals	FY2024 Budget	FY2025 Budget	Δ FY2 to FY26 Budgets	FY2026 Proposed Budget	Notes	FY2026 Sessions placeholder break-out
<b>Income</b>							<i>See note 2</i>
4010 Individual Contributions Total	206,708.78	223,000	228,000	11,000	239,000	1	27,000
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions Total	344,668.47	342,000	345,000	17,250	362,250	3	9,000
4025 Unallocated Income		0	0	10,873	10,873	10	
4030 Organizations Contributions	1,450.00	0	0	500	500		
4050 Interest and Dividend Income	7,172.34	12,000	11,000	(5,288)	5,712	4	
4070 Books & Other Sales Income	\$ 8,677.41	10,500	10,500	(1,700)	8,800	5	8,500.00
4080 Retreat Program Fees	30,422.00	37,500	37,500	3,850	41,350	6	
4085 Sessions Program Fees	161,365.50	249,475	214,895	(13,895)	201,000	2	201,000
4090 Change in Fair Market Value	72.07	0	0	-	0		
4099 Net Assets Released To/From	0.00	5,000	0	-	0		
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 760,536.58</b>	<b>879,475</b>	<b>846,895</b>	<b>22,590</b>	<b>\$ 869,485</b>		<b>\$ 245,500</b>
<b>Expenses</b>							
Total 5000 Staff	\$ 481,169.40	503,842	516,314	1,444	\$ 517,758	7	
Total 5100 General & Administration	\$ 102,604.06	87,449	87,449	6,201	\$ 93,650		\$ 11,000
Total 5300 Travel & Conferences	\$ 31,135.64	22,300	22,300	700	\$ 23,000	8	\$ 2,000
Total 6000 Programs	\$ 201,081.80	256,012	213,850	13,850	\$ 227,700	2	\$ 194,500
Total 6140 Books & Other Sales Expense	\$ 6,743.75	8,000	8,000	(1,000)	\$ 7,000	5	\$ 7,000
Total 6200-6590 Support of Other Organizations	0	0	0	-	\$ 0		
Total 6600 Publications	0	0		-			
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>822,735</b>	<b>877,603</b>	<b>847,913</b>	<b>21,195</b>	<b>\$ 869,108</b>		<b>\$ 214,500</b>
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>(62,198)</b>	<b>1,872</b>	<b>-1,018</b>	<b>1,395</b>	<b>377</b>		<b>31,000</b>
<b>Other Income</b>							
9940 Other Income - Transfers from other funds	5,000						
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<b>5,000</b>						
<b>Other Expenses</b>							
9950 Other Expense - Transfer to other funds							
<b>Total Other Expenses</b>							
<b>Net Other Income</b>	<b>5,000</b>						
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>(57,198)</b>						

<b>New England Yearly Meeting</b> <b>FY2026 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed - DETAIL</b> Version of 6/18/2025 - Approved by Finance Committee 6/26/2025						
Category	FY2024 Actuals	FY2024 Budget	FY2025 Budget	Δ FY25 to FY26 Budgets	FY2026 Proposed Budget	FY2026 Sessions placeholder break-out
<b>Income</b>						See note 2
4010 Individual Contributions						
General Fund Contributions	179,020.78	198,000	201,000	11,000	212,000	1
Pay-As-Led /Equalization Contributions	27,688.00	25,000	27,000	-	27,000	2
4010 Individual Contributions Total	206,708.78	223,000	228,000	11,000	239,000	27,000
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions						
General Fund Contributions	333,973.47	333,000	336,000	17,250	353,250	
Equalization Contributions	10,695.00	9,000	9,000	-	9,000	9,000
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions Total	344,668.47	342,000	345,000	17,250	362,250	3
4025 Unallocated Income		0	0	10,873	10,873	10
4030 Organizations Contributions	1,450.00	0	0	500	500	
4050 Interest and Dividend Income	7,172.34	12,000	11,000	(5,288)	5,712	4
4070 Books & Other Sales Income	8,677.41	10,500	10,500	(1,700)	8,800	5
4077 Consulting Fee Contribution				-		
4080 Retreat Program Fees	30,422.00	37,500	37,500	3,850	41,350	6
4085 Sessions Program Fees	161,365.50	249,475	214,895	(13,895)	201,000	2
4090 Change in Fair Market Value	72.07	0	0	-	0	
4099 Net Assets Released To/From	0.00	5,000	0	-	0	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 760,536.58</b>	<b>879,475</b>	<b>846,895</b>	<b>22,590</b>	<b>\$ 869,485</b>	<b>\$ 245,500</b>
<b>Expenses</b>						
5000 Staff						
5010 Salaries & Wages	360,924.10	380,988	389,236	(59,001)	330,235	7
5037 Housing Allowance				60,000	60,000	
5020 Payroll Taxes	27,077.77	29,146	30,195	(4,472)	25,723	
5030 Benefits				-		
5033 Health Benefits	52,982.14	49,199	51,796	6,603	58,399	
5035 Retirements	36,435.95	38,099	38,924	500	39,424	
5040 Disability	983.41	1,100	1,013	44	1,057	
5045 Workers' Compensation	682.00	760	600	20	620	
5050 Spiritual Retreats	727.00	1,200	1,200	-	1,200	
5060 Staff Development	1,257.03	3,250	3,250	(2,250)	1,000	
5070 Sabbatical & Paid Leave	100.00	100	100	-	100	
Total 5030 Benefits	93,167.53	93,708	96,883	4,917	\$ 101,800	
Total 5000 Staff	481,169.40	503,842	516,314	1,444	\$ 517,758	7
5100 General & Administration						
5110 Administration						
5120 Bank Expense	8,530.37	7,000	7,000	(250)	6,750	3,000
5130 Contracted Services	28,655.71	18,000	18,000	4,500	22,500	6,000
5135 Accounting Services		0	0	-	0	
5140 Legal Services	2,500.00	2,500	2,500	(1,000)	1,500	
5145 Infrastructure		0	0	-	0	
5150 Liability Insurance	6,835.49	5,250	5,250	1,750	7,000	
5160 Payroll Service	7,518.60	5,500	5,500	2,000	7,500	
5170 Recruiting Expense		0	0	-	0	
5180 Rent	9,350.00	9,350	9,350	-	9,350	
5190 Misc. Expense	467.93	0	0	-	0	
Total 5110 Administration	\$ 63,858.10	47,600	47,600	7,000	\$ 54,600	\$ 9,000
5200 Office						
5220 Archives Office Expenses		0	0	-	0	
5220 Cleaning Services	300.00	299	299	1	300	
5230 Maint - Equip & Hardware	89.99	500	500	(400)	100	
5240 Postage	2,200.39	3,750	3,750	(150)	3,600	100
5250 Office Equipment	237.55	1,500	1,500	(500)	1,000	
5260 Office Supplies	1,539.57	1,600	1,600	400	2,000	500
5270 Printing & Copying	7,415.95	9,500	9,500	(4,150)	5,350	500
5280 Software & Updates	23,017.05	19,000	19,000	3,700	22,700	700
5290 Telephone	3,833.26	3,700	3,700	300	4,000	200
5295 Misc. Office	112.20	0	0	-	0	
Total 5200 Office	\$ 38,745.96	39,849	39,849	(799)	\$ 39,050	\$ 2,000
Total 5100 General & Administration	\$ 102,604.06	87,449	87,449	6,201	\$ 93,650	\$ 11,000

Category	FY2024 Actuals	FY2024 Budget	FY2025 Budget	Δ FY25 to FY26 Budgets	FY2026 Proposed Budget	Notes	FY2026 Sessions placeholder break-out
<b>5300 Travel &amp; Conferences</b>							
5310 Travel - Committee	1,536.36	1,400	1,400	100	1,500		
5320 Travel - Clerk	4,990.75	2,500	2,500	500	3,000		
5330 Travel - Programs	3,853.02	3,100	4,100	(300)	3,800		
5335 Travel - Representatives Travel	8,299.70	2,000	2,000	400	2,400		
5350 Travel - Staff	12,455.81	12,900	11,900	-	11,900		2,000
5360 Travel - Ministries		400	400	-	400		
<b>Total 5300 Travel &amp; Conferences</b>	<b>\$ 31,135.64</b>	<b>22,300</b>	<b>22,300</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>\$ 23,000</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>\$ 2,000</b>
<b>6000 Programs</b>							
6110 Sessions Room & Board	127,106.70	169,442	135,570	35,930	171,500	2	171,500
6112 Retreats - Room & Board				-	0		
6114 Room Rental	13,988.00	10,000	10,000	1,700	11,700		
6150 Food Expense	9,413.65	10,000	10,000	(550)	9,450		
<b>Total 6112 Retreats - Room &amp; Board</b>	<b>\$ 23,401.65</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>1,150</b>	<b>\$ 21,150</b>		<b>\$ 0</b>
<b>6125 Program Expenses</b>							
6105 Honoraria - Speakers/Wkshp Ldrs	16,796.92	24,000	21,000	(3,000)	18,000		14,500
6107 Honoraria - Volunteer Leadership	11,250.00	15,000	15,000	(10,500)	4,500	9	
6115 Equipment Rental	7,708.79	6,500	6,500	(2,500)	4,000		4,000
6121 Supplies and Other Expenses	8,068.30	9,000	5,000	400	5,400		3,000
6165 Pre-Sessions Expense	1,409.44	1,500	1,500	-	1,500		1,500
<b>Total 6125 Program Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 45,233.45</b>	<b>56,000</b>	<b>49,000</b>	<b>(15,600)</b>	<b>\$ 33,400</b>		<b>\$ 23,000</b>
<b>6130 Committee Expenses - General</b>	<b>2,100.00</b>	<b>6,350</b>	<b>4,400</b>	<b>(3,150)</b>	<b>1,250</b>		
6134 Childcare		2,000	2,000	(1,600)	400		
6137 Committee Day Expenses		0	0	-	0		
<b>Total 6130 Committee Expenses - General</b>	<b>2,100.00</b>	<b>8,350</b>	<b>6,400</b>	<b>(4,750)</b>	<b>\$ 1,650</b>		
<b>6160 Program Support</b>							
6163 Friends Camp	3,240.00	2,220	2,880	(2,880)	0		
6167 Religious Education & Outreach		0	0	-	0		
<b>Total 6160 Program Support</b>	<b>\$ 3,240.00</b>	<b>2,220</b>	<b>2,880</b>	<b>(2,880)</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>		
<b>Total 6000 Programs</b>	<b>\$ 201,081.80</b>	<b>256,012</b>	<b>213,850</b>	<b>13,850</b>	<b>\$ 227,700</b>		<b>\$ 194,500</b>
<b>6140 Books &amp; Other Sales Expense</b>							
6142 Books	3,568.64	8,000	8,000	(4,400)	3,600		3,600
6145 Other Items for Sale		0	0	-	0		0
6147 Consignment Sales	3,175.11	0	0	3,400	3,400		3,400
<b>Total 6140 Books &amp; Other Sales Expense</b>	<b>\$ 6,743.75</b>	<b>8,000</b>	<b>8,000</b>	<b>(1,000)</b>	<b>\$ 7,000</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>\$ 7,000</b>
<b>Total 6200-6590 Support of Other Organizations</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>		
<b>6600 Publications</b>							
6610 Yearly Meeting Minute Book		0		-	0		
6620 New England Friend (Sessions Issue)		0		-	0		
<b>Total 6600 Publications</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>-</b>			
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>822,735</b>	<b>877,603</b>	<b>847,913</b>	<b>21,195</b>	<b>\$ 869,108</b>		<b>\$ 214,500</b>
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>(62,198)</b>	<b>1,872</b>	<b>-1,018</b>	<b>1,395</b>	<b>377</b>		<b>31,000</b>
<b>Other Income</b>							
9940 Other Income - Transfers from other funds	5,000						
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<b>5,000</b>						
<b>Other Expenses</b>							
9950 Other Expense - Transfer to other funds							
<b>Total Other Expenses</b>							
<b>Net Other Income</b>	<b>5,000</b>						
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>(57,198)</b>				<b>377</b>		

**Notes:**

1: **4010 Individual Contributions** estimated goal based on development consultant work: 5% growth FY25-FY26.

Growth rate FY22-FY24 has been 9.4% per year. FY15-FY19 was 13.7%; within that, FY16-19 was 17.6%. FY15-FY24 was 5.6%, and FY2008-FY2024 was 6.5%

2: **Sessions** 2026 budget is largely unknown. The last column breaks out "placeholder" Sessions numbers; the FY2026 Budget column still includes Sessions.

This budget is hypothetical, projecting the continuation of costs and income that we have seen in recent years.

In 2014-2019, the Sessions budget (which does not include staff time) had an average surplus of \$31,700 each year.

The model was that Sessions paid for part of the staff time needed to organize it, while unrestricted contributions covered the rest.

This FY26 Sessions budget model is still entirely hypothetical, but plans for a surplus of Sessions fees in line with pre-pandemic years.

3: **4020 Meeting contributions** for FY25 are projected at about \$350,200 (albeit including about \$5200 in one-time lawsuit contributions).

This FY26 budget is based on about a 5% increase from FY25 not counting lawsuit contributions.

4: **4050 Interest Income** based on bank account interest Q4 CY24 + Endowment interest Q4 CY24

5: **Bookstore** at Sessions adds about \$800 of profit based on 2024

6: **4080 Retreat Program Fee** income increased - based on successful surpluses for Living Faith & Discernment Discovery Day.

7. **Staff salary/wage** increase by cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) of 3%, rough average CPI for Boston metro 2024. Some mutually-agreed on reductions in wages or COLAs kept the increase lower than previous years. Recent previous COLAs have been: FY25 2.0%, FY24 6.1%, FY23 6.3%, FY22 0.5%, FY21 2.22%.

8. **5300 Travel**: Assumes management of travel expenses. 2026 is a Triennial year for FUM, usually meaning higher Reps Travel usage. YM can negotiate number of reps we fund.

9. **6107 Honoraria for Volunteer Leadership** reduced following the minute on laying it down: continue offering payments until terms of current appointees end at EOY FY26.

10. **Unallocated Income**: Propose an admin fee of 0.6% on our Pooled Funds investments. Admin fees are common for nonprofits; support accounting & associated programs.

## Nominating Slate

For full descriptions of the committees, see <https://neym.org/committees>.

These nominations are from the Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee. Please be in touch with the Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee clerk, Jackie Stillwell (nomclerk@neym.org or 603-933-2608) or rising clerk Sadie Forsythe (nomclerk@neym.org or 215-360-1815) with questions or concerns.

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

2026	2027	2028
Weaver, Hal (Well)	Eaton, Bob (Durh)	
	Woodrow, Peter (Port)	

### Archives & Historical Records (6)

2026	2027	2028
Schmidt, Maxine (Nham)	Cazden, Betsy (Prov)	Grannell, Andy (Port)
2029	2030	
Barker, Mark (Con)		
Kohlhofer, Merrill (NSho)		

### Board of Managers of Investments & Permanent Funds (10)

*Ex-officio: Yearly Meeting Secretary, Treasurer, Finance Committee clerk*

2026	2027	2028
Wernette, Tim (Win)	Eastman, David (Han)	
	Hackman, Mathew (Prov)	
	Ridgeway, John (Mt. Toby)	
2029	2030	
	<b>Bennett, Doug (Durh)</b>	

### Clerks' Table

2026	2027	2028
Grace, Jesse (Bhil), Reading	Veatch, Phillip (Fpon), Presiding Clerk	<b>Bickel, Sarah (Bhil), Reading</b>
	Conley, Mark (Prov), Recording	<b>Lightsom, Fran (Wfal), Recording</b>
Bussiere-Nichols, Beth (Port), Interim Reading Clerk for 2025		

### Faith & Practice (16)

Athearn, Marian (Wprt)	McCosker, Phebe* (Han)	
<b>Bishop, Peter (Nham)</b>	Neumann, Bruce (Fpon)	
Edmondson, Maggie (Wint)	Parkes, Alana (Bhil)	
Edwards, Eric (Wfal)	Reilly, Sue (Port)	
Godway, Eleanor (Hart)		
Hilles-Pilant, Carolyn (Bhil)		



**Finance (10)***Ex-officio: Yearly Meeting Secretary, Accounts Manager, Yearly Meeting Treasurer*

2026

Corindia, Thomas (Han)  
Keith, Doug (Hart)\*

2027

Walker, Stefan (Nham)

2028

**Belcher, Travis (Mon)**

2029

2030

**Mangelsdorf, Martha (Nbed)****Friends Camp Nominating (5) (3 named by NEYM Nominating, 2 named by Friends Camp Committee)***Ex-officio: Friends Camp Director*

2026

2027

Baker, Carol (Wrly)\*

2028

**Reuthe, John (Vass)****Friends Committee on National Legislation (6)**

2026

Drysdale, Scot (Han)  
Telenar, Kaj (Wel)

2027

Fletcher, John (Wrly)  
Smith, Sara (Conc)

2028

**Grace, James (Port)****Friends General Conference Central Committee Representatives (8)**

2026

2027

Dakota, Barbara (West)  
Farneth, Sally (Port)

2028

**Potter, Kit (Fram)****Friends Peace Teams Project (3)**

Claggett-Borne, Minga (Camb)

**Friends United Meeting 2023 Triennial Representatives (8, appointed to serve until the 2026 Triennial)**Fogarty, Maggie (Dov)  
Heath, Ruth (Conc)Walker, Stefan (Nham)  
Weaver, Hal (Well)Weinholtz, Diane (Hart)  
Weinholtz, Donn (Hart)**FUM General Board Representatives (3, appointed to attend 2023 Triennial and serve until the 2026 Triennial)**

Keefe-Perry, Kristina (Fpon)

Smith, Jennifer (Conc)

**Friends World Committee for Consultation Representatives (5)***Ex-officio: Yearly Meeting Secretary*

2026

2027

2028

**Goldberger, Judy (Bhil)****Legacy Gift Committee (9)***Ex-officio: Presiding Clerk, Permanent Board clerk*

2026

Candib, Lucy (Worc)

2027

Reixach, Karen (Keene)\*  
Vogel-Borne, Jonathan (Camb)

2027

**Christopher, Megan (Well)\*\***

**Meeting Accompaniment Group (5 to 7; 5-year terms)***Ex-officio: Yearly Meeting Secretary, Presiding Clerk, M&C Clerk***2028**

Baker-Smith, Gretchen (Wprt)

Gant, Sarah (Bhil)\*

McArthur, Hugh (Han)

Wilson, Morgan (Fram)

Woodrow, Honor (Putn)

**2029**

Stamm, Liesa (Hart)

**2030****Ministry & Counsel Clerk****2028****Hough, Janet (Cob)****M&C Assistant Clerk****2026 (February)**

Williams, Carl (Pfld)

**Ministry & Eldership Group, Thriving in (5 to 7)****2030****Monroe, Bill (Prov)**

Isbell Shin, Jennie (MTob)

Lyons, Jim (MTob)

**2030****Drayton, Brian (Weare)****Nominating Committee, Yearly Meeting (15)****2026**

Gant, Christopher (Bhill)

Hansen, Beth (Wrly)\*\*

Lamm, Thomas (Worc)

Schwope, Martha (Well)

**2027**

Manning, Leslie (Durh)

**2028****Drayton, Darcy (Weare)**

Forsythe, Sadie (Putn)\*

**Nurturing Friends Education, Committee for (12)** (6 nominated by Providence Mtg, NEYM; 6 nominated by Moses Brown)*Ex-officio: Presiding Clerk or Permanent Board clerk, Moses Brown Board clerk***2026**

Smith, Megan (Prov)

Douthit, Zona (Prov)

**2027**

Bourns, David (Prov)\*

**2028****Monroe, Bill (Prov)****Hopkins Buller, Anna (Well)****Permanent Board (50)****2026**

Allen, Kimberly (Durh)

Davies, Susan (Vass)\*

**Hansen, Beth (Wrly)**

Schwope, Martha (Well)

Zwirner, Mary (Bhill)

**2027**

Brenner, Tom (Worc)

Drayton, Darcy (Weare)

Isbell Shinn, Newell (Mt Toby)

Jordan, Carolyn Lamar (WFal)

Klepack, Meg (WSan)

Stamm, Liesa (Hart)

**2028**

Forsythe, Martin (Bhill)

Mair, Edward (Ames)

Randall, Allison (Keene)

Taber, Willa (Fpon)

**Permanent Board (continued)**

2029

Belcher, Travis (Mon)

2030

*Lightsom, Fran (Wfal)*

Forsythe, Carol (Putn)

McDonald, LouAnne (Hart)

Vaccaro, Palma (Hart)

*Wilson, Morgan (Fram)**Wooten, Kathleen (Lawr)***Puente de Amigos (9)**

2026

*McManamy, Em (Prov)**Schmidt, Macci (Nham)*

2027

*Stone, Carolyn (Well)\**

2028

*Lindo, Richard (Fram)\****Quaker Earthcare Witness (1)**

Blanchard, Neil (Fram)

**Theme and Speakers Team, Sessions (5; two-year terms)***Ex-officio: Sessions Clerk\**

2026

Claggett-Borne, Minga (Camb)

Melix, Gail (Esan)

2027

Rein, Carol (Nshr)

Drayton, Brian (Weare)

**Youth Ministries (6)***Ex-officio: Children & Family Ministries Coord., Teen Ministries & Outreach Coord., Program Director*

2026

Barletta, Newton (Fram)

Corindia, Nancy (Han)\*

2027

Becce, Melissa (Hart)

Gray, Heather (Fram)

2028

**Wooten, Maille (Lawr)**

## 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

## 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

### Faith & Practice Revision

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)

### Legacy Gift

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).

---

### Puente de Amigos

---

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

---

### Sessions

---

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

---

### Youth Ministries

---

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