

Sessions Planning Annual Report 2025

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