



2025 Minutes

of the Annual Sessions
of the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends

Three Hundred Sixty-Fifth Year
University of Massachusetts | Amherst, Massachusetts
August 1–6, 2025

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2025 New England Yearly Meeting Sessions Schedule

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

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

¹Choices 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

2025 Sessions Coordinators, Officers, Speakers, and Staff

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

* = YM Staff

2025 Youth Program Coordinators and Staff

Under 5s

Coords: Rainer Humphries, Carol Baker

Abigail Adams
Erica Bowden
Brooke Burkett
Peter Colby
Sadie Greene-Sims
Alison Levie
Paula Rossvall
Lynn Taber

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
Amie 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 Adult Friends

Coord: Glen Cote

Minutes of the Annual Sessions

Opening Ceremony, Saturday Morning, August 2, 2025, 9:30 to 10:15 a.m.

2025-1 Opening

Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak (Providence) welcomed Friends to the 365th New England Yearly Meeting Sessions, August 1 through 6, 2025, acknowledging Friends from all over the world who were attending virtually and on the University of Massachusetts Amherst Campus.

The Presiding Clerk spoke to this year's theme, "Streams in the Desert," encouraging Friends gathered to think of themselves as streams gathered in this place for refreshment and renewal, putting our attention during these challenging times on the love that is eternal, acknowledging the power God gives and the grace God bestows.

Members of the Clerks' table introduced themselves to the body with their meeting affiliations, pronouns, and on whose Indigenous territory they reside:

- Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak (Providence) on Narragansett, Wampanoag, and Pequot lands
- Recording clerks Megan Jensen (Monadnock) on Abenaki lands and Mark Conley (Providence) on Narragansett, Wampanoag, and Niantic lands
- Reading clerks Beth Bussiere-Nichols (Portland) on the land of the Wabanaki Alliance and Jesse Grace (West Richmond Friends Meeting, New Association of Friends) on Wabanaki land

Suzanna Schell (Beacon Hill) read an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement, a version of which will be shared at the opening of each of our sessions for business this week to orient us in relationship with and awareness of the unceded Indigenous sovereign territory on which we met.

Over the week, we will open meeting for business sessions with variations of the Land Acknowledgement statement. The optional paragraphs in the middle of the Acknowledgement, chosen as led, offer a different way to consider our relationship with indigenous peoples and our shared history, relevant to the business at hand.

The Land Acknowledgement is appended to these minutes (see page 29).

In this first meeting, the "New England Name" paragraph was read.

The reading clerks introduced this morning's elders, who held the meeting in prayer: Chris Jorgenson (Cambridge), Robert Dove McClellan (Fresh Pond), and Carole Rein (North Shore). They also introduced members of the pastoral care team: Susan Davies (Vassalboro), clerk; Jackie Stillwell (Monadnock), Janet Hough (Cobscook), Sadie Forsythe (Putney), Sarah Gant (Beacon Hill), Kristina Keefe-Perry (Three Rivers), and Jay O'Hara (Portland), and offered a few announcements and updates.

2025-2 Visitors

The Presiding Clerk welcomed visitors from other yearly meetings and representatives from organizations, inviting them to introduce themselves. The list in this minute includes all who introduced themselves over the course of business meetings at Sessions 2025

Yana Landowne, Brooklyn MM, New York YM (NYYM) and Miami FM, Southeastern YM
 Willis Monroe, New Brunswick MM, Canada YM
 Katrina McConaughy, Plainfield FM (IN), Western YM
 Sean McConaughy, Western YM Superintendent
 Chelsea Comas, Quaker United Nations Office
 Anne Pomeroy, New Paltz MM, NYYM

Megan Fair, Wilmington (OH) MM and YM, Right Sharing of World Resources

Edith Landowne, Miami FM, Southeastern YM

Gil George, West Hills FM, Portland, OR; Sierra Cascades YM, Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC)

Shelly Costa, Swarthmore MM, Philadelphia YM

Sarah Gada, Manasquan MM (NJ); Friends Publishing Corporation

Alison Forrester, York MM, Britain YM

S Y Bowland, Morningside MM, NYYM

Windy Cooler, Sandy Spring MM, Baltimore YM

Katie Titus, Moses Brown School

Eric Wilker, Moses Brown School

April Richer, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), NH Office

Greg Sebanski, Burlington MM; Quaker Voluntary Service

Lyle Miller, Everence Stewardship Consultant

Liz Yeats, Friends Meeting of Austin (TX), South Central YM; *Yearly Meeting News* Editor

Curt Torell, Board of Quaker House (Fayetteville, NC)

James Underberg, NYYM

Susan Nahvi, Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)

Rania Ma'ayeh, Head of Ramallah Friends School

Kelly Kellum, General Secretary, Friends United Meeting (FUM)

Pamela Williams, Germantown MM, Philadelphia YM

Rick Wilson, AFSC

Laura Everett, Executive Director, Mass. Council of Churches

2025-3 Sessions Worship Opportunities

Kristina Keefe Perry (Three Rivers) spoke of the worship opportunities this week, pointing out that there are worship formats for Friends of diverse ages, traditions, and spiritual conditions, on campus and virtually.

Kristina also encouraged Friends to consider if they feel called to volunteer their spiritual gifts as elders or mic spacers for events this week. She closed by sharing the poem "Blessing the Threshold" by Jan Richardson, which concludes:

*And now that
you are here,
this blessing
can hardly believe
its good fortune
that you have finally arrived,
that it can drop everything
at last
to fling its arms wide
to you, crying
welcome,
welcome,
welcome.*

2025-4 Tending to Each Other

The Presiding Clerk asked that we be mindful of holding one another tenderly in our interactions this week, recognizing our own and others' individual fragility and fallibility, and appreciating

that we have many opportunities for mutual growth and support, challenging each other in loving shared experience.

2025-5 Roll Call

Friends were encouraged to wave and joyfully greet each other as the reading clerks introduced each quarterly and monthly meeting.

First-time attenders were especially welcomed with a cheer from the gathered body.

2025-6 Spanish Language Interpretation Appreciation and Best Practice

Judy Goldberger and Jennifer Newman (both of Beacon Hill) oriented the gathered Friends to the practice of sequential interpretation that we will be using for our Bible Half Hours, requesting that Friends be mindful about leaving appropriate pauses for interpreters.

2025-7 Closing

Friends settled into a period of worship, and Reading Clerk Jesse Grace led the body in singing “Rise and Shine.”

Kara Price (Storrs) then introduced the youth programming leaders and staff, welcomed all ages to stay for the Bible Half Hour, and oriented families to the young peoples’ schedule and offerings for the rest of the day.

Kenzie Burpee (Worcester), JYM grades 1–6

Amy Greene (Cambridge), JHYM grades 6–12

Collee Williams (Northampton), Young Friends

Glen Cote (Cambridge), Young Adult Friends

2025-8 Bible Half Hours

Kirenía Criado Pérez (Havana, Cuba YM) presented the Bible Half Hours. Kirenía organized her remarks from two different perspectives on the Bible passages from the book of Isaiah which inspired this Yearly Meeting’s theme “Streams in the Desert.” First, she situated this chapter in the cultural and historical conditions of the times in which it was written, as she explained, in three major sections. Comparison with other parts of the Bible composed in the same period (Psalm 37 and the Book of Jeremiah) reveals a theme of contrast: two lands with big rivers, gardens, and abundance, two empires separated by a very hostile desert environment, and a journey the Hebrews took in fleeing Egypt in their search for the promised land, which represents an extreme challenge that may be read as parallel to our own times.

Exodus, according to Kirenía, is used in the Bible as a symbolic event that works as catalyst for shifting from one reality to another. It is a fusion of ideas of resistance and struggle against oppression. The overarching idea of the Biblical recounting of the Babylonian exile is that the faithful are not abandoned, that the desert is the place to feel and understand the presence of God. A presence without which we cannot move forward to a new reality. We cannot achieve transformation until we are clear about what inspires and directs us.

In addition to this historical situating, she explored the way that Isaiah can be understood from the perspective of contemporary Quaker spirituality. We too are living the times of the desert exile as a people of faith. In the desert we recognize each other as equals and that the only way to survive is through love. It is in the desert that God gives us signs of the plenitude of his love and his peace.

We need to find our strength in community, to act in unity. But we also need to discern individual ways to make miracles. As a people united, do we have the patience and fortitude to trust in the promise from the Holy One: “Now it shall come to light. Shall you not know it? I will make a road through the wilderness and rivers in the desert” (Isaiah 43:19). Kirenía reminded us that God needs us. We are God’s hands, God’s ears, God’s eyes. She asked, “What is Spirit calling us to in this time?”

Here is where the drama begins, she announced. “We are living in desert times, but something new is coming.” God is calling us to look, not backward from whence we came, but ahead to lean forward into the transformation that is possible and the creation of this new world!

We were well nourished and are grateful for Kirenia’s ministry delivered with compassionate wisdom and more than a little humor. Her message enriched our discernment and connected many threads of our week’s experience. She was accompanied during each Bible Half Hour throughout the week by elders for the body, including Betsy Cazden (Providence), Mary Chenaille (Worcester), Mey Hasbrook (Three Rivers), Chris Jorgenson (Cambridge), Phyllis Keenan (Northampton), Merrill Kohlhofer (North Shore), Jennifer McFadden (Providence), April Merleaux (Northampton), Wendy Schlotterbeck (Durham), and Virginia Swain (Worcester).

Sequential interpretation from Spanish to English was provided by Friends Mary Hopkins (Fresh Pond), Judy Goldberg (Beacon Hill), and Benigno Sanchez-Eppler (Northampton).

Yearly Meeting staff will post Kirenia Criado Pérez’s full Bible Half Hours on the website.

Saturday Afternoon, August 2, 2025, 1:15 to 3:15 p.m.

2025-9 Opening

Meeting for Business sessions reconvened, centering with the song “Each Sacred Breath” by Sarina Partridge, led by E.C. Piper (Mt. Toby).

Friends Ruah Swennerfelt (Middlebury), Robert Dove McClellan (Fresh Pond), Newell Isbell Shinn (Mt. Toby), Carol Rein (North Shore), and Phebe McCosker (Hanover) served as elders.

The Presiding Clerk welcomed Friends to settle into waiting worship and Minga Claggett-Borne (Cambridge) oriented our business towards right relationship with the indigenous Land Acknowledgement, with the “Amherst” optional paragraph selected (see page 29).

Our reading clerks offered some housekeeping reminders and daily announcements.

2025-10 Requests from the recording clerks

To conserve time for our most worshipful work as a body, the recording clerks proposed to read back only those minutes that record a decision or otherwise test our sense of unity, but not all minutes of record or procedure.

Acknowledging that this depends on some judgment about which minutes call for shared approval, Friends were welcomed to ask to hear back any minutes they believe should be checked by the full body. Friends can review and add comments to a rough draft of Sessions minutes that can be found on the Linktree page.

Secondly, it can be helpful to refer to a saved record of the auto-generated text transcripts of our business. Sometimes recording clerks miss a detail such as a name or a date in notetaking.

Friends approved the recording clerks’ request to selectively read back minutes, and to temporarily retain transcripts from Sessions meeting for business for review, just until the 2025 minutes are finalized.

2025-11 Visitors

The Presiding Clerk welcomed visitors from other yearly meetings or Quaker organizations to introduce themselves. A full list of visitors to the 2025 Sessions can be found in the minutes for Saturday (see Minute 2025-2).

2025-12 A Message from the New England Yearly Meeting Secretary

New England Yearly Meeting Secretary Noah Merrill (Putney) testified about his past experiences bearing witness to religious violence and political oppression that crystallized a keen anger, frustration, and bitterness in him.

He cautioned that in his yearning for justice and his commitment to spreading awareness of atrocity, he fell prey to a kind of Gospel of despair and anguish, that lacked an invitation to Life, to that infinite ocean of light and love that flows over the ocean of darkness visioned by George Fox in his own time of violence and unrest.

The testimony of a profoundly persecuted Christian Iraqi refugee in Syria radically reoriented Noah's heart away from the grip of anger, and toward the transformative power of divine peace, love, and joy.

Choosing joy, Noah urged us, is not to opt for passivity, or individualism, or a denial of oppression. Joy is a true liberation of the human spirit that empowers us to live with conviction and a peace that transcends and can truly confront evil.

We are invited to bear witness to truth, to be in relationship with the Spirit, to be nourished by fellowship, to unbind each others' hearts and to go forth in service to our neighbor, not with the burden of anger, but with the powerful lightness of peace in the most difficult of times.

The full text of Noah's poignant and pertinent message is appended to these minutes (see page 29).

The Presiding Clerk closed meeting with waiting worship, encouraging us to hold the faithful message from Noah on our hearts throughout this week of Sessions and beyond.

2025-13 Faith and Practice Revised Chapter: Testimonies

Phebe McCosker (Hanover), clerk of the Faith and Practice Revision Committee, presented the current draft of the chapter on Testimonies. Sessions participants were invited to give a careful reading of the text, participate in one of the small-group sessions if so called, and offer any feedback to the committee. A further reworked draft will be distributed to monthly meetings to consider for the remainder of the year until the chapter comes back to the next Annual Sessions for approval.

The most essential testimony, from which follow all other Friends' testimonies, is that each of us has within us access to divine truth, guidance, and love. As a way to more personally explore the content of this Faith and Practice chapter and its advices, Phoebe asked the gathered body to participate in an exercise of pairing off and reflecting on the query, "How is the Divine at work in your life today?"

2025-14 Introduction of the New Teen and Outreach Ministries Coordinator

Nia Thomas (Northampton) announced that, as Collee Williams (Northampton) is departing from the role of Teen and Outreach Ministries Coordinator, a search committee—Nia, Kenzie Burpee (Worcester), Newton Barletta (Framingham), Melissa Becce (Hartford), and Noah Bishop Merrill (Putney)—has discerned a new coordinator, Xinef Afriam. Xinef will officially begin serving in this new role in August.

The committee testifies that Xinef brings deep calling, commitment, and experience to this vital role. "Zee" spoke briefly of their enthusiasm and gratitude for this opportunity to show up for young Friends in service to the future of Quakers and our world, to nurture the expression and development of that of God in all.

The Presiding Clerk invited Friends to worshipfully hold our young Friends in the light and share any messages of appreciation or support for the life of the Spirit in our youth.

Friends witnessed that childhood or young adult exposure to Quaker faith, community, and programming (like retreats and Friends Camp) can have a lasting impact on a person's sense of self and

perspective. They carry this out into the world and the rest of their lives, even if not in ways we can always predict or know.

2025-15 Friends Camp Report

Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond), standing in for Friends Camp Director Anna Hopkins Buller, and Friends Camp counselor Sage Paterson (Concord) presented a report on the good and relevant work happening at Friends Camp this year. (See page 49 for Anna's annual report.)

2025-16 Closing

Friends closed the meeting with waiting worship.

Saturday Evening, August 2, 2025, 6:30 to 8:15 p.m.

2025-17 Memorial Meeting

The memorial meeting opened with a period of silence, out of which Kristina Keefe-Perry (Three Rivers) read an intergenerational story, *The Invisible String* by Patrice Karst, while the text and pictures were projected on a large screen.

The 21 memorial minutes were arranged by the quarterly affiliations of the Friends memorialized. For each grouping of one or two quarters, photos of the memorialized Friends were projected on the screen as the memorial minutes were read. After the minutes of each regional grouping were read, those assembled offered reflections coming out of a period of silent reflection.

Sunday Morning, August 3, 2025, 9:00 to 10:00 a.m.

2025-18 All-Ages Meeting for Worship

Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond) welcomed all to the Sunday morning worship. Friends of all ages joined Meg Klepack (Portland), Jay O'Hara (Portland), and Jesse Grace (West Richmond Friends) in an opening song, "Come Let us Sing" (Anonymous). The story *The Invisible Web* by Patrice Karst was read aloud by Rachel Guaraldi (Burlington) and Newell Isbell Shinn (Mt. Toby) while the book's illustrations were projected on overhead screens for Friends to follow along. Kristina then invited Friends into the "visible web" activity, saying that the book tells of how we are all connected, but sometimes we can feel alone—deserted—and dry. She reminded us that our connections to each other and to all of life are like a stream in the desert. Those connections bring us life and remind us that we must tend the ties that connect us. Friends were then encouraged to find a person in the room who they did not know and find some connection. Once established, they would tie together the ribbons they received when they entered. The pair would then reach out to another pair to do the same, creating a four-ribbon length of connection. A period of expectant waiting worship followed. As we concluded worship with the song "I've Got Peace Like a River/Paz Como Rio," Friends were asked to take their tied blue ribbons to a gathering place at the front of the room. There they rested during the rest of the Sessions week, visually reminding all of us of many stream(er)s in the desert.

Sunday Afternoon, August 3, 1:15 to 2:45 p.m.

2025-19 Plenary

Kristin Wilson (Framingham) introduced NEYM 2025 Sessions plenary speaker, Gretchen Baker-Smith (Westport), who is a dear Friend well known and beloved in our community as she has worked for decades in the nurture of our youth programs and the support of our monthly meetings in many ways. She learned from her many years working with the youth of our Yearly Meeting

that the most useful and effective question is often: “How can I help?” It has become in a way, her mantra.

Gretchen shared reflections on her many years of service among Friends and her own perspective on our Yearly Meeting’s spiritual condition. Recognizing that our times are both exquisitely beautiful and horribly ugly, breathtakingly compassionate and terribly mean, brimming with courage and also brutal selfishness, she asked us to lay down for the moment our bundles of care and to come together in listening for the Spirit that is rising among us.

Gretchen invited us into the space of waiting for Spirit to rise among us. And rather than trying hard to think about how we are called, to open ourselves to the message that will come to us if we only listen. She urged us to find the watering holes in the desert of our times and to see these places, for each of us perhaps unique, as the source of hope. And she urged us to act, forgoing perfection, effectiveness, and concern for results. Her hope she finds in our community where each can be faithful in this moment, each of us can help others to do the same.

Gretchen closed with a song that came to her during a year of considerable challenges. A song that she sings and that has been one of her own places for finding hope—a watering hole.

*There is a river
That flows through all beings.
Living water, grace-filled streams.
Whatever you call it
However you pray
This well spring of love
Seeps in all of our days.*

Sunday Afternoon, August 3, 2025, 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

2025-20 Opening

Peter Blood (Mt. Toby) and a group of Friends centered the worshipful reopening of our business sessions by leading us in the song, “Wait in the Light” (w: Alec Davison, m: Tony Biggin).

Friends Maggie Fogarty (Dover), Janet Hough (Cobscook), Ruah Swennerfelt (Middlebury), and Virginia Swain (Worcester) served as elders.

The Presiding Clerk welcomed Friends to settle into waiting worship and Cynthia Ganung (Wellesley) grounded our work together with the Indigenous Land Acknowledgement. The “Peace Testimony” optional paragraph was read at this meeting (see page 29).

Our reading clerks offered some housekeeping reminders and daily announcements.

The Presiding Clerk welcomed visitors from other yearly meetings or representatives from organizations (see list of all visitors in Minute 2025-2).

2025-21 Epistle

Our reading clerks read the 2025 Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting.

2025-22 First Reading of Nominations

Joined by the full committee, Jackie Stillwell (Monadnock), outgoing clerk of the Nominating Committee, spoke of her gratitude to all who are sharing their gifts and allowing Spirit to work through them. This leading of the Spirit may involve committee service, but it also involves our service in the community of Friends and in the world.

The clerk of Nominating Committee directed Friends to give a careful read of the nominating slate in the advance documents, **noting a few changes and additions to the published slate:**

Archives & Historical Records: Charlie Barnard (Worcester), class of 2030

FWCC: Mary Hopkins (Fresh Pond), class of 2027

Legacy Gift: Anne D. Burt (Midcoast), class of 2028

Nominating Committee: Lucy Meadows (Beacon Hill), class of 2028

Remove Carol Forsythe from Permanent Board—nominated for 2030 but wants to wait at least a year before serving

Friends with concerns or suggestions were invited to bring feedback to a member of the Nominating Committee.

2025-23 Ministry and Counsel Report

On behalf of Carl Williams (Burlington), clerk of Ministry and Counsel, Yearly Meeting Secretary Noah Bishop Merrill (Putney) presented a report on experiments in the work of ministry and counsel in our Yearly Meeting.

In recent years, the Yearly Meeting has laid aside the structure of the Ministry and Counsel Committee, noting that its multiple responsibilities were too many for one body to carry.

During this hiatus, the Yearly Meeting has experimented with ways to best meet these responsibilities, whether creating new activities and groups or returning to old forms. Last year (2024) there was a recognition of the need for deepened attention to and prioritization of these responsibilities, which include:

- Conducting a review of purpose, care, and oversight for quarterly meetings
- Creating a “Ministry and Eldership Resource Group”
- Appointing a rising clerk of Ministry and Counsel

This year, there is only one recommendation, which appears in the Unity Agenda: To designate the Meeting Accompaniment Group (a body provisionally charged by the 2022 Sessions to work with monthly meetings in their journeys) as a standing committee of the Yearly Meeting.

The Secretary ended with an image of a “web of care” held by Friends with responsibilities across our Yearly Meeting, all of whom have met regularly in order to discern what new forms might be arising to meet the Yearly Meeting’s spiritual needs.

2025-24 Report from Moses Brown School

Moses Brown School has traditionally provided an annual written report to Sessions. Katie Titus, Head of School for Moses Brown, gave a presentation from the school. She expressed a hope that this will begin a renewal of deeper relationship between the school and the Yearly Meeting.

In her report, she explained the organizational structure of the school and emphasized that more than one third of the board members of the school are Friends. She shared a statistic that 772 students are enrolled, all of whom attend weekly meeting for worship. She included information on ways in which Quaker practice is woven into the life of the school outside of worship.

The school is beginning a process of imagining the future of the school, using the theme of “Lighting the Way.” Part of this reimagining is a closer relationship to the Yearly Meeting. Katie invited Friends to reflect on whether they might be called to enter a relationship with Moses Brown School.

2025-25 Worship and Consideration of Queries on the Conflict in Israel-Palestine

Noting that there are several opportunities this week for Friends to engage with each other and with Spirit on the matter of the Israel-Palestine Conflict, the Presiding Clerk encouraged the gathered body to enter into a worshipful time together, in order to reflect on how our hearts are called.

To center our worship, the body was asked to consider the following queries:

- What are we holding in our hearts as we wrestle with the pain and suffering we see in Palestine and Israel?
- Are we listening in our hearts for the voice of God?

Those assembled entered a period of silence and vocal ministry around these queries, sharing lived experiences in grappling with this conflict.

Upon closing of the worship period, the Presiding Clerk asked those in attendance to hold another query after the rise of meeting: How can we rise to manifest our testimonies in this moment?

Sunday Evening, August 3, 2025, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

2025-26 Opening

Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak (Providence) welcomed Friends back to worshipful business together.

Kristna Evans (Durham), Ada Kerman (Monadnock), and Carole Rein (North Shore) served as elders for this meeting.

Suzanna Schell (Beacon Hill) read the Land Acknowledgement, with the “Federal Indian Policy” optional paragraph selected to be read at this meeting (see page 29).

The reading clerks offered a few announcements and the Presiding Clerk invited visitors to introduce themselves.

Our reading clerks read the epistle from the 2024 Baltimore Yearly Meeting.

2025-27 Message from Cuba Yearly Meeting

Friends heard a prerecorded address from Jorge Luis Peña Reyes, clerk of Cuba Yearly Meeting, on the occasion of the Cuba Yearly Meeting’s 125th anniversary, celebrating the longstanding relationship between Friends of New England and Cuba.

Mary Hopkins offered an interpretation of the Spanish into English.

Jorge’s message appears in the Appendix (see page 33).

2025-28 Reports of Work with Friends Organizations

Judy Goldberger (Beacon Hill), Mary Hopkins (Fresh Pond), Noah Merrill (Putney), Nia Thomas (Northampton), and Jonathan Vogel-Borne (Cambridge) shared news of some of the work that they have witnessed or participated in with Friends World Committee for Consultation.

Friends heard about the recent FWCC meeting of the Section of the Americas held in Arizona. The theme of the conference was “Building the Future as Way Opens,” and Quakers from all over South, Central, and North America wrestled with the questions “How do you know when God is speaking to you?” and “Have you ever known a time when you felt God was absent, and how did you recognize when way was opened?”

Friends also learned of work in internal conflict resolution in Bolivia, the initiation of a project to connect people in Brazil who have sent queries about the Quakers, and FWCC Quaker Connect, a program for meetings and churches across the Americas for renewal and deepening their Quaker practice. All were invited to consider whether they might feel called to work with FWCC in the future.

Marian Baker (Weare) shared some of the history of United Society of Friends Women International, as well as reporting on some of its present work and accomplishments. Young Adult Friends from around the world are involved and active in the organization. As one example of USFW work: Women are planting trees in Kenya, thanks to a grant from Quaker Earthcare Witness. This process

is not only greening an area that suffered massive deforestation but is also providing an opportunity for the women involved to learn how to write grants.

2025-29 Quaker Indigenous Boarding School Research Group Report

Janet Hough (Cobscook) presented a report on behalf of the Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools Research Group (see page 36).

In its report, the committee documented its work in meeting the charges given it since its formation. At this point, the Research Group asked to be laid down. As part of its charge “to suggest next steps,” the committee “recommend[ed] 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.”

While Friends were in unity to lay down the current working group, there was not clarity to adopt the group’s proposal for next steps in the process. Many Friends felt that at this point, an emphasis on further research was not adequate to the need, asking that this restructuring also continue the reparative and restorative relationship-building work that has already begun.

The recording clerks were asked to bring a minute to a future business meeting that reflected a shift in the purpose of any future restructuring.

2025-30 Closing

Meeting closed with a period of worship.

Monday Morning, August 4, 2025, 9:15 to 11:15 a.m.

2025-31 Opening

E.C. Piper (Mt. Toby) opened with the song “Golden Thread” by Te Martin.

Rebecca McKenzie (Quaker City) grounded our meeting with the Land Acknowledgement. The optional “New England Name” paragraph was selected to be read at this meeting (see page 29).

Friends Lynn Taber (Fresh Pond), Allison Randall (Keene), Beth Collea (Dover), and Janet Hough (Cobscook) served as elders for the morning.

Our reading clerks offered daily announcements.

The Presiding Clerk invited visitors from other yearly meetings or representatives from organizations to introduce themselves.

2025-32 ARCH Program Coordinator Report

Patricia Muldoon (Cambridge), ARCH Coordinator, provided a report on the programs and ministry of the New England Yearly Meeting Aging Resources Consultation and Help program, which offers support to Friends facing the end of life, to their caregivers, and to Friends who are called to offer pastoral support.

2025-33 Report from New England Yearly Meeting Secretary and Program Director

Noah Bishop Merrill, Secretary, and Nia Thomas, Program Director, offered a report on their work for New England Yearly Meeting over the past year.

An ongoing Visioning Process has been gauging the needs, priorities, and possibilities for reshaping our NEYM Sessions for 2026 and beyond. Noah assured Friends that updates about the logistics and plans for the 2026 Sessions will be shared in a timely fashion.

Year-round Yearly Meeting programming offers retreats, workshops, support to meetings and more for Friends of different ages and locations.

The Yearly Meeting is continually reassessing and experimenting with ways to support New England Friends' ministries and community connections, in balance with the limits of capacity and resources.

(The full report appears on page 38.)

2025-34 Development Initiatives and Financial Stewardship Report

Noah Bishop Merrill presented some of the initiatives that have been established for supporting ministries and financial sustainability.

Michael Wadja (Bennington), called to a ministry in fundraising, has begun working with the Yearly Meeting to strengthen the financial position of New England Yearly Meeting.

Friends serving on a newly developed Living Stream Travel Team intend to visit monthly meetings to deepen relationships between New England Friends and to raise awareness of the financial needs of local and Yearly Meeting ministries, with a goal of broadening the donor base and increasing overall financial contributions.

Noah further encouraged Friends to give to New England Yearly Meeting; options include a new GiveMonthly subscription and a New England Yearly Meeting Venmo account that can receive individual gifts.

2025-35 Closing

Friends closed with waiting worship.

Monday Evening, August 4, 7:00 p.m.

2025-36 Musical Plenary

Singer/songwriter Kim Moberg is an Alaska native (Tlingit) artist and activist who uses music and spoken word as medicine and to activate positive change in the world. Along with Heather Swanson on violin, she performed her composition "The Seven Fires Prophecy Suite for Humanity" (2023) in an all-ages gathering. This original nine-song suite tells the ancient yet relevant Anishinaabe legend "The Seven Fires Prophecy" and the movements are: The First Fire: Exodus; The Second Fire: Lost; The Third Fire: The River; The Fourth Fire: Two Faces; The Fifth Fire: The Promise; The Sixth Fire: The Cup of Life; The Seventh Fire: The Crossroads; The Eighth Fire: The Wings of the Winds; and The Ninth Fire: The Past and the Present. Through powerful verse and melody, Kim communicated deep feelings of melancholy and heartbreak, healing and social consciousness. She spoke about the underlying message of the Seven Fires Prophecy: "My belief is we can light that eighth fire. We can live together in peace. We can live together in harmony and respect for all living things. Our superpower is love. And together we can choose to make our world a better place because we are one."

Monday Afternoon, August 4, 2025, 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

2025-37 Opening

E.C. Piper (Mt. Toby) opened with her own song, "There Is a Way."

Kathy Olsen (East Sandwich), Suzanna Schell (Beacon Hill), and Lucy Meadows (Beacon Hill) served as elders holding this session.

Mary Link (Mt. Toby) grounded our business together with the Land Acknowledgement. The "Confronting Genocide" optional paragraph was selected to be read at this meeting (see page 29).

The Presiding Clerk invited visiting Friends to introduce themselves, and the reading clerks offered a few daily announcements.

2025-38 Yearly Meeting Treasurer's Report

Marian Dalton (Brunswick) presented a report as treasurer of the New England Yearly Meeting. The Yearly Meeting operating expenses have exceeded our income for several years now. Ongoing work from Friends aims to “right-size” our programmatic, administrative, and staff spending, and to deepen and broaden the donor pool of New England Yearly Meeting.

Further details can be found in the 2025 Treasurer's Report (see page 40).

2025-39 New England Yearly Meeting 2026 Budget

Scott Drysdale (Hanover), clerk of the NEYM Finance Committee, presented a first reading of the proposed 2026 NEYM Budget. He detailed some of the decisions and adjustments the committee made to best match expected income and expenses in the coming year, while continuing to support a vital Yearly Meeting.

Friends were invited to attend a listening session during Sessions to get more detailed information and offer feedback on the budget before it is presented for approval.

2025-40 Permanent Board Report

Susan Davies (Vassalboro) presented her report as clerk of the New England Yearly Meeting Permanent Board.

Permanent Board serves the Yearly Meeting by coordinating and overseeing work done outside of, and delegated by, Annual Sessions.

Susan offered appreciation for Friends who are stepping down from important roles of service in the Yearly Meeting and for the Friends stepping into new nominations.

More details can be found in the published Permanent Board Report (see page 52).

2025-41 Legal Action on Immigration and Religious Freedom

Noah Bishop Merrill (Putney) presented an update on New England Yearly Meeting's joint participation in a lawsuit with several other religious bodies to block U.S. immigration enforcement officers from entering houses of worship in their official capacities.

Although aware that Quakers have historically tended to avoid the practice of litigious engagement, the Presiding Clerk and Secretary did reach clarity that this exceptional action was consistent with, even demanded by, Friends' conviction that every person should have the right to safely, peacefully gather for worship.

A judge has granted a preliminary injunction preventing Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers from entering the houses of worship of the claimants to this lawsuit; next intended steps include pursuing a broader, equal claim to protection in any house of worship across the country.

Friends expressed gratitude for those who are working on this matter and for immigration rights broadly, and for the unexpected testimony to our beliefs found in these legal briefs.

2025-42 Closing

The Presiding Clerk welcomed visitor Rania Ma'ayeh, Head of Ramallah Friends School. Rania spoke to the condition of the students and staff striving to live and attend their studies through the current crisis in Palestine.

Friends settled into waiting worship to close.

Tuesday Morning, August 5, 2025, 9:15 to 11:15 a.m.**2025-43 Opening**

Friends transitioned from Bible Half Hour to business meeting with a brief stretch and settled into worship together.

Jonathan Vogel-Borne (Cambridge) and Mey Hasbrook (Three Rivers) grounded our business together with the Land Acknowledgement. The “Federal Indian Policy” optional paragraph was selected to be read at this meeting (see page 29).

Our business was held by elders Addison Brown (Mt. Toby), Phebe McKosker (Hanover), Virginia Swain (Worcester), Jackie Stillwell (Monadnock), and Janet Hough (Cobscook).

The Presiding Clerk welcomed visitors to introduce themselves, and Laura Everett from the Massachusetts Council of Churches rose to further address the meeting as a claimant in a different lawsuit opposing immigration enforcement action in places of worship.

She exhorted us, “Because we have privilege from the lawsuit currently under injunction, what can we do that other churches cannot do? We have some protection, clear legal standing—use that to protect, to stand with those who are not protected, because we are stronger together!”

Marches, vigils, and actions have been done, more are planned. Friends were invited to join in and discern more ways to get involved.

The reading clerks offered daily announcements.

In Spanish, Judy Goldberger (Beacon Hill) read aloud a letter of greeting from the *Iglesia de los Amigos Cuáqueros* Richmond (Indiana), signed by two Friends who could not travel safely to be with us. The reading clerks followed with an English translation. The letter is appended to these minutes (see page 41).

2025-44 Unity Agenda

The Presiding Clerk brought forward the Unity Agenda, which presents annually recurring items requiring approval of the Yearly Meeting at Sessions as one item.

Friends approved the Unity Agenda as presented in the Advance Documents, amended by the corrections brought forward by the Nominating Committee at Sunday afternoon’s meeting for business.

2025-45 Reflections on the Role of Quarterly Meetings

A Yearly Meeting priority in recent years has been working with quarterly meetings to discern and strengthen the work that our quarterly meetings are most called to pursue.

Our ministries as Friends are active locally, regionally, and globally. Discernment of our witness can and should rise from individual Friends, from monthly meetings, and from quarterly meetings. Empowering quarterly meetings to carry the leadings rising among Friends can help clarify, season, and distribute the priorities of our Yearly Meeting.

One example can be found in the work of Falmouth Quarterly Meeting in witness for LGBTQIA+ rights awareness and advocacy.

Fritz Weiss (Portland) and others from Falmouth Quarterly Meeting described how a minute from Brunswick Monthly Meeting was shared with the rest of their Quarter, inspiring other monthly meetings in turn to record their own minutes of LGBTQIA+ solidarity. One Friend noted that there is real urgency in these matters. Governmental actions are moving fast to enact exclusionary policy. Our allyship is needed now.

The text of minutes from Brunswick MM, Durham MM, and Portland MM that were read aloud to the body can be found starting on page 43.

New England Friends are encouraged to take this and other concerns home to their local monthly and quarterly meetings, and similarly to allow their leadings to rise among them, to be witnesses in fulfilment of our Friends testimonies in all our spheres.

The Presiding Clerk then asked the body to reflect on this presentation from Falmouth Quarter and Friends' own experiences, and to share on three queries in small groups, requesting that each small group record their findings and send notes to the Presiding Clerk to be compiled to inform further work supporting quarterly meeting vitality:

- How can New England Yearly Meeting use quarterly meetings to create space for deep corporate discernment between Sessions?
- Are there specific topics that you suggest the quarterly meetings take up in 2025 and 2026 in preparation for 2026 Sessions?
- What has made it difficult for some quarterly meetings to prosper and what can we do to minimize these difficulties?

2025-46 Closing

The body closed with waiting worship.

Tuesday Afternoon, August 5, 2025, 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

2025-47 Opening

Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak welcomed Friends back to worshipful business together.

Katie Bond (Beacon Hill), Cynthia Ganung (Wellesley), Eleanor Godway (Hartford), and Robert Dove McClellan (Fresh Pond) served as elders for this meeting.

Willard Peabody (Middlebury) grounded our business together with the Land Acknowledgement. No optional paragraph was selected to be read at this meeting.

The reading clerks offered a few announcements relevant to the remainder of the day and for the next day. The Presiding Clerk invited visitors to introduce themselves. There were no new visitors at this meeting.

Members of Puente de Amigos led the gathered body in an energetic singalong.

2025-48 Epistles

Kirenía Criado Pérez read the 2025 epistle from Cuba Yearly Meeting in Spanish, followed by an English translation from the reading clerks.

The reading clerks then read an epistle from the Black, Brown, Indigenous and People of Color Friends Gathering, held on May 31 of this year, urging all Friends to raise up anti-racist awareness in all their discernment together.

2025-49 Revised Minute on Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools Research Group

Returning to the item presented on Sunday evening, the recording clerks brought forward for consideration a revised minute for the Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools Research Group:

Friends approved the laying down of the Quaker Indigenous Boarding School Research Group with gratitude for the faithful, heartbreaking report that these Friends compiled for us in fulfillment of the charge laid on them by 2022 Sessions. All their work is the foundation for our shared, ongoing work on this matter.

Having moved together to acknowledge harms and uncover the truth of New England Yearly Meeting's complicity and culpability in forced assimilation, we heard that it is time to shift our attention to the appropriate next phases. We are resolved to do so, with love and conviction, laboring to address past and lasting harm.

The outgoing Research Group urged New England Friends to engage more broadly with the work that they began. We charged Permanent Board with establishing a structure to support

monthly meetings, individual Friends, and other Quaker organizations to use their particular resources to seek out archival records, oral histories, and other sources of information that could help answer the appeal from impacted communities to bring what we learn into the light of day.

We also asked Permanent Board (informed by wisdom from the Right Relationship Resource Group, members of the outgoing Quaker Indigenous Boarding School Research Group, the Coordinating & Advisory committee, the Black Quaker Project, and any other relevant Friends) to discern a structure to support continuity in the reparative relationship-building and knowledge-sharing that has already begun. This should be the foundation for next steps we take toward retrospective justice.

We expect that what we learn will help Spirit lead our Yearly Meeting to further action. Conscious of mistakes of the past, Friends are reminded to do this work in all humility, mindful to consult those who suffer from previous well-intentioned but destructive actions as we travel the road to right relationship.

Friends approved this minute, with one Friend further reminding us that this is not new work and exhorting us not to slacken our momentum in these times when so much is required of us. Each Friend, monthly meeting, and quarterly meeting is urged to take up the call to engage in the work of examining our patterns of oppression, acknowledging and making amends for harm, and centering justice in all our ministries, as prompted by the 2024 FWCC Plenary in Johannesburg, “Living the Spirit of Ubuntu”:

We grieve with God for the exponential impact of historical and ongoing injustice. This includes the impact of colonisation, forced displacement, slavery, economic exploitation and racism. We are called to disrupt patterns of oppression and division, to acknowledge offences, to challenge false notions of white supremacy, to repudiate doctrines of discovery, to make amends and to work for reparative and retrospective justice. We are called in our Quaker communities to be patterns and examples, to share gifts and skills, to be brave, to become radically inclusive and to celebrate diversity. Are we all ready to take up these callings?

2025-50 Approval of the Yearly Meeting Budget

Having had previous opportunities at Sessions to ask questions and to give feedback to the Finance Committee, Friends approved the 2026 Budget as presented by Finance Committee clerk, Scot Drysdale (Hanover).

2025-51 New England Yearly Meeting Epistle First Reading

The 2025 Yearly Meeting Epistle Committee—William Monroe (Providence), Morgan Wilson (Framingham), Leisa Stamm (Hartford), and Piper Brossard (Providence)—presented a first draft of this year’s New England Yearly Meeting Epistle, inviting feedback from Friends before the final draft would be presented Wednesday morning.

2025-52 Extended Worship in Consideration of the Conflict in Israel-Palestine

At the call of the Presiding Clerk, the body entered an extended period of worship around “what we may be called to do” concerning the conflict in Israel-Palestine. Messages that emerged were deep and centered.

Since this worship occurred during a meeting for business, the recording clerks were asked to attempt to give a sense of some of what came forward in spoken ministry, without attribution or direct quotation. The Presiding Clerk further charged the recording clerks to bring this summary forward at the next meeting for business, in case the sense of the meeting might be of assistance for future discernment.

2025-53 Closing

The meeting closed with a brief period of further waiting worship.

Wednesday Morning, August 6, 2025, 9:15 to 10:15 a.m.**2025-54 Opening**

E.C. Piper (Mt. Toby) opened our final business session with an original song, “Four Queries on New Beginnings.”

Elders Chris Hansen (Burlington), Kathy Olsen (East Sandwich), Allison Randall (Keene), Beth Collea (Dover), and Katie Bond (Beacon Hill) held our business in prayerful spirit.

Gordon Bugbee (Beacon Hill) helped ground our work together with a Land Acknowledgement. The “Peace Testimony” optional paragraph was selected to be read at this meeting (see page 29).

The Presiding Clerk invited Friends into a moment of worship for the realization of lasting world peace, on the anniversary of the 1945 bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The reading clerks offered daily announcements.

2025-55 Events Coordinator Report

Elizabeth Hacala, Events Coordinator for New England Yearly Meeting, gave a report on the 2025 Annual Sessions. She celebrated that this year brought some changes to Sessions, and some continuity. Sessions is a time of special renewal of connections and ministry.

This year Sessions had the highest attendance since we began hybrid gatherings. Nearly 100 more people joined us on campus this year than either of the past two years. Video conference participation remains very robust, with 117 Friends connecting to Sessions virtually.

Commuter attendance rose this year from under 30 to 175. This may suggest that there is a desire among Friends to have a way to attend Sessions even if a multi-day residential program is not the right fit. Elizabeth wondered if the location of Sessions at Amherst, Massachusetts, contributed to the rise in attendance and commuter participation.

Next year will bring yet more changes and we can look forward to the ways in which, no matter the location or logistics, so much of what Sessions is, is what Friends bring to it when we are together.

2025-56 Presentation from Ramallah Friends School

Rania Ma’ayeh, Head of Ramallah Friends School, addressed Friends, introducing us to images and stories of the students and staff who she described as striving to live a life of dignity and peace—a “living expression of what is possible even under impossible conditions.”

Friends watched a video compilation of scenes, hopeful and challenging, from day-to-day life at the Ramallah Friends School, illustrating Rania’s assertion that the school is not only an institution of learning, but also a sanctuary of resilience.

The Foundation of Tomorrow is a transformative initiative by Ramallah Friends School to expand educational opportunities and enhance facilities for students in Palestine. Rania encouraged Friends to “pray for us, hold us in the Light, and financially uphold our operations,” as USAID termination has left the school struggling to cover \$400,000 of need.

Rania urged us to reach out to others to share the story of Ramallah Friends School, saying, “Telling our stories is needed. Indeed, it is what is most needed. Let them echo in your homes, your communities, your ministries. ... Learning is resistance. Justice begins in the classroom.”

2025-57 Discerned Action in Response to the Israel-Palestine Crisis

On Tuesday afternoon, the Presiding Clerk asked Friends to settle into worship together and search our hearts for how God is calling us now. The recording clerks were requested to gather a general sense of the worship. On Wednesday morning, out of a worship following Rania Ma'ayeh's presentation, the recording clerks shared the following:

The living stream of worship had many tributaries, but it was clear that Israel-Palestine is on our minds. The living waters of divine refreshment encourage us to continue our journey, even as the difficulty before us sometimes tempts us to remain in a desert of despair.

Many Friends hunger for bold action, and we share a sense that our hearts yearn to be of help to and be in public allyship with those who suffer. Friends were clear that our witnessing community is bigger than these Sessions, and that our call to act will extend beyond this week. Our discernment is unfinished, yet we are not satisfied to leave this gathering without some commitment to a collective witness to the ongoing evil occurring in Gaza and owning our complicity in it.

The scale of catastrophe is daunting and heartbreaking. Yet we are called to be faithful and courageous. Whether we are successful is beyond our control. We must raise up our voices and live into our most fundamental testimonies, that there is that of God in every person, that we honor and speak the truth, that "we utterly deny all outward wars, strife, and fighting with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatsoever."

We believe that mutual support, inspiration, and knowledge-sharing is key. Not all will be called to the same ministries, and many Friends are already active, individually and as local meetings. However, shared discernment is our faith practice.

The meeting charged the Presiding Clerk and the Permanent Board with scheduling a special called meeting of New England Friends as soon as possible, before 2025 comes to a close, for the purpose of sharing and encouraging work that is already being done in the Yearly Meeting, and worshipfully discerning a corporate response to the crisis in Gaza.

Friends approved this minute.

2025-58 Closing

The business meeting sang together to welcome the children from Youth Programming to join for the Closing Ceremony.

Wednesday Morning Closing Ceremony, August 6, 2025, 10:15 to 11:15 a.m.

2025-59 Youth Program Epistles

Friends heard Epistles read from each of the youth meetings of New England Yearly Meeting:

- Under 5s, presented by Coordinator Rainer Humphries (Hartford)
- Junior Yearly Meeting, presented by Eowyn Hebert (Framingham) accompanied by Coordinator Kenzie Burpee (Worcester).
- Junior High Yearly Meeting, presented by Nation Bhardwaj (no MM) and Arthur Eller Fitze (Portland)
- Young Friends, presented by Rosalee Parkes (Wellesley), Martin Eller Fitze (Portland), Cheyenne Reynolds (Storrs), Isadora Haineswood (Putney), Chloe Martin (Westerly), and Winter Golden (Weare), who finished by holding up a banner of thanks for the outgoing Teen Ministries and Outreach Coordinator, Collee Williams

The youth programs epistles are appended, starting on page 88.

2025-60 2025 New England Yearly Meeting Epistle

William Monroe (Providence) and Leisa Stamm (Hartford) read the final draft of the 2025 NEYM Epistle.

2025-61 Interpreter Appreciation

This year we had a particularly robust inclusion of Spanish-English interpretation at Sessions and the Presiding Clerk welcomed the interpreters who served us this week to the front for a moment of recognition. Our work together is broadened and deepened by a diversity of voices, and these Friends' service helped bring so much richness to our Sessions:

Benigno Sánchez-Eppler (Northampton)
 Judy Goldberger (Beacon Hill)
 Mary Hopkins (Fresh Pond)
 Hope Bastian (Beacon Hill)
 Martha Maylén Basulto (no MM)
 Susannah McCandless (Middlebury)
 Len Cadwallader (Hanover)
 Richard Lindo (Framingham)

2025-62 Special Appreciation for Our Cuban Friends

The Presiding Clerk read aloud the travelling minute carried by Kirenia Criado Pérez, and Friends approved its endorsement by the New England Yearly Meeting, with gratitude and heartfelt well-wishes for her continued travels, and love and appreciation to bring home to Cuban Friends.

The travel minute and endorsement are appended (see page 45).

Friends then heard and approved a Minute of Appreciation and Celebration on the Occasion of Cuba Yearly Meeting's 125th Anniversary from the Presiding Clerk of New England Yearly Meeting to the Friends of Cuba Yearly Meeting (see page 46).

2025-63 Closing

Out of a brief period of silent worship, outgoing Presiding Clerk Rebecca Leuchak (Providence) invited us in our 2025 Annual New England Yearly Meeting Sessions closing moments to all form a circle by holding hands around the whole auditorium space, singing together in expression of optimism and of divine love the song "The Bells of Norwich" by Sydney Carter. His composition was inspired by the 14th-century English mystic Julian of Norwich's affirmation, "All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well," words which make up the song's refrain.

*Ring out, bells of Norwich,
 and let the winter come and go.
 All shall be well again, I know.
 All shall be well, I'm telling you,
 let the winter come and go.
 All shall be well again, I know.*

This was followed by a final song, a round by Thich Naht Hanh that is beloved by New England Friends both young and old, "Dear Friends."

*Dear friends, dear friends
 Let me tell you how I feel
 You have given me such treasures
 I love you so*

Incoming Presiding Clerk Phillip Veatch concluded our gathering by reminding us that we had just heard in our week together that desert time is followed by a time of life and grace. He exhorted us to boldly go forth and scandalize the world, saying, “Let us go forth and build new roads, purposing to meet again in the summer of 2026. This, the 365th session of New England Yearly Meeting, is now closed. Go forth, knowing that you are held in the lap of God.”

Approved Budget

New England Yearly Meeting FY2025 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed - Summary

Approved by Finance Committee 4/26/2024

Category	FY2023 Actuals	FY2023 Budget	FY2024 Budget	Δ FY24 to FY25 Budgets	FY2025 Proposed Budget	Notes
Income						
4010 Individual Contributions Total	197,009	230,225	223,000	5,000	228,000	
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions Total	348,668	373,000	342,000	3,000	345,000	
4025 Unallocated Income	33,451	31,000	0	-	0	
4030 Organizations Contributions		0	0	-	0	
4050 Interest and Dividend Income	7,761	12,000	12,000	(1,000)	11,000	2
4070 Books & Other Sales Income	11,638	17,000	10,500	-	10,500	
4077 Consulting Fee Contribution	900					
4080 Retreat Program Fees	25,712	47,000	37,500	-	37,500	
4085 Sessions Program Fees	158,157	227,400	249,475	(34,580)	214,895	1
4090 Change in Fair Market Value	3,225	0	0	-	0	
4099 Net Assets Released To/From	0	30,000	5,000	(5,000)	0	3
Total Income	786,521	967,625	879,475	(32,580)	\$ 846,895	
Expenses						
Total 5000 Staff	462,754	493,684	503,842	12,472	\$ 516,314	4
Total 5100 General & Administration	109,827	93,615	87,449	-	\$ 87,449	
Total 5300 Travel & Conferences	30,899	35,300	22,300	-	\$ 22,300	
Total 6000 Programs	193,220	284,300	256,012	(42,162)	\$ 213,850	
Total 6140 Books & Other Sales Expense	10,043	14,500	8,000	-	\$ 8,000	
Total 6200-6590 Support of Other Organizations	42,807	45,975	0	-	\$ 0	
Total 6600 Publications		0	0	-		
Total Expenses	849,549	967,374	877,603	(119,461)	\$ 847,913	
Net Operating Income	(63,028)	251	1,872	(1,269)	(1,018)	
Other Income						
9940 Other Income - Transfers from other funds	36,639					
Total Other Income	36,639					
Other Expenses						
9950 Other Expense - Transfer to other funds	8,789					
Total Other Expenses	8,789					
Net Other Income	27,850					
Net Income	(35,178)					

New England Yearly Meeting
FY2025 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget Proposed - Detail

Approved by Finance Committee 4/26/2024

Category	FY2023 Actuals	FY2023 Budget	FY2024 Budget	Δ FY24 to FY25 Budgets	FY2025 Proposed Budget	Notes
Income						
4010 Individual Contributions						
General Fund Contributions	171,080.76	204,225	198,000	3,000	201,000	1
Equalization Contributions	25,928.00	26,000	25,000	2,000	27,000	
Other Contributions		0	0	-		
4010 Individual Contributions Total	197,008.76	230,225	223,000	5,000	228,000	
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions			0	-		
General Fund Contributions	340,040.41	350,000	333,000	3,000	336,000	
Equalization Contributions	8,627.50	23,000	9,000	-	9,000	
Other Contributions		0	0	-		
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions Total	348,667.91	373,000	342,000	3,000	345,000	
4025 Unallocated Income	33,451.27	31,000	0	-	0.00	2
4030 Organizations Contributions		0	0	-	0.00	
4050 Interest and Dividend Income	7,760.85	12,000	12,000	(1,000)	11,000	
4070 Books & Other Items Sales Income				-	10,500.00	
4072+4075 Sales - Books + Other Items	11,638.37			-	0.00	
4070 Books & Other Sales Income	11,638.37	17,000	10,500	-	10,500	
4077 Consulting Fee Contribution	900.00					
4080 Retreat Program Fees	25,711.65	47,000	37,500	-	37,500.00	1
4085 Sessions Program Fees	158,157.17	227,400	249,475	(34,580)	214,895.00	
4090 Change in Fair Market Value	3,225.27	0	0	-	0.00	
4099 Net Assets Released To/From	0.00	30,000	5,000	(5,000)	0	3
Total Income	786,521.25	967,625	879,475	(32,580)	\$ 846,895.00	
Expenses						
5000 Staff						
5010 Salaries & Wages	351,738.85	378,053	380,988	8,248	389,236.00	4
5020 Payroll Taxes	25,950.61	27,392	29,146	1,049	30,195.00	
5030 Benefits				-		
5033 Health Benefits	48,051.00	45,123	49,199	2,597	51,796.00	
5035 Retirements	34,829.84	35,806	38,099	825	38,924.00	
5040 Disability	1,116.36	1,100	1,100	(87)	1,013.00	
5045 Workers' Compensation	596.00	760	760	(160)	600.00	
5050 Spiritual Retreats		1,200	1,200	-	1,200.00	
5060 Staff Development	470.87	4,250	3,250	-	3,250.00	
5070 Sabbatical & Paid Leave			100	-	100.00	
Total 5030 Benefits	85,064.07	88,239	93,708	3,175	\$ 96,883.00	4
Total 5000 Staff	462,753.53	493,684	503,842	12,472	\$ 516,314.00	
5100 General & Administration						
5110 Administration				-		
5120 Bank Expense	8,395.84	7,000	7,000	-	7,000.00	
5130 Contracted Services	25,402.50	22,000	18,000	-	18,000.00	
5135 Accounting Services		0	0	-	0.00	
5140 Legal Services	2,500.00	2,500	2,500	-	2,500.00	
5145 Infrastructure	5,000.00	5,000	0	-	0.00	
5150 Liability Insurance	6,388.12	5,250	5,250	-	5,250.00	
5160 Payroll Service	5,624.16	5,500	5,500	-	5,500.00	
5170 Recruiting Expense		0	0	-	0.00	
5180 Rent	9,589.50	9,350	9,350	-	9,350.00	
5190 Misc. Expense	717.96	0	0	-	0.00	
Total 5110 Administration	63,618.08	56,600	47,600	-	\$ 47,600.00	
5200 Office						
5220 Archives Office Expenses		0	0	-	0.00	
5220 Cleaning Services	220.00	265	299	-	299.00	
5230 Maint - Equip & Hardware	10.51	1,250	500	-	500.00	
5240 Postage	3,186.90	3,750	3,750	-	3,750.00	
5250 Office Equipment	1,993.27	3,250	1,500	-	1,500.00	
5260 Office Supplies	1,702.70	2,500	1,600	-	1,600.00	
5270 Printing & Copying	13,724.28	14,500	9,500	-	9,500.00	
5280 Software & Updates	22,232.77	7,000	19,000	-	19,000.00	
5290 Telephone	3,006.01	4,500	3,700	-	3,700.00	
5295 Misc. Office	132.31	0	0	-	0.00	
Total 5200 Office	46,208.75	37,015	39,849	-	\$ 39,849.00	
Total 5100 General & Administration	109,826.83	93,615	87,449	-	\$ 87,449.00	

Category	FY2023 Actuals	FY2023 Budget	FY2024 Budget		FY2025 Proposed Budget	Notes
5300 Travel & Conferences				-		
5310 Travel - Committee	1,278.60	3,000	1,400	-	1,400.00	
5320 Travel - Clerk	3,027.86	4,500	2,500	-	2,500.00	
5330 Travel - Programs	5,792.90	3,700	3,100	1,000	4,100.00	
5335 Travel - Representatives Travel	13,421.87	6,700	2,000	-	2,000.00	
5350 Travel - Staff	7,377.35	17,000	12,900	(1,000)	11,900.00	
5360 Travel - Ministries		400	400	-	400.00	
Total 5300 Travel & Conferences	30,898.58	35,300	22,300	-	\$ 22,300.00	
6000 Programs				-		
6110 Sessions Room & Board	126,566.25	192,950	169,442	(33,872)	135,570.00	1
6112 Retreats - Room & Board				-		
6114 Room Rental	8,632.35	13,550	10,000	-	10,000.00	
6150 Food Expense	13,161.07	15,930	10,000	-	10,000.00	
Total 6112 Retreats - Room & Board	21,793.42	29,480	20,000	-	\$ 20,000.00	
6125 Program Expenses				-		
6105 Honoraria - Speakers/Wkshp Ldrs	15,672.00	22,000	24,000	(3,000)	21,000.00	3
6107 Honoraria - Volunteer Leadership	11,250.00	15,000	15,000	-	15,000.00	
6115 Equipment Rental	6,637.09	6,000	6,500	-	6,500.00	
6121 Supplies and Other Expenses	4,966.76	7,300	9,000	(4,000)	5,000.00	
6165 Pre-Sessions Expense	1,524.82	1,000	1,500	-	1,500.00	
Total 6125 Program Expenses	40,050.67	51,300	56,000	(7,000)	\$ 49,000.00	
6130 Committee Expenses - General	1,632.27	6,350	6,350	(1,950)	4,400.00	
6134 Childcare	297.00	2,000	2,000	-	2,000.00	
6137 Committee Day Expenses		0	0	-	0.00	
Total 6130 Committee Expenses - General	1,929.27	8,350	8,350	(1,950)	\$ 6,400.00	
6160 Program Support				-		
6163 Friends Camp	2,880.00	2,220	2,220	660	2,880.00	
6167 Religious Education & Outreach		0	0	-	0.00	
Total 6160 Program Support	2,880.00	2,220	2,220	660	\$ 2,880.00	
Total 6000 Programs	193,219.61	284,300	256,012	(42,162)	\$ 213,850.00	
6140 Books & Other Sales Expense		0	0	-		
6142 Books	2,696.87	14,500	8,000	-	8,000.00	
6145 Other Items for Sale	1,126.41	0	0	-	0.00	
6147 Consignment Sales	6,220.13	0	0	-	0.00	
Total 6140 Books & Other Sales Expense	10,043.41	14,500	8,000	-	\$ 8,000.00	
6200 Support of Other Organizations				-		
Total 6200-6590 Support of Other Organizations	42,806.86	45,975	0	-	\$ 0.00	
6600 Publications						
Total 6600 Publications		0	0	-		
Total Expenses	849,548.82	967,374	877,603	(119,461)	\$ 847,913.00	
Net Operating Income	(63,027.57)	251	1,872	(1,269)	(1,018.00)	
Other Income						
9940 Other Income - Transfers from other funds	36,638.89					
Total Other Income	36,638.89				-	
Other Expenses						
9950 Other Expense - Transfer to other funds	8,789.03					
Total Other Expenses	8,789.03				-	
Net Other Income	27,849.86				-	
Net Income	(35,177.71)				(1,018.00)	

1. Sessions registration fee income: assumptions: 8% fee increase over 2024; 450 attendees (2023 was 419; increase of 31); seven people move to Traditional fee from Low Income; three people move to Complete Cost from Traditional; room usage similar to 2023
1. Sessions costs: increase 3.5% 2024+2025
- 2: income from Quasi-Endowment declined \$4000 after Q-E balance reduced by Funds Recalculation; and, with 4.5% interest rates on new money market account, expecting \$2500-\$3000 of new interest income depending on cash-flow management
- 3: No use of reserves in 4090 Net Assets Released to/from. The \$5000 for FY23 was per PB minute about Volunteer Leadership honoraria
4. Staff salary/wage increase by cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) of 2.0%, CPI for Boston metro area January 2024.
4. Recent previous COLAs have been: FY24 6.1%, FY23 6.3%, FY22 0.5%, FY21 2.22%
4. Health insurance: rates actually went *down* 8.12% from 2023 to 2024; number of staff family members insured has gone up.

Unity Agenda Items

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.

Approved 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 (Bruns)	
	Woodrow, Peter (Port)	

Archives & Historical Records (6)

2026	2027	2028
Schmidt, Maxine (Nham)	Cazden, Betsy (Prov)	Grannell, Andy (Port)
2029	2030	
Barker, Mark (Con)	Charlie Barnard (Worc)	
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	
	Bennett, Doug (Durh)	

Clerks' Table

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

Faith & Practice (16)

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

Nominating Slate

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, 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

Drysedale, 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)

FUM 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 Reps (3, 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

Mary Hopkins (Fresh Pond)

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)

2028

Christopher, Megan (Well)**
Anne D. Burt (Midcoast)

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)*

Lucy Meadows (Bhil)**Nurturing Friends Education, Committee for (12) (6 nominated by Providence Mtg, NEYM; 6 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)

McDonald, LouAnne (Hart)

Vaccaro, Palma (Hart)

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

2026

*McManamy, Em (Prov)**Schmidt, Macchi (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)

Appendices to the Minutes

Land Acknowledgment

Friends, as we gather in the Light of Truth and Love, we acknowledge the unceded homelands of the Pocumtuc Nation. Nestled here in the valley of the long river (known as the Connecticut), we recognize all our relations in the matrix of care in which we live, and move, and have our being.

For millennia, the Pocumtuc have lived in deep reciprocity with these lands, a practice their descendants and Algonquian relations across the northeast uphold today. We acknowledge the painful history this place holds and Friends' involvement in policies and practices that continue to harm Indigenous communities, putting the created web of life in jeopardy.

(Optional paragraphs; splice in one or more, as led)

- (CONFRONTING GENOCIDE) We gather on this campus even as some Friends feel called to witness elsewhere. We honor the courage required to speak against genocide—whether in the past or unfolding before our eyes.
- (FEDERAL INDIAN POLICY) We are painfully aware that selling the land of Native Nations west of the Mississippi under the Morrill Act of 1862 was used to establish this campus as a land-grant institution. The same federal policies established the “Indian boarding school” system in which Friends were leading participants.
- (AMHERST IDENTITY) We acknowledge that UMass Amherst bears the name of Lord Jeffery Amherst, British commander-in-chief who wrote of his desire for the “total extirpation” of Indigenous peoples and in 1763 explicitly approved biological warfare against the Lenape/Delaware in the Midwest.
- (NEW ENGLAND NAME) We are mindful, too, that our name, “New England Yearly Meeting,” carries forward Captain John Smith’s 1614 colonial vision to remake Indigenous homelands as English territory. Names are not neutral—they hold worldviews and the power to perpetuate or heal historical wounds.
- (PEACE TESTIMONY) Remembering early Friends’ testimony about removing all occasions for war, we consider how the colonial assumption—that Indigenous lands were available for taking—created the very conditions that perpetuate violence and injustice.

With humility, letting love be the first motion, we seek authentic relations through care and repair. May we learn from Indigenous wisdom and walk gently on the land we all share, offering aid when invited.

Message from Yearly Meeting Secretary Noah Bishop Merrill

I want to speak about conviction, about becoming implicated in each other’s faithfulness, and about our Testimony. I want to speak about living in the Life and Power. Some of what I share may be difficult to hear, but these are difficult times. I trust with all my heart that we are eternally held, and pray that our Guide will help us hear whatever we need to hear.

Almost 20 years ago now, I spent five years of my life engaged in a ministry of humanitarian aid, advocacy, and peace activism in support of people internally displaced or made refugees as a result of the United States’ invasion of Iraq in 2003, its precursors, and its devastating aftermath.

In those years, I encountered daily, with visceral intensity, the evidence of what the weapons of war do to human families, to the human body, to human hearts and souls. Working alongside a group of Iraqi, Palestinian, and American activists, we sought to partner with efforts to find vitally needed support for people in need of significant and often lifesaving medical care.

When not in the Middle East and West Asia, through the support of several US-based organizations, I had the opportunity to travel across the United States, telling stories, with permission, that some of the people I had worked with had trusted me to share. They were stories of profound suffering, abandonment, shattered hopes, broken lives. Stories that would defy comprehension, if they weren't true.

They remain with me still, etched in memory. A man my age paralyzed by a fall from his roof caused by the concussive impact of bombs falling on his neighborhood. A young woman learning to live with unremovable shrapnel in her body, the only survivor of a missile's destruction of her whole house and family, including her baby daughter. A 6-year-old boy burned from head to toe by an explosion caused by a U.S. Marine raid on the camp where he and his family had taken shelter from sectarian violence. A woman's face burned by acid, part of attacks by sectarian militias who had been armed and empowered by the U.S. occupation forces. Their trust in me, and their yearning for their stories to be shared with a world seemingly or willfully oblivious to the hell they were living, spurred me on.

In those days, I was mostly fueled by anger. It drove me. I remember how it felt to bear witness, face to face, to the stories and the experiences like these I have just shared. The weight of that burden. Maybe some of you have felt a burden like that, in your own context. Perhaps some of you are feeling that kind of burden here and now.

Sometimes, the only relief that I could feel was when I was speaking to a group of people in the United States, and I realized that the pain that I had shared had brought tears. Knowing that I had disturbed people's hearts, that they had felt in some small way the pain of those whose stories I carried, that I had made them hurt. Anger is an insufficient word for how I lived my days. So is guilt. So is obsession.

In 2008, I was in Syria, in a neighborhood that was later reduced to rubble in the Syrian civil war to come.

I'll always remember the words. "He wants to meet you." For weeks, we had been hearing stories about a man who had suffered profoundly, unspeakably. People said we should speak with him, but his location was a secret, out of fear of retribution given what he had been through; Syria was an uneasy refuge for those fleeing violence and chaos in Iraq in those days.

But now we had been approached with an invitation. To meet with this man, to drink tea, and to hear his story. One of the man's companions led us to the place, through the winding streets of the Old City of Damascus.

The man was seated and waiting for us. After the tea was poured, he began to tell his story.

He was an Iraqi Christian, he said, part of one of the oldest Christian communities in the world. His ancestors had lived in Iraq for centuries, largely peacefully with their neighbors of all faiths.

But when the war came, and the chaos followed it, ethnic and religious minorities began to be increasingly targeted by rival sectarian militias, groups intent on creating polarization, mutual distrust and division, and fear, leading to ethnic cleansing.

He told me how a gang of men with their faces covered with black masks dragged him from his bed into the street. They took him to the basement of a now-empty house somewhere he didn't recognize. And there, in that cellar, they tortured him. Not for any action he had taken, but simply because of his religious identity, and to serve as a warning to others. And then, in sacrilegious mockery of his most deeply held faith, they ended that night of horror by hanging him on the basement wall. They crucified him. And they left him to die.

With whatever partial consciousness he had remaining, he prayed. He prayed that God would free him from this suffering, even if it meant helping the end come soon so that he wouldn't have to endure the pain and humiliation any longer. He prayed that Jesus would save him from the evil that had been unleashed among his neighbors and in his country, that Jesus would save his country.

It was then, he said, that the miracle happened. He said that he saw an image of Christ, bearing the same wounds he bore, coming toward him amidst the shadows and desperation. But, he said—and this he said was important—this Presence didn't take away his suffering. The One he experienced as Christ didn't take him down from where his broken body was hanging.

Instead, as he described his experience, the Presence of the Living Christ joined him in his darkness and desperation, climbing up to accompany him where he was hanging on the wall to share with him completely in his suffering and misery and grief and yearning for justice. And in that moment—though time seemed to fade away—he told me that he felt an all-embracing sense of peace, an overflowing of a profound joy. And then, everything went dark.

When he awoke, he realized that he had been thrown in a vast garbage heap, left for dead. And somehow, through step by grace-filled step, he was given the strength to escape the neighborhood, the city, the country. With help from Muslim friends, he crossed the border into Syria, was found again by caring people there, and offered this place to live, and to heal.

As he finished his story, my hands were shaking—with rage, despair, and powerlessness. It was as if all the burdens that I had been carrying in those years, all of the horror and the anguish of the evil of which we are capable as humans broke like a dam in my head and heart. I was unable to speak, maybe even to think. For a long time, I couldn't lift my head to reach his eyes.

And then he spoke again: "Wait, my friend. This is why I wanted to meet you. This is what I wanted to tell you, this is what I believe you need to know, and what I want you to share—Did you hear that He came? And do you see that I am Alive?" His eyes, I now saw, were shining. And his face was radiant with light and joy.

In that moment, I suddenly understood that he had called me there not for him, but for me, and all whose hearts might be opened by his testimony. The story he had called me there to hear was not—at its heart—the story of an encounter with evil, but of an encounter with the power of being met by the peace that the world cannot give, and brought home into the transforming power of God. It was a story of Life triumphing over death, a narrative outpost in enemy-occupied territory, a breaking in of divine Love restoring human dignity and personhood in a parched wasteland of despair. And this was the story to which he had called me to bear witness—through sharing this experience in his life, and, if I chose it, in my own living as well.

Friends speak about moments of conviction in our spiritual lives, when we come to see the condition of our hearts and souls with a clarity and starkness that offers an almost irresistible invitation—even a crying need—to change and grow. This encounter was such a moment for me.

I came to see that, in my quest for justice, and even in my yearning and advocacy and organizing for peace, I had so often been bearing witness not to the Life and Power, but to the power of anguish, tragedy, terror, and evil. I had been preaching what could be called a "gospel" of despair. There was no "good news," only more anger, more struggle, more relentless fighting to assuage my conscience and keep the nightmares at bay. And in this way of living, there was no invitation to another kind of Life. I was sunk down in the ocean of darkness and death; the ocean of Light and Love seemed like a fantasy.

I realized then, with a shudder that swept my whole body, that I was in the tendering presence of a human being who had come to live in the Life and Power. And in this encounter, the cords that bound about my heart began to loosen. The burden I had been carrying, and the way I believed I had to carry it—with anger, desperation, and the need to control, to fix and save—began to change. And in the breaking of my heart, a living stream of joy began to flow—slowly at first, then growing, as I attended to it, to be of service in ministry. It had been there all the time, waiting. And in the many years since, while I have often been distracted, denied it, dishonored it, or suppressed it, I know that it has never stopped flowing.

"Living in the Life and Power." George Fox, one of the founders of the Religious Society of Friends, used these words to describe his experience of the inward reshaping of his heart that made

him unable to engage with outward weapons in the warfare and social turmoil so rampant in the bloody times in which he lived, and in which the Quaker movement was born.

Reflecting on a meeting with recruiters for one of the armies who claimed that they were fighting for justice, liberation, and the Kingdom of God, who had seen his gifts of leadership and were seeking to give him a military commission to command soldiers in battle, he wrote in his journal,

I told them that I lived in the virtue of that Life and Power that takes away the occasion of all wars and strife ... I told them that I had come into the covenant of peace, which was before all wars and strivings were.

This testimony to a direct experience of the Spirit at work in a life, and in the lives of those around that person, has been at the heart of what Friends have called “testimony”—the ways in which the liberation and repatterning of our hearts, and the actions arising and patterned by that freedom and joy, bear witness to the Truth, as Friends have used that word, to describe not a set of principles or list of rules or a catchy acronym, but a relationship—that is, a relationship and journey with the Spirit, present and active, at work in our world, within, among, and through all whose hearts are willing.

We can help remind each other, when we inevitably forget or get distracted or confused or frustrated. Our meetings’ rhythms of common life are intended for that purpose. In our own Faith & Practice, that trusted handbook on this pilgrimage together, the query for the twelfth month that is read in many of our local meetings for worship, including my own in Vermont, reads:

“Do you live in the virtue of that Life and Power that takes away the occasion of all wars? ...when discouraged, do you remember that Jesus said, “Peace is my parting gift to you, my own peace, such as the world cannot give. Set your troubled hearts at rest, and banish your fears.” – John 14:27 (from the 1985 New England Yearly Meeting Faith & Practice, pg. 147)

Queries such as this are designed to help us reflect as a worshipping community on what is most essential in our living tradition, and how it shapes our living. Because this is the essential part: Friends have found that this seeking, this abiding, this growing and testing and acting in the Spirit, is a pilgrimage on which we need accompaniment. Some of us are given frequent or overwhelming experiences of this spiritual reality, others only glimpses. For some of us, our experience has yet to reflect the words we hear about worship, about leading, about living in relationship with this tender, unshakeable, and infinite Love Who seeks us. And that is why we need each other. As my friend in Syria was for me in that moment of conviction, we are called to be present to one another, to help unbind each other’s hearts.

I have spoken about joy, and I want to take care not to be understood to glorify suffering or urge passivity, or to suggest that mere “happiness” is an antidote or a thin bandage that we should cultivate to cover over the very present manifestations of humans’ capacity for evil—in these times, or in any. These platitudes are the story our society is selling all around us. I am speaking about something different when I speak about this kind of joy.

New England Friend and minister Elise Boulding gives words to this difference with clarity and power:

For the real difference between happiness and joy is that one is grounded in this world, the other in eternity. Happiness cannot encompass suffering and evil. Joy can. Happiness depends on the present. Joy leaps into the future and triumphantly creates a new present out of it. It is a fruit of the spirit, a gift of God—no one can own it ... Joy is the ultimate liberation of the human spirit. It enables the human being to travel to the very gates of heaven and to the depths of hell, and never cease rejoicing.

These are times of terror, of scattering, of collapse, when evil masquerades as truth, and despair is crouching at the threshold. When corruption seems ascendant, and mercy is outlawed by human authorities. Yet they are also times of healing, of remembering, of new vision, of weaving and re-

weaving the threads of covenant community in ways more resilient, more authentic, more willing to invite and share our testimony to the Life and Power in which we have covenanted to travel on this adventure of faith.

The Religious Society of Friends, our local meetings, were never meant to be places for the welcoming, respectful practice of hyper-individualism. The discovery and nurture of these fellowships, centered in worship, was always intended to help Friends gather and be gathered by the Spirit into local covenant communities—anchored and shaped in worship, nourished in fellowship and mutual care, formed in exploration of our living tradition, and sent forth by the overflowing of Love in our hearts into service and love of neighbor in the whole of our lives. And all of this, all these fruits of this journey together, however imperfect, are our Testimony.

But there is one thing needful. We must not allow ourselves to fall into despair of the living water, even in this parched wilderness. It is the witness of countless generations, who like us suffered and struggled and mourned and rejoiced and lived and died in faith, that the Life and Power we seek is closer than breath to us, always seeking new channels through which Love might continue to come into the world.

There is a fragment of a poem, a gift from Denise Levertov that has become a prayer to me—and a vow—one that speaks to me in the deserts of my soul; I hope it might speak to us:

*Don't say that there is no water
to solace the dryness at our hearts
It is still there and always there
with its quiet song and strange power to spring in us
up and out through the rock.*

Message from Jorge Luis Peña Reyes, Clerk of Cuba Yearly Meeting

Caminos en el desierto, ríos en la soledad

Bueno, ante todo quiero saludar a todos los amigos que en esta hora se encuentran reunidos en las sesiones de la Junta Anual de Nueva Inglaterra. Es para mí un privilegio también compartir este mensaje con ustedes.

Isaias 43.18 y 19. KJ.

Aferrarnos a las promesas de Dios por encima de nuestras seguridades aumenta nuestra fe y nuestra experiencia con Él.

Isaias estaba hablándole a un pueblo que se liberaría pronto de la cautividad babilónica. Sus promesas incluían anuncios buenos y otros no tan buenos.

Israel, que de algún modo tipifica nuestro caminar con Dios, era un pueblo rebelde. Había visto muchos milagros, milagros transmitidos mediante la oralidad de generación en generación. Habían visto brotar agua de la roca mediante su siervo Moisés. Habían cruzado el Mar Rojo y Dios le había provisto alimentos en medio de sus constantes quejas. Por el día columnas de humo y por la noche columnas de fuego, tal era la protección de Dios sobre su pueblo.

Ahora el Señor tenía para ellos un nuevo plan. Los llevaría de regreso y les prometía que iba a hacer algo nuevo. Parece una redundancia, para Dios no es nada novedoso hacer algo diferente. Pero para la palabra, pero la palabra en hebreo quería decir algo inédito, algo jamás visto. Pero el versículo anterior dice en el 18 “Dejen atrás el pasado, olvídense de lo que ya hice.” No vivan de la historia, sino que construyan su propia historia, tengan nuevas experiencias.

Las tribulaciones y los tiempos difíciles forjan el carácter, constituyen nuevas experiencias que marcan nuestra vida y nos regalan un carácter fuerte para con Dios. La experiencia de Job fue similar. Dice Job “De oídas te había oído, mas ahora mis ojos te ven.” Después de las pérdidas, después de la tribulación, Job reconoce que tiene una nueva experiencia con Dios. Para el hombre es importante la meta, sin embargo para Dios es mucho más importante el camino, porque en el camino,

los tropiezos se convierten en una fragua en ese andar con Dios. Incluso nuestras rebeldías Dios las aprecia porque ello habla de nuestra dependencia con Dios, de aferrarnos a sus promesas más allá de nuestro control sobre lo material.

Si algo aprendió el pueblo cubano, vital para su fe, fue depender de las promesas de Dios. Nuestra fe no puede basarse solo en nuestros testimonios, porque son como armaduras que les sirvieron a otros para vencer a gigantes. Inspiran, es cierto que inspiran, pero palidecen con el paso del tiempo, son hierros que sirvieron a nuestros abuelos, pero que hoy no nos sirven porque si bien las armaduras cambian, los gigantes también cambian.

Dios tiene hijos pero no tiene nietos. Es decir que nuestras luchas son las de hoy, no las de nuestros abuelos. Cada uno de nosotros tiene sus propias armaduras y por eso hay cuestiones de nuestra vida espiritual que son experiencias intransferibles, que te sirven a ti pero no le sirven al que tienes al lado. A veces escuchamos los testimonios y las experiencias de otros como si escucháramos una película de la época. Hasta los milagros ajenos no son suficientes para sostener nuestra fe, al menos para que nuestra fe crezca y nuestra fe sea robusta y vigente.

Jesús lo sabía, por eso cuando se realizaba algún milagro, él pedía sobre todo que le contáramos a nuestra familia. Y yo te pregunto en esta mañana, ¿Le hemos contado a nuestra familia las cosas que Dios puede hacer por nosotros? ¿Le hemos contado a nuestra familia las promesas que el Señor tiene para nosotros?

No hay como nuestra propia experiencia con Dios. No es útil que seamos reconocido con el premio Nobel de la paz si no reconocemos nuestro escenario para luchar por la paz, ni recordar nuestro testimonio de la verdad si asumimos los mismos trucos de las redes sociales para encubrir nuestra verdadera identidad.

Más allá de eso, más allá de ese pasado hermoso, el Señor te convoca a vivir una nueva relación con Dios, una experiencia que te sacuda las mismas entrañas. No fueron las memorias con Jesús las que lanzaron a los discípulos a morir por el evangelio, sino las experiencias con el resucitado. Es un nuevo...

Parte dos y final.

El Señor dice que hará caminos en el desierto, caminos que te permitan transitar seguro, caminos que te hagan ver las nuevas misericordias del Señor que se renuevan de día en día. Dios como en el anterior éxodo te tomará de la mano y descubrirás que el no habita en casas de oración ni en el templo hechos por hombre, sino que él se hará conocer cara a cara como en un diálogo más cercano.

El hará ríos en la soledad, hará más que un arroyo de agua viva para que tu vida sea de una total compañía para que no te sientas solo en medio de la crisis que genera la sociedad moderna con su banalidad y su vacío. Cree en esas promesas y reaviva tu relación con el Señor. Que el Señor te respalde y te cuide.

Roads in the desert, rivers in the wilderness.

Well, first of all I want to greet all the Friends who right now are gathered at the Sessions of New England Yearly Meeting. For me it is also a privilege to be able to share this message with you.

Isaiah 43:18-19.

Holding fast to God's promises, above our certainties, increases our faith and our experience with Him.

Isaiah was speaking to a people that would soon be freed from the Babylonian captivity. His promises included some good news, and some not-so-good news.

Israel, which in some way typifies our walking with God, was a rebellious people. They had seen many miracles, miracles handed down orally from generation to generation. They had seen water spring from the rock by means of God's servant Moses. They had crossed the Red Sea, and God had provided them food in the midst of their constant complaints. By day columns of smoke and by night columns of fire, such was God's protection over His people.

Now the Lord had a new plan for them. He would take them back and He promised them that He would do something new. This seems redundant, for God it's not unusual to do something different. But for the word, but the word in Hebrew meant something unheard of, something never before seen. But the previous verse says, in 18, "Leave the past behind, forget what I did before." Don't live from history, but rather build your own history, have new experiences.

Tribulations and hard times forge character, they constitute new experiences that mark our lives and strengthen our character toward God. Job's experience was similar. Job says [42:5] "By ear I had heard of you, but now my eyes see you." After the losses, after the tribulation, Job recognizes that he has a new experience with God. For man, the goal is important; for God the road is much more important, because in the road, the stumbles become a forge in our walking with God. God appreciates even our rebellions, because they speak of our dependence on God, of holding on to His promises more than to our control over material things.

If the Cuban people has learned anything vital for its faith, it's been to depend on the promises of God. Our faith can't be based only on our testimonies, because these are like arms that worked for others to vanquish giants. They're inspiring, they're certainly inspiring, but they fade with the passage of time, they're blades that worked for our grandfathers, but that today don't work for us because just as arms change, giants change too.

God has children, but He doesn't have grandchildren. That is to say, our struggles are those of today, not those of our grandparents. Each of us has our own weapons. That's why there are questions of our spiritual life that are non-transferrable experiences, that are useful to you but not to the person beside you. Sometimes we hear the testimonies and the experiences of others, and it's as if we were watching a period movie. Even the miracles of others aren't sufficient to sustain our faith, at least not to grow our faith and keep it strong and active.

Jesus knew this, that's why, when he performed some miracle, he asked above all that we tell our family about it. And I ask you this morning: Have we told our family the things that God can do for us? Have we told our family the promises that the Lord has for us?

There is nothing like our own experience with God. It's no use if we're recognized with the Nobel Peace Prize, if we don't recognize our own place to struggle for peace; nor is it useful to remember our testimony of truth if we take up all the tricks of social media to hide our real identity.

Beyond that, beyond that beautiful past, the Lord is inviting you to live a new relation with God, an experience that will shake you right down to your insides. It wasn't their memories with Jesus that flung the disciples out to die for the Gospel, but their experiences with the resurrected one. It's new ...

Part two and last.

The Lord says that he will make roads in the desert, roads that let you travel safely, roads that make you see the Lord's new mercies that are renewed day by day. God, as in the former exodus, will take you by the hand and you will discover that He doesn't dwell in houses of prayer nor in temples built by people, but that He will make Himself known face to face, in a closer conversation.

He will make rivers in the wilderness, He will make more than one stream of living water so that your life will be totally accompanied, so that you won't feel alone in the midst of the crisis that modern society generates, with its banality and its emptiness. Believe in these promises and revive your relationship with the Lord. May the Lord support you and care for you.

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 (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 (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 (youtu.be/XpAtN6mcP9A?si=VFYFmsaw-BR7JLr7P). 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 McLoud, 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 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 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 op-

tion 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 timeframe. 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

Letter from the Friends Church in Richmond, Indiana

Agosto 4 de 2025, Richmond-Indiana

Mis queridos hermanas y hermanos de la Junta Anual de Nueva Inglaterra.

Reciban un saludo fraternal de la Iglesia de los Amigos en Richmond, Indiana.

Deseamos que continuen una bendecida reunión guiada por el Espíritu Santo, colmada de calor, amor y paz que provienen de nuestro Dios, e inspirada por la unidad que siempre les ha distinguido.

Oramos para que el discernimiento espiritual esté presente en cada acuerdo que tomen, y que la luz divina alumbre el camino de su comunión y testimonio.

Nos unimos a ustedes en espíritu en torno al tema que les convoca este año: “Ríos en el desierto”. Esta imagen bíblica nos recuerda la fidelidad de Dios, que abre camino y da vida aun en medio de la aridez y las pruebas.

He aquí que yo hago cosa nueva; pronto saldrá a luz; ¿no la conoceréis? Otra vez abriré camino en el desierto, y ríos en la soledad. Isaías 43:19

Lamentamos profundamente no poder acompañarles como habíamos previsto. Las restricciones migratorias establecidas bajo las leyes del presidente Trump continúan representando un obstáculo y un peligro para los cubanos, impidiéndonos estar presentes físicamente con ustedes.

Sin embargo, nuestros corazones están unidos a los suyos en fe, esperanza y amor. Que el Espíritu de Cristo les fortalezca, les inspire y les conduzca en todo momento.

Rogamos sus oraciones por nuestro ministerio, que en medio de las circunstancias actuales representa un gran desafío.

El próximo 8 de noviembre celebramos nuestro primer aniversario. Nos reuniremos en esa misma fecha para conmemorar este tiempo de gracia y testimonio. Les extendemos una cordial invitación a unirse a nosotros en esta celebración.

Nos sentimos parte del Puente de Amor Nueva Inglaterra – Cuba, y también del lazo que nos une desde Richmond, Indiana.

Un puente más en esta querida Asamblea de la Junta Anual.

Con afecto fraternal y oración constante,

La Iglesia de los Amigos en Richmond.

En la luz,

Odalys Hernandez

Rosa Rodriguez

August 4, 2025, Richmond, Indiana

My dear sisters and brothers of the New England Yearly Meeting,

Please accept fraternal greetings from the Friends Church in Richmond, Indiana.

We wish you continued blessed gatherings guided by the Holy Spirit, filled with the warmth, love, and peace that come from our God, and inspired by the unity that has always distinguished you.

We pray that spiritual discernment may be present in every agreement you make, and that divine light may illuminate the path of your communion and witness.

We join you in spirit around the theme that calls you together this year: “Rivers in the Desert.” This biblical image reminds us of God’s faithfulness, which makes a way and gives life even in the midst of aridity and trials.

Behold, I am doing a new thing; it will soon come forth; will you not know it? Once again I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. Isaiah 43:19

We deeply regret that we cannot be with you as we had planned. The immigration restrictions established under President Trump’s laws continue to represent an obstacle and a danger for Cubans, preventing us from being physically present with you.

However, our hearts are united with yours in faith, hope, and love. May the Spirit of Christ strengthen, inspire, and guide you at all times.

We ask for your prayers for our ministry, which represents a great challenge amidst the current circumstances.

On November 8th, we celebrate our first anniversary. We will gather on that same date to commemorate this time of grace and witness. We extend a cordial invitation to join us in this celebration.

We feel part of the New England-Cuba Bridge of Love, and also of the bond that unites us from Richmond, Indiana. One more bridge at this beloved Annual Meeting.

With brotherly affection and constant prayer
 The Friends Church in Richmond.
 In the light,
 Odalys Hernandez
 Rosa Rodríguez Rodríguez

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) Community¹

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 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, attenders, and other individuals who reach out to us;

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

- 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 wondrous 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

Travel minute & endorsement for Kirenia

Junta Anual de la Iglesia de los Amigos (Cuáqueros) en Cuba

Holguín, 12 de Julio de 2025

Es una oportunidad muy valiosa para Cuba que la hermana Kirenia Criado Pérez les visite con el propósito de cumplir un intenso programa con la Junta Anual de Nueva Inglaterra y fortalecer el Puente entre ambos países.

Procede de la Junta Mensual de Puerto Padre, es líder pastoral de la Junta Mensual de la Habana por más de 20 años. Fundadora y facilitadora de Proyecto Alternativa a la Violencia, Cuba.

Kirenia es graduada de Maestría en Teología en el Seminario Evangélico de Teología en Matanzas, actualmente profesora titular de nuestra Junta Anual en este mismo Seminario de las asignaturas del Nuevo Testamento y Griego.

Es parte de claustro de profesores del Instituto Cubano Cuáquero de Paz en las asignaturas de, Transformación conflictos, Cultura de Paz y Cuaquerismo.

Acompañamos en oración este viaje y les rogamos su apoyo a nuestra hermana.

Fraternalmente,

Jorge Luis Peña Reyes

Presidente

6 Agosto 2025

Que bendición haber tenido a Kirenia Criado Pérez con nosotros en nuestra 365ª Sesión de la Junta Anual de Nueva Inglaterra del primero al 6 de Agosto, bajo el lema “Ríos en el desierto.” Con toda generosidad Kirenia compartió su clara Luz, profunda sabiduría y gozoso humor con los Amigos congregados durante los estudios bíblicos recibidos cada mañana en cinco días. Compartió con nuestros jóvenes en sus programas y comidas. Revivió relaciones con muchos Amigos y sembró muchas nuevas amistades. Estamos muy agradecidos por tu presencia, querida Kirenia, y te enviamos en tu viaje de regreso, deseando que lleves contigo todo el amor y amistad que sentimos por nuestros hermanas y hermanos en Cuba.

Rebecca Leuchak, Junta Anual de Nueva Inglaterra.

Yearly Meeting of the Friends Church (Quakers) in Cuba

Holguín, July 12, 2025

It's a very valuable opportunity for Cuba that sister Kirenia Criado Pérez visits you, with the purpose of carrying out an intense program with New England Yearly Meeting and strengthening the Bridge between both countries.

Originally from Puerto Padre Monthly Meeting, she has been the pastoral leader of Havana Monthly Meeting for more than 20 years. Founder and facilitator of the Alternatives to Violence Project, Cuba.

Kirenia holds her Masters in Theology from the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas, and she is currently the tenured professor from our Yearly Meeting in the same Seminary, teaching New Testament and Greek.

She is part of the faculty of the Cuban Quaker Peace Institute, where she teaches Conflict Transformation, Cultures of Peace, and Quakerism.

We accompany this voyage in prayer, and we pray that you support our sister.

In Friendship,

Jorge Luis Peña Reyes

Presiding Clerk

August 6, 2025

What a blessing to have had Kirenía Criado Pérez with us in our 365th Sessions of the New England Yearly Meeting, from the first to the 6th of August, with the theme “Rivers in the desert.” With great generosity, Kirenía shared her clear Light, deep wisdom and joyful humor with the Friends gathered during the Bible study every morning for five days. She shared with our young people in their programs and meals. She revived friendships with many Friends and sowed many new ones. We are very grateful for your presence, dear Kirenía, and we send you on your return journey, wishing that you carry with you all the love and friendship that we feel for our brothers and sisters in Cuba.

Rebecca Leuchak, New England Yearly Meeting

Minuta de agradecimiento a la Junta Anual de Cuba
en ocasión de su 125o Aniversario
.....

5 Agosto 2025

A los Amigos de la Junta Anual de Cuba:

En nombre de la Junta Anual de Nueva Inglaterra, les escribimos con profunda alegría y sentido agradecimiento mientras celebran el 125° aniversario de su Junta Anual. Damos gracias por las muchas generaciones fieles que se han reunido para adorar, ministrar y dar testimonio.

Estamos especialmente agradecidos por los lazos que unen nuestras Juntas, lazos que se han profundizado a través de la adoración compartida y el estímulo mutuo. En un mundo que anhela el amor a través de las diferencias y la fidelidad a través de la adversidad, su firmeza brilla intensamente.

Que este aniversario sea a la vez un tiempo de celebración y de renovación de la vida y la obra del Espíritu entre ustedes. Damos gracias por su testimonio y por las formas en que la Junta Anual de Cuba continúa enriqueciendo la comunidad más amplia de Amigos.

En la luz y el amor,

Rebecca Leuchak

Secretaria Presidente

En nombre de la Junta Anual de Nueva Inglaterra

Minute of Appreciation for Cuba Yearly Meeting
on the Occasion of Their 125th Anniversary
.....

August 5, 2025

To Friends of Cuba Yearly Meeting,

On behalf of New England Yearly Meeting, we write with deep joy and heartfelt appreciation as you celebrate the 125th anniversary of your Yearly Meeting. We give thanks for the many faithful generations who have gathered together in worship, ministry, and witness.

We are especially thankful for the ties that unite our Meetings. Ties that have deepened through shared worship and mutual encouragement. In a world longing for love across differences and faithfulness through adversity, your steadfastness shines brightly.

May this anniversary be both a time of celebration and renewal of your commitment to the life and work of the Spirit among you. We give thanks for your witness and for the ways Cuba Yearly Meeting continues to enrich the wider fellowship of Friends.

In Light and Love,

Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk

For New England Yearly Meeting Friends

Staff Reports

Secretary

The Yearly Meeting Secretary's report will be presented at Sessions, and a text will then be available. (See "Message from Yearly Meeting Secretary Noah Bishop Merrill" on page 29.)

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 neym.org/events-calendar/2025/07/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.

—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.

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 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. 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 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 camperships

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 meet-

ing 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 Tamara Gaydos to clarify the process for adding Yearly Meeting records to SCUA.

The Committee regularly reviews and supports Tamara 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-

er-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 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.

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 wholistic, 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 distribute (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 commitments 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@moses-brown.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.

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 Planning

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 intervisitation 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 dpeakers. After the 2025 YAY Gathering, Kody Hersh, Youth & Retreat Coordinatorm, 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

- 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.

—CHRISTOPHER HAINES

Memorial Minutes

Adele MacVeagh Clurman Bourne March 22, 1936-January 11, 2025

On January 11, 2025, Providence Monthly Meeting of Friends lost a vivacious, beloved member of our community, Adele MacVeagh Clurman Bourne, who passed away after living a full 88 years. In a full circle gesture, we celebrated Adele's memorial service on her birthday, in the company of her family and beloved twin brother, Charlie. We learned that Adele was a "surprise" daughter to her parents, whose father famously exclaimed upon her birth, "Well we pulled that one out of our hat!" Throughout her life, Adele was affectionately known as "Rabbit" and now we understand why. With that auspicious beginning, our dear friend Adele made her debut into the world.

Adele would go on to become a gifted educator of literature and theatre arts, poet, playwright, and lifelong ferocious social justice activist. Her life was abundant with theatrical performance, literature, nature, and art. Adele was known for her prodigious intellect, intense interpersonal focus, and laser-sharp wit. As one Quaker shared, Adele had pluck, engaging full throttle in life with all its complexity. In the latter part of her journey, when she utilized a walker, she maneuvered with characteristic purpose and precision. Indeed, Adele was a force to be reckoned with, and she channeled that force for good in the world.

Adele was born and raised in the Episcopalian tradition in Bedford, New York, in a family whose father served on Franklin D. Roosevelt's War Production Board and whose uncle and grandfather were US ambassadors. When the family moved to Webster Groves, Missouri, for her father's work, Adele founded her activist passion as a junior high-schooler when she worked alongside her mother and other members of the Emmanuel Episcopal Church to desegregate Webster Groves schools.

Adele's activist career was fueled by her education at Bryn Mawr College, with its historically Quaker roots and emphasis on equality of all people. She was further galvanized in 1963 by her attendance at Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* speech. Adele honed her work for peace and justice as a member of Moorestown, New Jersey, Friends Meeting and was always the first to join a protest, spearhead a letter-writing campaign, or care for a family in need. When she resettled and joined Providence Monthly Meeting, she quickly engaged as an active and steadfast member of the Peace and Social Concerns Committee.

Adele was especially valued as a source of advice and support to others as they pursued their particular social justice activities. One member recalls Adele, well into her 80s, making the trek to Boston and reveling in vigils to help preserve a children's hospital garden. Although the garden was sacrificed, Adele took the time to write in her bold cursive to offer words of solace: "Even though the outcome wasn't what you hoped, your efforts brought integrity to the process and that matters." Indeed, Adele mentored many a soul, wrote poetry, and turned to the arts to advance the pursuit of social justice.

Adele served as a devoted, attentive member of the Pastoral Care Committee. She enjoyed reaching out to others in our community in need of encouragement with telephone calls, handwritten cards, visits, flowers, and meals. She was a good listener and made people feel special. She was comfortable connecting with others and engaging in conversation, and ever-generous with her time and resources. She accepted people for who they were and refrained from judgment. She remembered people's names and made note of newcomers and those who might be isolated, lonely, bereaved, or hungry. She was attuned to the human condition and took joy in serving the needs of others. At her memorial service, there were messages from her neighbors at Wayland Manor, who recalled her kindness, open door and warm hospitality, and sharing of food.

Adele had a remarkable energy and wholeheartedness that animated her and influenced those around her. She easily connected and made friends with those across the generations. She was funny, bold, quotable, classy, and entertaining. She spoke her mind, often eloquently, and served as a role model for many, including her grandchildren, who took pride in their grandmother's perennial youthful optimism and perspective. Adele could at once be serious yet lighten the moment with her quick wit, smile, and willingness to share of her own experiences. At a recent Christmas program, drawing on her background in theatre, she delivered a reading with verve and compassion that uplifted those present. Adele was comfortable in her own skin, upheld the dignity of all people, and envisioned a world of fairness and opportunity for all. She made good on this vision through her educational and social justice endeavors, everyday kindness, humor, and nonjudgmental, positive regard for others. She embodied Quaker principles and testified to them throughout her life.

Adele is survived by her loving twin brother, Charlie, and her sister Priscilla; her daughter, Margaretta, and son, Andrew, and their partners; vibrant grandchildren and great-grandchildren; and an extended family of nieces, nephews, and cousins. Adele generated joy, made the world a better place, and she will be remembered for brightening our Meeting and our world.

PROVIDENCE MONTHLY MEETING JUNE 8, 2025

SOUTHEAST QUARTER JUNE 15, 2025

Erica Brinton
October 14, 1948 – January 27, 2022

Hanover Friends Meeting's long-time member, Erica Brinton, passed away quietly in her modest home in Norwich, Vermont on January 27, 2022.

Erica was a community activist, avid bike commuter, faithful Christmas Revels actor, loyal shape-note singer, cheerful Morris and contra dancer, dedicated Registered Nurse, and famous cook for each and every potluck supper where, like at all activities, she was a cheerful presence. But most of all, Erica was a friendly face to everyone she met.

Erica was born on October 14, 1948, and raised in a Quaker household in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and graduated from George School. After spending every childhood summer vacation at her parent's hillside farm, "Wenlock Edge" in Ludlow, Vermont, it was Hanover Friends Meeting's good fortune that she decided to relocate permanently to New England. After graduating from Russell Sage College with a BS in nursing, she took a job at Mary Hitchcock Hospital and settled into the Upper Valley so she could spend her free time back at Wenlock Edge.

From the time Erica moved to the Upper Valley, her life became a tableau of community happenings. Her life was filled year 'round with events that drew people into her circle. In the spring, she'd be inviting people to walk a local trail. Summer would be a time to help weed community gardens. Her apple-cider mill would be grinding away on sunny autumn days. And winter would be filled with Revels rehearsals and contra dances.

Erica wore her Quaker values on her sleeve. She attended every vigil against war and injustice that she could. She volunteered in the Meeting's First Day School program, served as Presiding Clerk and on a number of its standing committees, as well as the AFSC-Vermont Committee, and regularly attended her faith's quarterly meetings. To expand her circle of friends beyond northern New England, she joined a religious delegation to visit a Quaker church in Havana, Cuba, where she taught New England folk dances to gales of laughter and much hand-clapping and toe-tapping. Now, years later, Cuban Quakers still fondly invoke memories of "Erika" with warm smiles.

To allow her more time for civic engagement, Erica traded in her full-time nursing job for a part-time job at Kendal at Hanover where, once again she made lifetime friends.

Erica Brinton's life was cut too short by medical challenges. But she will be carried in the hearts of all who knew this person who exuded the divine presence with such grace and charm.

HANOVER FRIENDS MEETING, MARCH 16, 2025

NORTHWEST QUARTERLY MEETING, JUNE 7, 2025

Karen Sheila Levy Cadbury
June 3, 1945 – March 27, 2024

Friends at Midcoast Monthly Meeting in Damariscotta, Maine give thanks for the many ways Karen Cadbury served the Meeting. She worked on the Finance Committee and the Pastoral Care Committee; she taught First Day School and served as co-clerk; she was the spark that created and secured grant funding for the Meeting's innovative Outreach and Peace project. Karen was energetic and bright—her only sibling, Melaine, described her as "a trooper."

Karen Sheila Levy Cadbury was born in 1945 in Baltimore but spent her early years in Texas, her father's home state. Karen would refer to her father's Jewish background saying she was raised "never to hate." In her teens the family moved to Baltimore, her mother's home area. When Karen was sixteen her mother died. Karen became "like a mother" to Melaine and carried on. She finished high school and enrolled at the University of Maryland. Soon she met David Frederick Cadbury, a student at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA).

They became a devoted, hard-working couple, sharing a love for birding, ocean sailing, and art for 49 years. David's family was from a Quaker background; Karen would say that her transition to Quakerism was natural. David and Karen moved to Philadelphia and joined Central Philadelphia Meeting, participating there for two decades.

Melaine spoke of a time Karen took her to a civil rights demonstration in Baltimore, saying Karen was "always thinking about people's rights and different cultures." Gradually Karen built a career working for organizations that supported these rights and cultures. She worked in the development office for the University of Pennsylvania and at the university's Museum, where she developed programs that brought Museum exhibits and experts to Philadelphia public school classrooms. She served as staff for the Policy and Legislation Committee of the Peace Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, constantly encouraging Friends to contact their U.S. Senators and Representatives about important federal legislation. She developed considerable expertise on what was happening in Israel and the Middle East, an interest she continued throughout her life. Meanwhile their two children, Benjamin and Rachel, were born.

A Friend said of Karen and David: "David and Karen together were an inspiring model of supporting and living with each other through all of life's challenges." When David had a heart attack at age 45, they decided to move to Maine where David's family had summered in the past. Karen got a job with College of the Atlantic and soon set up Cadbury Consultants, continuing her work for non-profits.

A Friend spoke of how hard Karen worked at her job but also reached out with caring to people around her. Another Friend said "Karen was one to bounce back. I was in awe of her anchored trust that the best will prevail. Even in her last days, Karen was imagining ways to share and connect people." Karen lived out Quaker testimonies in her many work endeavors and brought her professional organizing and finance skills to Friends' Meetings and organizations.

Karen had a way with words whether listening or communicating. If there was a misunderstanding among Friends she would make personal phone calls and write letters to offer an ear or loving support. As she was transitioning from a demanding career load, she joined a writers' group and began to write a mystery.

Said a member of Midcoast Meeting, "I will miss her way with words that made Quakerism live for me in a special way. She was a brilliant woman who gave so much to the Meeting."

MIDCOAST MEETING OF FRIENDS, SEPTEMBER 15, 2024

VASSALBORO QUARTERLY MEETING, NOVEMBER 2, 2024

Andrea Cousins
July 25, 1941 – January 27, 2024

Andrea Cousins moved to Leverett in 1990, and a year later, at age fifty, somehow found her way alone to the Mt. Toby Meeting for reasons she could never recall. She liked the silence. For the next thirty-three years until her death in January 2024, she was a steady and steadying presence, sitting in her customary seat in the south-east corner, and, on occasion, blessing the meeting with succinct, thoughtful messages that expressed her characteristic honesty and humor, and sometimes just the inspiration she found among the wildlife of her garden.

Andrea was the oldest child of Norman Cousins, the eminent writer and international peace advocate. Her mother, Ellen, a force in herself, stayed home, where she grew, and promoted, organic vegetables, while mainly supporting her husband in his important work. This division of labor later gave Andrea mixed feelings about the institution of marriage.

Andrea and her three younger sisters grew up in New Canaan, Connecticut. Her father and mother were both of Russian Jewish heritage. Their household was so completely secular that during most of her childhood Andrea was unaware of any Jewish background. She happily attended a progressive and preppy Connecticut private school until, in her teens, she was reluctantly transplanted to a public school to be more in accordance with her father's political views.

Her younger sisters were important to Andrea throughout her life. Sarah moved to Israel, became an Orthodox Jew, and the mother of six children. Candis lived in California, married and had a son, and is, like Andrea, a psychotherapist, confirming their especially close bond. To Andrea's enduring sadness, Amy developed schizophrenia, and died from its complications at age 43.

When Andrea entered Sarah Lawrence College, she was happy to find that many of the most interesting women there also had Jewish backgrounds, and she was able to embrace that part of herself while never ac-

cepting any particular theological belief. Later, she would explain her wish to be part of the Quaker community without becoming a formal member of it, as part of her lifelong disinclination to be defined by a faith.

When Andrea was invited by the meeting to describe her “Spiritual Journey,” she discovered from the enthusiastic overflow attendance, and to her great happiness, just how much she was loved. She had thought of herself as an outsider. It was entirely characteristic of Andrea’s intellectual rigor—“opinionated,” according to her own description—that she was unable to fully accept the talk’s title. She said she did not know what “spiritual” meant, and that “journey” suggested a spurious coherence. She settled for “Life Story.”

Andrea’s early adult life coincided with the era’s civil rights activism and the African independence movement. She was a member of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, and was close to Tom Hayden, a founder of the SDS. She also traveled to Guinea in West Africa, but did not feel she had found her own place in the world. Partly to overcome a lasting grief from the break-up with a longstanding boyfriend, Andrea went to Algeria to undertake doctoral research in Social Anthropology for a Harvard degree. But this did not prove to be her vocation, and shortly after moving to Leverett she went into psychoanalysis, first as a patient and then as a practicing therapist, with a clinical doctorate. She discovered that this was what she was always meant to do. She practiced psychotherapy and psychoanalysis with great satisfaction, continuing even after she was diagnosed with lung cancer. Many people benefitted from Andrea’s care, and she felt entirely fulfilled in her work. She said that as she gained experience as a therapist she became quieter and quieter.

The qualities that made Andrea a natural psychotherapist also benefited the Mt. Toby meeting. Apart from her contributions to the Meeting for Worship, Andrea served on the Hospitality, Nominating and Care and Counsel committees, and was a member of a number of “Friendly 8’s” groups, smaller gatherings that examined inner life and its relationships with the outer world in intimacy and depth. Andrea’s welcoming presence, and the honesty, insight, and wit she brought, was a central compelling force in these long-lived groups.

Andrea had a talent for friendship but sometimes expressed regret that a partnership in something like a marriage had not been for her. Love, however, did not elude her, and she found great satisfaction in a long relationship with a like-minded man that she chose to treasure by holding it privately to herself.

When Andrea was diagnosed with lung cancer, she immediately knew that it was serious. She decided to continue working and attending meeting as before. When she finally became house-bound, she still enjoyed the conversation and the poetry she had always loved, even when, in the last months, she was drifting in and out of sleep. Her close friend from Meeting, Ken Hoffman, in particular, did much to ease the way of her final months, and after her death, Pam Tinto did much to mindfully close Andrea’s beloved Leverett home and distribute her belongings among her friends. Andrea is buried in the Mt. Toby Meeting burial ground.

Andrea leaves behind her younger sisters Candis and Sarah, and many nieces and nephews, and their children. Also, her best friend, Ann Bookman, and many other friends, including, locally, John Bollard and Margaret Lloyd, and Olivia Bernard, and a community of Friends from the Meeting that had been such an important part of her life.

MT. TOBY MONTHLY MEETING, MARCH 9, 2025

CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING, MAY 4, 2025

Anne Willoughby DiMase
February 12, 1933 - October 11, 2023

On October 11, 2023, Providence Monthly Meeting of Friends lost a cherished member, Anne Willoughby DiMase, who passed away at the age of 90 years. Anne became a member of Meeting upon turning 70 years. She reflected with her membership Clearness Committee that she still had “a lot to offer” and wished to belong to our community. Indeed, over the last two decades, Anne has graced our Meeting with her kindness, warm embrace, and enduring optimism of humanity.

Anne had a presence, a warm smile and, as one member described it, “eyes that danced.” She would often sit on the back bench of the meeting room, welcoming and, in her role as Membership Recorder, tallying those who entered the Meeting room. Another member recollected feeling a great sense of comfort seeing her in this familiar role, thinking “Anne is here. All is well. All she greets will be made to feel welcome.” Her presence lent a steadiness, a valued constancy to Meeting for Worship and to the broader life of the Meeting.

Anne had Light. Quakers speak of “Inner Light” which Anne had in abundance. She also manifested “outer light,” a smile that lit up and enlivened a conversation. Her genuine interest and concern for others served to lighten whatever burdens they might be carrying. One felt listened to, heartened, and affirmed in Anne’s pres-

ence with her gentle approach and acceptance of all people. She could also be funny and was known for her witty quips. She was sought out for her natural gift of bringing meaningful life experiences to bear that offered guidance and reassurance to others. She was approachable and inviting during coffee hour, and balanced matters of a serious nature with a light touch.

Anne believed deeply in justice, compassion, and equality for all people, values informed by her deep faith and studies of Christianity, Buddhism, and Vedanta Hinduism. In keeping with her eclectic prism of perspectives and practices, Anne was a pacifist and supporter of the civil rights movement. For many years Anne served on the Peace and Social Concerns Committee, making valuable contributions and staying abreast of current social justice issues.

Anne was often accompanied at Meeting on Mother's Day by her beloved daughter Sherrie and grandson Shane. They made a family tradition of attending the annual Christmas Eve candlelight service at Saylesville Meeting House. Anne enjoyed the fellowship and cookies afterwards—and she was always eager to catch up with young people home for Christmas holiday. One of her favorite holidays was Valentine's Day and she extended a warm invitation to her friends at Meeting to join at her home for cookies and hot chocolate. She wasn't a fussy entertainer, insisting that "store bought cookies are just fine." She placed the emphasis on connecting with people and relationships, rather than formalities, creating a home that was appreciated as a lively hub of joy in times of celebration, and a welcoming place of comfort in times of difficulty.

Born in Worcester, Massachusetts on February 12, 1933, Anne lived most of her life in New England. She graduated from the University of Rhode Island with a degree in Early Childhood Education. She then won a fellowship for graduate studies in Human Development and Human Relations at Merrill Palmer Institute in Michigan. A lifelong learner, Anne also studied Anthropology at Brown University and Social Work at Rhode Island College.

Anne's life spoke with her good works devoted to children. She was passionate about early childhood education and as one member noted, "she never seemed to age...she was forever young." True to her ideals, Anne spent years advocating for higher standards in this field, especially for disadvantaged students and those with special needs. During her early years she served as director of a school for disabled children in Springfield, MA and taught third grade in Dedham, MA and later in Cincinnati, OH. After returning to Rhode Island, she taught at Meeting Street School in Providence. She went on to found and teach at the East Greenwich Cooperative Nursery School. Anne served on the East Greenwich School Committee, where she advocated for individualized educational programs for students. Later, she taught at the John Hope Day Care Center, where she began a parents' group and practiced social work at the John Hope Settlement House. She also directed several Head Start programs and day care centers in Lima, Ohio, and Glendale, California. With remarkable energy, she established and directed a new infant-toddler center and preschool in Middletown, Rhode Island, while directing day care programs at Child and Family Services of Newport County. Anne was a visionary and gifted educator who improved the lives of many.

When Anne reached standard retirement age, not one to be idle, she took a position at the American Automobile Association. There she continued in her diligent, calm, and cheerful manner to assist travelers in Providence. She finally (and reluctantly) settled into her well-deserved retirement at the age of 80. Wherever Anne worked and lived, she was a source of support and guidance, and she stayed in touch with many of her mentees throughout her life.

Anne loved poetry and history, particularly hearing the stories of those who came before her. She also loved music, particularly the jazz of her youth and the folk music of the 50s and 60s. Spending time in nature brought a special joy to her.

Anne is survived by one son, Daniel, three daughters, Debora, Laura, and Sherrie, and nine grandchildren. She was also blessed with dear friends that she cherished, many of whom spoke at her memorial service. Anne's good works and relationships live on, and our lives are enriched for having known her.

PROVIDENCE MONTHLY MEETING, JUNE 9, 2024

SOUTHEAST QUARTERLY MEETING, JUNE 16, 2024

Carla Lurie Dowben
January 18, 1932 – January 9, 2024

In January, we lost our valued member Carla Dowben. In April 2014, she had transferred her membership from Acton Friends Meeting (Concord, Massachusetts), where she had been a member since 1962. While at Provi-

dence she provided an important presence at online Meetings for Worship during covid, and she served ably on Ministry and Counsel Committee until the time of her death. A memorial service for her was held at the Providence meetinghouse on February 24, 2024.

Her husband, Robert, had died in 2019, and losing him had shaken her faith, but she found renewed meaning and purpose at Meeting, plus an opportunity to serve, and she attributed her restored faith to the support of the Meeting community. In gratitude, she donated many of her household and personal possessions to Meeting for a yard sale that was held June 8, 2024.

Raised in a Jewish household, she began attending Friends meeting in Philadelphia while in law school at Temple University, where she was the only woman in her class.

Later, in Chicago, Carla's sense of social justice exemplified itself in the kinds of cases she took. She worked for the Cook County Legal Aid Society and made a living defending the poor and recent immigrants from Europe. She was particularly empathetic to women's roles in the social order of the day. In one case, she obtained the release of a woman who had been wrongly incarcerated in a mental facility by demonstrating the false claims of the husband. Another case made it all the way to the Supreme Court.

In Dallas she was particularly interested in protecting people in the health care system, and she taught medical ethics in the medical school there. She was a champion of women's rights and access to healthcare for all marginalized individuals.

Carla was instrumental in starting Acton Friends Meeting. While there, she took on the role of defending the legal rights of patients confined to mental hospitals. Many in the Acton meeting provided aid to her cause, networking with legislators and others. She contributed to the closure of several institutions for developmentally delayed individuals in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Carla loved nature, especially flowering plants, which she shared generously from her "Monet" garden. Her generosity was legion with her caregivers and their families. She had a great sense of humor, and her close friends considered her "a hoot." Her attitude was to keep evolving and growing throughout her life, and this will continue to serve as an inspiration for us all.

PROVIDENCE MONTHLY MEETING, JUNE 9, 2024

SOUTHEAST QUARTERLY MEETING, JUNE 16, 2024

Muriel Farrar
January 8, 1949 – June 16, 2023

Every person who contributed to this minute used the same words to describe Muriel: kind and gentle.

Also: thoughtful. Muriel made sure we had snacks for hospitality after meeting. Muriel made sure we had a seasonal wreath on the front door, made sure we all got some of the snowdrops from Shirley Leslie's home, made sure there were flowers in the meetinghouse yard. She was ready with a hug, an offer of help, a small gift. She could show up unexpectedly on your birthday with food from Taco Bell and a small cake—with candles!

Born January 8, 1949, in Keene, New Hampshire, Muriel earned her Masters of Education at the University of New Hampshire and taught first and second grade at Hilltop Elementary School in Somersworth, New Hampshire. She later served as Assistant Principal at Milton Elementary School and dedicated her time to teaching students studying for their GED and HSET at the Strafford County Jail through Dover Adult Learning Center.

Muriel was much loved and valued in our meeting. She served as clerk for several years, including taking over as pastor for a time after Gonic's part-time pastor stepped down. Muriel took on so much more than the traditional clerk's role. She took on tasks large and small to care for both our building and our small community of Friends by providing hospitality, ensuring repairs were completed, and much more. In addition, she served as liaison to the Greater Rochester (NH) Interfaith Council, coordinating the annual CROP walk for hunger relief and hosting interfaith services. She helped to organize an ecumenical Women's World Day of Prayer service which was prepared by a sister meeting in Cuba. Muriel was active in USFW, served as treasurer for Dover Quarter, and as a member of the Yearly Meeting Finance Committee, including a term as clerk.

Toward the end of her life, Muriel suffered with dementia and was not able to attend meeting. We miss her gentle presence, her loving messages in worship, her singing, and so much more. During her memorial meeting we learned from her friends and family the many other ways that Muriel is missed.

Muriel is survived by her husband, Don Foster; her daughter, Alaysha Duncan; her grandchildren, Khairi and Ka'Marah; and her sister, Judith Glidden.

GONIC MONTHLY MEETING, JULY 14, 2024

DOVER QUARTERLY MEETING, SEPTEMBER 29, 2024

Eden Elizabeth Parker Grace
November 23, 1968 - May 27, 2023

On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” - Revelation 22:2 NRSV

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

Life and Education

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

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

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

Quaker Journey

Beacon Hill Meeting and New England Yearly Meeting

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

During their honeymoon in 1991, Eden and Jim attended the Friends World Committee for Consultation World Conference of Friends in Chavakali, Kenya, where they heard a powerful message from Miriam Were

calling on Friends to turn to Christ to heal the divisions among us. This message, supported by other parts of the conference, had a profound impact on Eden and started her on a journey of Christian faith that continued and grew. It was a turning point that set the stage for her subsequent study of theology, passion for Christian unity, and vocation as a Friends' minister.

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

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

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

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

Friends United Meeting

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

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

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

From 2013 to 2020 Eden served as FUM's Global Ministries Director based in Richmond, Indiana. In this role, she encouraged and nurtured new leadership in FUM, especially by women, and maintained and expanded FUM's ministry of spiritual renewal and service to marginalized people. One volunteer recalls, "After

returning from years in Kenya to her position in global ministry at FUM, Eden developed a compelling vision of the unfolding future of the Religious Society of Friends around the world and in North America especially.”

West Richmond Friends Meeting

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

Ecumenical Eden

Friends Committee on National Legislation

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

Massachusetts Council of Churches

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

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

World Council of Churches

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

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

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

Influence and Legacy

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

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

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

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

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

BEACON HILL FRIENDS MEETING, DECEMBER 15, 2024

NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING PERMANENT BOARD FOR SALEM QUARTERLY MEETING, MARCH 1, 2025

Rudman J. Ham July 22, 1931 – January 24, 2022

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

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

He was born in Dover, New Hampshire on July 22, 1931, to a Quaker family who were members of the Dover monthly meeting. He was a proud alumnus of Westtown School in West Chester, Pennsylvania. After graduating from the University of New Hampshire he registered as a conscientious objector with his draft board. He

did his alternative service with the International Volunteer Services (IVS), helping bring livestock and farming assistance to a Kurdish village in Northern Iraq.

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

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

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

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

WELLESLEY FRIENDS MEETING, JANUARY 12, 2025

NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING PERMANENT BOARD FOR SALEM QUARTERLY MEETING, MARCH 1, 2025

Ruth Ann Hawkins
August 10, 1945 – October 13, 2022

Ruth Ann (Elsaesser) Hawkins was born in Paterson, New Jersey, on October 25, 1923, and died on October 10, 2023, fifteen days before her 100th birthday.

Ruth's formal education included an undergraduate music education degree with a German minor at New Jersey College for Women in 1948. She began her professional career teaching music to all grades in Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey. She was an accomplished violinist, playing in several orchestras and string quartets. During the summers, she directed a Girl Scout summer camp. Wanting to grow in her professional development, she attended the graduate program in social work at New York University. During this time, she attended a Fellowship of Reconciliation conference at the Westbury, New York, Quaker meetinghouse. Here, she met her future husband, Bruce Hawkins, who was an instructor in physics at Yale.

Ruth and Bruce were married on June 3, 1957, and moved to Oberlin, Ohio. Ruth worked as a clinical social worker in Elyria and gave birth to two daughters, Judith (Judy) and Patricia, born in 1959 and 1961, respectively. For many years, the Hawkins family enjoyed sailing, with the ultimate experience being a cruise on a square-rigged ship in the Leeward Islands in 2010. Other family activities included a love for the outdoors and singing Girl Scout songs, folk songs, and holiday carols, which Ruth accompanied on the piano.

Ruth grew up Presbyterian, and while in Ohio from 1957 to 1961, Ruth and Bruce were Methodists but participated in activities associated with Oberlin Quakers.

Ruth and Bruce settled in Northampton in 1961, when Bruce received a position in the Physics department at Smith College. They started attending the Mt. Toby Friends Meeting, with Ruth becoming a member around 1965. A group of Quakers in Northampton, Massachusetts, became a worship group under the care of Mt. Toby in 1991. The first meetings of the worship group met in Ruth and Bruce's living room. They were among the founding members when the worship group became the Northampton Friends Meeting in 1994. Ruth was less

interested in Quaker theology or mysticism but grounded in instinctual respect for others, working tirelessly for peace and justice.

Once both of Ruth's daughters attended preschool, Ruth was employed by the Holyoke, Massachusetts, YWCA and organized several annual peace and social justice high school conferences at Elms College. She was later employed as a school adjustment counselor in the Northampton, Goshen, Westhampton, and Southampton, Massachusetts, school districts. She introduced a personal safety curriculum in the late '70s and '80s, which helped children recognize and reject inappropriate attention. She led parent education classes based on Alfred Adler's ideas, finding his perspective more community and family-oriented than other early psychological thought. She also utilized her social work skills within the Quaker meeting, empathetically supporting parents with kindness and integrity.

Ruth lived her faith, led by her Quaker spirituality and tenacious optimism. She let her life speak through continuous outreach, organizing, and activism. The core of her spiritual commitment evolved while coming of age during World War II. Having both Protestant and Jewish German relatives, she identified with the profound horror and senselessness of war. In 1948, she participated in a youth hostel group that traveled through post-war Germany, observing the devastation of war. After leading several hostel groups through North America, North Africa, and Western Europe, she served on the board of American Youth Hostels. She filled a seat vacated by Norman Rockefeller Jr, who said, "It's in your hands now, Ruth."

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Ruth was a volunteer recruiter for the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Ohio. Upon moving to Northampton, she revived the local chapter and recruited Frances Crowe to follow her as president. Ruth also co-founded the thirty-year-old and still vigorous Northampton peace vigil, where she would hand out leaflets on the cold and sunless side of the street.

During the late '60s and early '70s, Ruth and her daughter Patricia attended anti-Vietnam war protests at Westover Air Force Base. On one occasion, Ruth was arrested and detained for blocking the gates with the encouragement of her daughter by her side.

In the mid-80s, Mt. Toby became a Sanctuary Meeting, welcoming two undocumented refugees from Guatemala. Later, other family members came to join the original two. The support committee included members from many local religious organizations, and Ruth became one of the most active members. Twenty years later, when the last refugee obtained a green card, Ruth was still actively engaged with the family. This family viewed Ruth as a "most generous, generous person." The youngest family member, a son, regarded Ruth as a grandmother and was a pallbearer at her burial.

Ruth was a long-time member of the Mt. Toby Peace and Social Concerns committee and an active participant in the Western Massachusetts American Friends Service Committee. Along with Frances Crowe, also a member of Mt. Toby, Ruth influenced the meeting by keeping matters of peace and justice at the forefront.

Ruth served on several marriage clearness committees, including for two women in 1991 at the Mt. Toby Meeting when same-sex marriages were still not legally sanctioned.

Ruth spent countless years with the organization of Social Workers for Peace and Justice (SWPJ). She edited the newsletter, served on the state board, and helped students organize an annual high school conference sponsored by SWPJ.

In her retirement, she continued activism with the Northampton peace vigil and sang with the Raging Grannies. On one notable occasion, just before a congressional vote on the Iraq war, the Raging Grannies sang in front of Congressman Neal's home; he came out and conversed with the group, not making any commitment regarding how he would vote. Two days later, he voted against the war.

After years of receiving Bruce's loving care in their home, Ruth spent her twilight months at the Atrium in Agawam, supported by Bruce, her daughters, and the Northampton Friends Meeting. She was buried at Mt. Toby, surrounded by many old and new friends.

Ruth is sadly missed by those who had the privilege of knowing her. She was a beloved member of Mt. Toby and Northampton Friends Meetings and throughout the Pioneer Valley.

NORTHAMPTON FRIENDS MEETING, SEPTEMBER 8, 2024

CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING, OCTOBER 5, 2024

Julie Heagney
September 6, 1945 – July 5, 2023

Julie Heagney was born in Madisonville, Kentucky, where her father's family, rooted in the South, were from. She grew up in Carbondale, Illinois, where she also attended college, graduating third in her class at Southern Illinois University. By her reckoning, her early years were quite parochial and imbued with a racist perspective that for the rest of her life she sought to reject. Following college, she moved east and began her journey away from her roots toward an understanding of the hard lessons of racism that her southern Illinois childhood had left her with. That journey ultimately brought her to membership in the Society of Friends and a second career as a teacher of English as a Second Language and director of Framingham's Literacy Unlimited program.

Julie was ever a seeker, rarely satisfied to simply accept the unacceptable. She was also resilient in the face of the many obstacles life presented, resting always in her compassion and love for her family and community. When her PhD in English Literature from Boston College did not lead to the academic position she would have expected, she reinvented herself and used her writing skills first in Vermont and then in Massachusetts in state government planning. Not satisfied with this path, she eventually opted for early retirement and returned to graduate school to get a Masters in linguistics, which then opened the door to the second career she came to love. Along the way, she married Terry and together they adopted Rafa as a young boy from El Salvador. Rafa was a gifted soccer player and so Julie became the quintessential soccer mom, supporting him in his athletic pursuits. When Rafa married and had two sons with his then-wife, Julie warmly embraced his wife and her daughters by a former marriage, as well as her two grandsons, providing the stability and security they needed. Even after Rafa and his wife parted ways, Julie remained invested and involved with her former daughter-in-law and her step-granddaughters, all of whom spoke poignantly of the love they felt for and from Julie at her memorial meeting.

Julie's capacity for love and compassion was generously shared with Framingham Friends Meeting where she had many roles. She served as presiding clerk of the meeting as well as clerk of the Peace, Justice and Earth Care Committee for many years. She also served on Ministry and Counsel where she was also clerk, was very active on the Working Group on Racism and was the meeting's representative to the Framingham Interfaith Community Association for several years. She served on the New England Yearly Meeting's Puente de Amigos Committee supporting the "bridge of love" between New England and Cuba Yearly Meetings. Beyond her service, Julie was a good friend and caring confidante to many members of the meeting who found in her a generous and kind heart.

Her journey into Quakerism deepened with her participation in the Nurturing Faithfulness program in 2017–2018. Then she experienced the "cracking open that allows the Light in" which deepened her sense of the mystery of the Divine and which sustained her as she approached her end far too soon last July. In her final years she was a gentle and attentive participant in a faithfulness group formed as part of this program, generously sharing her life with the other participants, and likewise sharing her deep wisdom.

Julie was and remained a seeker. As she faced the reality of her impending death, understandable fears and doubts arose. There were so many things left undone in her life. She had started a memoir she wanted to finish, but more important, she wanted to be sure that Terry, Rafa, and her grandchildren were going to be okay. One of her final requests was that we rehome an exotic frog for her. At the end, she was still thinking of others, concerned for their welfare, wanting to be sure they were okay. Ever the writer, she wrote farewell notes to her family members. It was that generous love and her wish to live from that loving place that we have all missed in the months since she died. That love for her family, for her community and for all creation is what defined her life and is her legacy.

FRAMINGHAM FRIENDS MEETING, APRIL 21, 2024.

NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING PERMANENT BOARD FOR SALEM QUARTERLY MEETING, SEPTEMBER 28, 2024

Elizabeth Kincaid-Ehlers
October 2, 1933 – January 7, 2024

GIRLS DON'T DO THAT

*That refrain clanged with menace
over my youth*

*“Girls don’t do that.” Well
I did. And was not sorry, am not sorry, only
pissed that “NO” was everywhere.
Wearing bluejeans? Taking
physics? Wanting to study
rocks? Girls did that.
So there.*

(Excerpt from Elizabeth Kincaid-Ehler’s poem “Girls Don’t Do That”)

Elizabeth was a complex and complicated person as reflected in the diverse range of her academic and professional accomplishments and interests. Even for those who knew her well, she remained a bit of an enigma, but had a strong voice, unassuming presence and clear, often boldly worded convictions. In many ways her life experiences are captured in her poems, described by her publisher as “a rich variety of moods ranging from despair to hope, resignation to determination, fury to love. And always there is that wry (and sometimes rueful) wit at play”

Elizabeth was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where she spent her early years. She later attended the University of Michigan. While there, she received a Hopwood Award in poetry. She left the University during her junior year to marry William Howe Rueckert and moved with him to Troy, New York. She returned to Ann Arbor to complete her B.A. the following year. While raising her four sons and following her husband’s career moves, she also managed to earn an M.A. from the University of Illinois and a Ph.D. from the University of Rochester.

Following the end of her marriage in 1979, Elizabeth moved to Connecticut as a visiting writer-in-residence at Trinity College and decided to settle in the Hartford area. Here she continued a variety of teaching assignments that had initially begun at the University of Illinois, Rochester Institute of Technology, the University of Rochester, and Eastman School of Music. After her writing residency at Trinity College, Elizabeth taught part-time at the University of Connecticut and as a visiting writer in several Connecticut public school systems. At one school, a 5th grader interviewed her for the school newsletter and although she had been introduced as Dr. Kincaid-Ehlers, in her published interview, she was called “Dr. Kinky Waller.” In Elizabeth’s words, her irrepressible alter ego had finally been named and she thereafter wrote many poems under that name

In the mid-1980s, Elizabeth followed another one of her many callings and retrained as a psychotherapist. She maintained an office at the Hartford Family Institute where she continued to assist her clients well into her eighties. She was a religious skeptic who questioned the existence of a Christian God while also being a skillful practitioner of Gestalt Therapy, which embraced and incorporated deep spiritual components.

Throughout her life Elizabeth was an accomplished writer, who, according to family legend, began making poems when she was three, engaging her mother as amanuensis. She occasionally sent her poems out into the world and eventually published three books of collected poems with Antrim House Books. In addition, her poetry and literary and psychological essays appeared in numerous collections, academic journals, and books.

Elizabeth read her poems at the inaugural Sunken Garden Poetry Festival at the Hill-Stead Museum and gave countless other poetry readings over many years. She enjoyed her regular meetings with a long-time group of poets who both sustained each other’s work and gave each other a hard time. She received numerous awards for her writing, including the North Country Poetry Prize and a Pushcart Prize.

In addition, Elizabeth was a talented musician who played the piano and dulcimer and had a particular fondness for bluegrass music and opera. She hiked, skied, and loved to travel, making two cross-country driving trips as well as visits to Alaska, Europe, New Mexico, and Hawaii. She lived in Italy (traveling across the Atlantic alone at age 22 on a cargo ship), England, Canada, and throughout the United States. But the one place that mattered most to her was the Thousand Islands in the St. Lawrence River, where she had a house on Stave Island to which she returned every summer until she could no longer get in and out of the boat.

Elizabeth's introduction to Quakers was in England while participating in a peace march in London during the 1970s. She first attended a Quaker meeting, Hampstead Meeting, around this time. Sometime later, while at Cambridge University for a year-long post-doctoral assignment in poetry, she attended Cambridge Friends Meeting at Jesus Lane, where she became a member. After she found Hartford Meeting in 1990, the meeting became a place of great comfort and fulfillment for her. Over many years, she regularly occupied the same rear spot along the western wall of the meetinghouse, and at times could be overheard offering her opinions or sharing a running commentary about the messages and announcements of various Friends. She participated in the meeting's book club and provided a great service by proof-reading the meeting's newsletter for a number of years. This was a task for which she was well-suited as she had a keen eye for punctuation, word selection, and formatting. She valued her participation in several creative listening groups, the most recent on Zoom.

Elizabeth was a fighter who survived polio as a child and then cancer twice as an adult. She transformed her anguish at the latter into her third book of published poems titled *How Do I Hate Thee?* While she did not suffer fools lightly, her acerbic wit and occasionally sardonic comments belied deep compassion and a burning desire to see peace and justice prevail. Even as a child, she was moved by issues of social justice and felt called to activism. She became a lifelong advocate for the environment, civil rights, women's rights, and peace, participating in many protests, sometimes as an individual by simply holding a sign on a street corner and sometimes as part of a group.

The advent of COVID was a reminder to Elizabeth that her world was shrinking and she uneasily reconciled herself to her new reality, limited not only by the pandemic but increasingly by her mobility restrictions. Her presence with us in worship, although generally quiet, is much missed.

HARTFORD MONTHLY MEETING, JUNE 16, 2024

CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING, MAY 4, 2025

Christopher McCandless
September 10, 1946 – March 22, 2024

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

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

Christopher's life of service began early. In 1965, at 18, he helped register voters in the South and supported the building of a community center in Canton, Mississippi, returning in 1967. Those experiences shaped him: he reflected on being schooled there in racial equality, humility, respect, and the visceral impacts of white supremacy and its disruption until his final days. A conscientious objector to the Vietnam War, he counseled others about the draft in Chicago and in the Bay Area. He searched for and encountered "that of God" in everyone whose path he crossed. His theology embraced loving others; his vision was of joyful communion. He found a fierce, brilliant, and committed partner in building community in Jean Margaret (Watson) McCandless, his partner in activism, service, and leadership for over 55 years. They imparted these values to their children, in turn.

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

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

the wider world of Friends. His calm, competent manner, his centered presence underlined a love and respect for each of us and for our community.

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

BURLINGTON MONTHLY MEETING, MAY 19, 2024

NORTHWEST QUARTERLY MEETING, JUNE 2, 2024

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

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

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

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

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

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

Her parents’ lives and work served as patterns and examples to Jean: their commitment to making education broadly accessible, to service, social work, justice—and to ongoing revelation, throughout their lives, to care for all who are children of God. Her early years were steeped in Quaker thought and action, learning the essentials of equality, justice, hospitality and love. The local chapter of the Committee on Racial Equality gathered in the family’s basement.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BURLINGTON MONTHLY MEETING, MAY 19, 2024

NORTHWEST QUARTERLY MEETING, JUNE 2, 2024

Donna McDaniel
(October 28, 1934 – July 9, 2024)

Donna Lee Bowen McDaniel was born in Chicago, Illinois, in October 1934 and lived her childhood in Jamestown, RI, from where she took a ferry to high school in Newport each school day. She graduated magna cum laude from Tufts University with a major in history and then went on to Boston University where she earned a Masters in Education in guidance and counseling.

As a young adult, she worked with the US Department of Defense schools in Germany and Japan, where she developed her life-long love of travel and immersed herself in other cultures. Returning to the US, she raised her two sons and pursued her love of writing as a journalist with the *Middlesex News* and the local *Southborough Villager* newspapers.

In the late 1980s, while accompanying her younger son in support of his own spiritual exploration, she found a home among Friends at Framingham Meeting. She soon became active on numerous committees at the meeting and eventually became an important link to the wider Quaker world when Friends General Con-

ference invited her, along with Vanessa Julye, to write a book on Quakers and their relationship with African Americans. *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice* was published by FGC in 2009 and remains an important reference, not only for Friends with our complicated history, but also as a window into the tortured history of race relations in the US.

Donna was a Renaissance woman: a journalist, teacher, counselor, musician, active participant in two choirs (international traveler with one of them), leader of musical ventures at Christmas and other events at our meeting as well as being a loving and proud mother and grandmother to her sons and grandchildren.

Beyond her many accomplishments, Donna had a large and generous heart. She approached life with a deep passion and intellectual curiosity. When she felt called, she would anchor herself in her deep commitment to justice. She was honored in 2013 as an “Unsung Heroine” by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, both as the first woman on the Select Board in Southborough and for her devotion to that community.

Donna was justly proud of the research she and Vanessa Julye did in writing *Fit for Freedom*. Quakers had long rested on the laurels of some members who were early leaders in the abolitionist movement; however, long ignored was the way we nonetheless continued to reflect the prevailing white supremacy of the time and were not open to fully embracing African Americans as members of our meetings or educational institutions. *Fit for Freedom* opened our eyes to our historical complicity. Donna’s eyes were similarly opened in the process and she would admit that she emerged a changed person because of her intimate exposure to this painful history. The legacy of this book continues to resonate today as Quakers explore ways to be more honest and open about our continued complicity in white supremacy culture.

Donna’s openness and transparency were what made her so loved in our meeting; her smile would brighten a room. She embraced the meeting as her second home and, in turn, we embraced her as she shared her life and struggles with us. It was hard not to feel a sense of reflected pride in her accomplishments, because she allowed us to feel part of them. As life brought on changes that required her to leave her home in Southborough and move closer to her son and family in Boston, we missed her generous heart and grieved at the losses she faced.

Donna led with her heart, and the love and pride she felt for her sons and their families were a constant in her life. At her memorial meeting in August 2024, there were many expressions of appreciation for her accomplishments. Most moving, however, were the expressions of love that were felt for her, a love that will be her most enduring legacy

FRAMINGHAM MONTHLY MEETING, MARCH 16, 2025

NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING PERMANENT BOARD FOR SALEM QUARTERLY MEETING, MAY 10, 2025

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

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

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

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

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

Rose was a living testimony of the power of love to be equally present in agreement as well as in disagreement. Her honesty and tendency to be outspoken empowered her willingness to address controversy. She lis-

tened deeply, and also understood when it was best to yield to the larger sense of truth held by those present. She was influential to many in her warm, welcoming greeting and outreach to those of all ages.

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

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

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

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

HANOVER FRIENDS MEETING, JULY 24, 2022

NORTHWEST QUARTERLY MEETING, SEPTEMBER II, 2022

Rhoda Elsie Mowry
December 19, 1939 – January 8, 2024

On Sunday mornings at Smithfield Meetinghouse, sunshine streaming through the wavy glass of the windows creates a beautiful pattern on the walls. The sacred dance of light spoke to Rhoda Mowry's heart throughout her lifetime. From her favorite pew, she witnessed this weekly gift from the Divine, finding in it a message of God's presence that sustained her faith. When our historic windows required repair, Rhoda's devotion to this simple beauty moved us to ask that each antique glass pane was returned to its exact position, preserving the precise quality of light that had nourished her spirit for so many years.

The windows were important to Rhoda, and Rhoda was essential to Smithfield Friends. A Friend whose roots ran deep in our Quaker soil, she embodied the calm and constant presence that anchors a Meeting community. Born into a historic Rhode Island Quaker family, whose legacy lives on in street names, historic taverns, and conservation areas throughout our state, Rhoda carried forward generations of faithful witness with quiet dignity and unwavering commitment.

Her service to our Religious Society spanned decades and crossed every level of Quaker organization. At Smithfield Monthly Meeting, she served with distinction as Clerk of the Meeting and Clerk of Ministry and Counsel, shepherding us through seasons of growth and challenge with patient wisdom. Her leadership extended to Rhode Island Smithfield Quarterly Meeting, where she served as Clerk, and to New England Yearly Meeting, where she contributed faithfully to the Permanent Board for many years. Rhoda took particular joy in welcoming newcomers to our Meeting, extending the warm hospitality that draws seekers into our circle of worship. Her friendship enriched countless lives throughout New England Yearly Meeting, and she remained an active and cherished member of the United Society of Friends Women.

Proud of Smithfield's programmed tradition, Rhoda supported our pastoral ministry and regularly participated in gatherings that strengthened bonds among programmed Meetings. Her commitment to this form of Quaker worship reflected her deep appreciation for the many ways the Spirit moves among Friends.

Rhoda Elsie Mowry was born in Woonsocket to Stanley Mowry, Sr. and Dorothy Lapham Mowry, and throughout her life she maintained strong ties to her hometown community. After graduating from Woonsocket High School in 1957, she pursued higher education with characteristic determination, studying at Boston University from 1957 to 1960 before earning her nursing degree from the University of Maine at Augusta in 1978. Later, driven by a calling to serve others in new ways, she returned to school at Rhode Island College, completing both her bachelor's degree in 1992 and master's degree in 1993 in social work.

Her professional life reflected her deep care for human wellbeing. As a registered nurse, she served patients at Roger Williams Hospital and other healthcare facilities with compassion and skill. Transitioning to social work, she brought the same dedication to her roles at East Bay Mental Health Center and St. Joseph's Hospi-

tal's partial hospitalization program, where she helped individuals navigate mental health challenges until her retirement.

Beyond her professional and spiritual commitments, Rhoda embraced life with enthusiasm and curiosity. She was an accomplished bridge player who delighted in the game's strategic challenges. Her adventurous spirit made her the perfect companion for spontaneous journeys. She would happily set aside her plans to embrace an unexpected opportunity for exploration. In quieter moments, she found creative expression through watercolor and oil painting, and she approached cooking with the same attention to detail that Julia Child advocated, finding joy in preparing memorable meals for family and friends.

Rhoda's legacy lives on in her beloved family: her children, Deborah Wood-LaSalle and her husband James of Coventry, and Frank Stanley Wood of Waterville, Maine; five grandchildren, Alexandria, Anastasia, Adrianna, Taylor, and Samantha; two great-granddaughters, Elizabeth and Charlotte; and many nieces and nephews who treasured her presence in their lives. She was preceded in death by her brother Richard Mowry. Her brother Stanley Mowry Jr has subsequently passed away this year.

As we remember Rhoda Mowry, we give thanks for the light she brought to our Meeting and to all who knew her. Like the morning sunshine that painted patterns on our meetinghouse wall, her faithful presence illuminated our community with steady warmth and gentle beauty. As Friends, we hold her memory in the Light, grateful for the gift of her life among us.

SMITHFIELD MONTHLY MEETING, JULY 6, 2025

SOUTHEAST QUARTERLY MEETING, JULY 7, 2025

John Preston
December 15, 1926 – March 6, 2023

John Preston was a big man, with an even bigger heart and spirit.

The youngest of three brothers, John grew up in Wilbraham, Massachusetts, which was then a country town. He spoke fondly of being raised by the whole village and embraced by the community. His early education was in a three-room school. In the Depression era, young people sought jobs beyond their family chores. John worked as the janitor of the Congregational church and loved the privilege of ringing the church bell on Sunday morning. He also cared for an elderly couple, bringing them groceries and firewood and checking on their welfare.

After graduating from high school in Springfield, John went on to Wesleyan University and then to Andover Newton Theological Seminary. He was ordained in the Congregational Church and moved to North Dakota, where he served three small rural churches. He loved the people and the open country, often visiting in barns when he made pastoral calls. After ten years in pastoral ministry, he was a campus minister at the University of North Dakota for the next decade. Then came ten years of high school teaching, finding engaging ways to present lessons in history and English, plus directing school plays. The next decade was as director of the Foster Grandparent Program, working with seniors and special needs children. Then came the great leap back to New England to work at Woolman Hill in Deerfield, where he and his wife Mary Ellen shared the great variety of tasks entailed in managing a Quaker retreat center. Occasionally John would be asked, "When did you leave the ministry?" His answer was: "I left a paid church position, but I never left ministry." The next decades of volunteer work were also ministry, as John worked with immigrants teaching English and then was "Mr. John" helping in kindergarten classes. He lived his ministry.

John began worshiping at Mt. Toby when he and Mary Ellen settled at Woolman Hill. He found a home among Friends and soon became involved with committee work. He was very clear that he had found his spiritual home when he asked for membership.

John and Mary Ellen hosted a Friendly Eights group in the small Red House they lived in on Woolman Hill, somehow magically creating space for all in the group to fit. John provided wise spiritual and practical support to many of us through a variety of challenging life transitions. In addition, John was a core regular attender of mid-week worship at Woolman Hill up until the last few months of his life.

In whatever he took on, John carried a ministry of time and attention that opened to meaningful connections with the oldest to the youngest among us. When he served on Nominating Committee, first as a regular committee member and later as Assistant Clerk of the meeting, he took the extraordinary step to visit us in person, affirming our gifts and learning more about our interests, in the rare context of a warm spaciousness. As he looked for the best in us, he nurtured and drew it forth. He was a welcoming presence on Fellowship and

Hospitality, and later in life was a magnet, as he sat on a high stool near the refreshment table drawing us in to hear our news and share lively conversations.

John brought a depth of spirit, curiosity, organizational skills, and kindness to his service on Ministry & Worship, Trustees, and AFSC Program Committee. His love of history made him an asset to History and Records, and Library committees. John's love of music led him, along with others, to introduce singing before morning worship. His gift for language found expression in his poetry, as well as in the Bible study he and others led before meeting for several years. Notes he recorded as part of a 2002 gathering to reflect on our process for oversight of ministry have been helpfully providing guidance for decades.

John had a wide definition of family. He created an apartment for his parents in his North Dakota home and cared for them in their last years. He rejoiced in the birth of his four children and was always interested in the wonderful directions their varied talents took them. When John married Mary Ellen, he enthusiastically embraced her five children and was soon "Dad." Grandchildren and great-grandchildren were a joy. John's sense of family expanded far beyond as a beloved "family of choice" joined his circle. He embraced nearby friends whose children called him Grandpa John. His dogs and cats were treasured too—and he delighted in hearing about our non-human companions as well.

John's community and family were built on love as he took us all in as part of that ever-growing family. With Mary Ellen, he hosted a huge "family" Thanksgiving for many years, first at Woolman Hill Retreat Center and later filling the Mt. Toby meetinghouse. The whole meeting, along with our families, neighbors and friends—especially those who did not have somewhere else to go—were invited to join in this annual welcoming pot-luck feast celebration.

John loved to garden and to share his pride and joy in the lush purple irises, multi-hued lilies, pink fragrant peonies, and other blooms that painted a living canvas across his yard wherever he lived. In the garden beds, as with people, he planted perennials—relationships that lasted, with roots that deepened over time. This was also true of John's spiritual journey with God, through his time as a professional minister, then as a Quaker. He invited us into that journey with him as he offered Bible study sessions before worship, or simply shared his searching questions and what he was learning with us.

Right up to the time of his death his spiritual life was vital and he was ever eager for more.

On March 6, 2023, John Preston died peacefully in the comfort of his home. Even as his physical energy diminished, he remained as mentally alert as ever, reading, listening to music and lectures, and carrying on deep conversations. On his last morning, he spoke words of gratitude and love, closed his eyes, and gently left the body that had served him well for 96 years. John's memorial meeting was held outside at Mt. Toby on May 13, 2023, under a big tent that echoed the generous capacity of his embrace for life and all of us. Loving, gentle, and peaceful described his life. John's body was donated to the UMass Medical School, but his spirit and lessons of love and affirmation will live on in all whose lives he touched.

MT. TOBY MONTHLY MEETING, MAY 12, 2024

Friends agreed to accept the minute and added that, from our experience, John had a phenomenal capacity to let people know they are loved and to make each person feel they were the most important one in his life.

CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING ON OCTOBER 5, 2024.

James Ramsey
November 23, 1946 - October 10, 2020

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

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

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

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

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

Jim and his wife, Liz, moved to central Maine in 1971. Jim took a job at Skowhegan Junior High as an English teacher, where he would stay for 40 years in various positions. He and Liz bought a dilapidated, uninsulated farmhouse on 39 acres for \$14,000, where he spent the rest of his life, growing gardens, cutting wood, raising their two children, Caitlin and Ian, and working on the house.

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

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

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

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

VASSALBORO FRIENDS MEETING, NOVEMBER 17, 2024

VASSALBORO QUARTERLY MEETING, FEBRUARY 1, 2025

Jack Shepherd
December 14, 1937 – December 26, 2022

"Make visible what, without you, might perhaps never have been seen." These words of Robert Bresson's encapsulate so much of our dear Friend Jack Shepherd's inner and outer life: his deep and lifelong commitment to the power of writing, his intense curiosity and desire to educate, and his rich and private spiritual life. Jack, 85, passed away at his home in Norwich, Vermont, with his family at his side. Jack loved his family, friends, colleagues, Africa, life in Vermont, and every element of his varied career as journalist, author, and professor.

Jack first became acquainted with the Quaker faith as an undergraduate at Haverford College, where he admired the values and ethics of the professors and administration, as well as the college's overall moral atmosphere and the personal support that he received. He carried these influences into many aspects of his life in the years that followed. Not inconsequentially, his first date with Kathleen, his wife of 63 years, was to attend a meeting for worship.

After leaving Haverford, Jack received a degree at Columbia University's School of Journalism. His assignments for *Look* magazine took him to cover famine in Ethiopia, war in Nigeria, and the civil rights movement in Watts, Los Angeles, and Lowndes County, Alabama, where to get closer to the story he chose to live with Black families. These experiences exposed Jack to some danger and, although he had a keen sense of justice, he did not consider them acts of moral courage (some might disagree) but attributed his successful recording of those tumultuous times to "good luck and smarts" and being "drawn to a good scoop."

These experiences engendered in Jack a deep and lifelong concern for the issues of food insecurity, chronic hunger, and poverty that permeated his subsequent writing and research. A central organizing principle for him became how we are called to live on this earth—how we manage our personal resources (e.g. fitness, healthy food) and the right sharing of resources on a world-wide scale.

When Jack and his family moved in 1977 from New York City to Norwich, Vermont, his outreach to Haverford alumni in the area brought them to Hanover Meeting, where they soon became members. Jack's involvement with Friends influenced his interest in mediation and peacemaking at many levels, from interpersonal to international. His great interest in Africa, plus timely encouragement from a Dartmouth professor and member of Hanover Meeting, led Jack to advanced study at Boston University and on to teaching Dartmouth undergraduates as the director of the War and Peace Studies Program and in the Environmental Studies Program. He had a loyal following of students and relished teaching and mentoring both undergraduates and graduates.

Beginning in 1993 Jack became the director of the Global Security Fellows Initiative (GFSI) at the University of Cambridge, England. There he brought together mid-career professionals from East-Central Europe and southern Africa to address common environmental, political, and economic issues. Although his good spirit, sense of humor, and eagerness to address conflict (which was inevitable) served him well, he admitted to his secretary at the time to having "un-Quakerly thoughts" about the actions of some individuals who were undermining the program. Returning to Dartmouth's Environmental Studies Program in 2000, he directed its Africa Foreign Studies Program for 8 years. He and Kathleen took great joy in guiding groups of Dartmouth undergraduates as they traveled and worked together on southern African environmental issues.

Jack cared deeply about Hanover Meeting. He regularly attended meeting for worship and was often at meeting for worship for business. He served as clerk of the meeting, on the Board of Trustees, and was clerk and a member of the Finance Committee for several years. He was a steady, quiet presence. Jack had a way of sitting with the quieter folks at the rise of meeting, finding the Light in their companionship. He took a keen interest in the young adults in the meeting, with whom he shared his wide knowledge and experience and connections, pairing these with their individual interests. One of his great gifts to the meeting was mentoring a member in a significant writing endeavor, which enriched them both.

The monthly meeting, however, was not the central force in Jack's life, as he gave his energy to a number of other important and demanding pursuits: teaching and mentoring students, developing programs at Dartmouth and beyond, work and travel in Africa, and to a wide variety of research and writing projects. Jack's first thoughts were always for his family—wife, daughter, and son and their life partners, and three beloved granddaughters who came together each summer for a family camp created by their grandparents.

Jack's spiritual life was foundational to him, and it was also private. During worship he was content to be in his own space. Messages based in Scripture had particular meaning to him, as Biblical texts did in his inward spiritual life. Writing, as a driving force in Jack's life, was a sacred mystery. He once said, "Writing is almost like being in a Friends Meeting. What I want to say, what is most interesting, will emerge if I am in that listening place."

HANOVER MONTHLY MEETING, JUNE 16, 2024

NORTHWEST QUARTERLY MEETING, SEPTEMBER 14, 2024

Sarah Howe Spencer
September 29, 1949– September 29, 2023

Sarah Howe Spencer, beloved elder and Friend, died on September 29, 2023, her 74th birthday.

Sarah grew up in Cleveland, Ohio. In her youth she danced ballet. She continued with dancing, doing Morris Dance and partner dancing as an adult. Even in high school, her classmates noted her lively wit and commitment to social justice.

After college she moved to Boston and met Shearman Taber. The young couple connected through common interests in dance and sailing. Sarah and Shearman raised two children, David and Jeanette, and later, Sarah

had the joy of a granddaughter, Ramona. While her children were in elementary school, Sarah took courses in computer software engineering, an expertise she shared in her service to Quakers.

Sarah lived with visual impairments due to a genetic condition that from a young age gradually reduced her field of vision. She managed her personal and working life in a manner in which most people did not become aware of her impairment, and for which she rarely asked for accommodation.

Throughout her childhood Sarah attended services in the Episcopal Church, where she found the formal services with the “smells and bells” and theology unsatisfactory. Shearman introduced her to Quakerism, where she found a spiritual home and a lifelong community. Sarah developed a deep knowledge of Quakerism through her extensive readings and discussions with Friends from our various traditions. Her love for Friends was most clearly expressed through her wit and intellect, which she mobilized to provide care and support for her community.

Sarah had a concern for helping Friends increase their knowledge of Quakerism and its history, and making connections both within their meetings and throughout the Society. As part of her work with Beacon Hill Friends House, Sarah edited and published a long-running series of pamphlets highlighting contemporary Quaker voices. Sarah also coordinated the Quaker Studies Program, which was a joint program with Salem Quarterly Meeting. She was an early explorer of online Quaker learning programs through Quaker Studies.

While raising her children, she began teaching in First Day School, which eventually led her to become the coordinator of NEYM’s Junior High Youth Group. She told a story of sleeping across the exit door at Woolman Hill during junior high retreats to keep the kids from encountering the local wildlife in the dark. Guiding the young teenagers in learning and using Quaker principles and practices gave her much joy and satisfaction.

Sarah’s service to the Yearly Meeting was broad and deep, with terms on various committees in many different roles. Her deepening understanding of the Spirit led her to participate in the School of the Spirit and serve on Ministry and Counsel for monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings. In her later years, she was widely known as an elder, a role that she cherished.

While on Ministry and Counsel, she was asked to edit the memorial minutes being read at Yearly Meeting Sessions. This led her to develop guidelines for writing memorial minutes. One of the challenges Sarah bequeathed to the authors of this minute was her understanding that a memorial minute was an account of a spiritual life and not a recounting of secular milestones.

She and Allison Randall developed and led “daytreats” for local meetings’ Ministry and Counsel, Worship and Ministry, and Pastoral Care Committees. These daytreats were an opportunity for Friends serving on those committees in their local meetings to talk about the joys and challenges of serving in those roles. They brought their wisdom and care for service to those times, enriching sessions for those who participated and made connections to others serving in similar roles in their meetings.

When she and Shearman moved to Northampton, Sarah was tapped immediately to serve on Worship and Ministry. She brought her deep knowledge of Friends and her wisdom to all the roles she filled. She had a slightly snarky sense of humor, which she often deployed when things got too serious. She could be forthright in sharing concerns, a quality which was not always appreciated, though her honesty and straightforward approach often kept discussions on course.

While on Worship and Ministry at Northampton, Sarah helped start midweek meeting, serving as a shepherd. This meeting has continued to develop into a wonderful community since moving to Zoom during the pandemic, with participants from Oregon to Philadelphia and even Great Britain. Her eldership and presence in that community is deeply missed, as is her wisdom and humor.

Sarah loved spending time with her family, particularly cooking and laughing together. Being with her through joys and challenges always felt like home for all of us—a feeling we may never experience in quite the same way again.

NORTHAMPTON FRIENDS MEETING, FEBRUARY 9, 2025

CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING, MAY 4, 2025

Epistles

General Epistle

To Friends Everywhere,

Loving greetings from the 365th annual Sessions of the New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. From August 1 to 6, 2025, we gathered for the first time on the campus of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, as well as over Zoom, and we humbly recognize that the lands on which we met are the unceded homelands of the Pocumtuc Nation. 420 adult Friends as well as 69 children and youth gathered here in the valley of the Long River (the Connecticut), with 116 Friends joining us over Zoom.

We were especially glad to welcome 67 newcomers to our annual Sessions!

Our theme this year was “Streams in the Desert” (Isaiah 43:19). This theme has felt deeply relevant to us and has been woven through our worship and conversations. With the sorrow and concern that we carry, many Friends feel that we are living in a desert. Yet Friends feel called to stand against injustice and sense a readiness for our community to take action. And we need to find those streams that will replenish our souls.

Kirenia Criado Pérez of our sister yearly meeting in Cuba joined us as our Bible Half Hour speaker. Kirenia serves as pastor of the Friends church in La Habana and as a professor at Matanzas Theological Seminary. Kirenia spoke powerfully to us on our theme as she invited us to join her on a journey through the desert, reminding us that God’s map seldom takes the easy route. And she noted that, when God brought the Hebrew people out of Egypt, they also had to remove Egypt from their hearts, reminding us that while most colonial empires have ended today, we continue to struggle to remove empire from our own hearts.

Our plenary speaker was Gretchen Baker-Smith of Westport Friends Meeting. Gretchen has worked for many years nurturing youth and adults throughout New England Yearly Meeting and beyond, and is beloved as a bastion of the youth programs that have long been such an important part of NEYM. She spoke to us of the grief that many of us are feeling today but reminded us to hold on to what remains constant and what grounds us. We are called to be faithful, not perfect, successful, or even effective. Hope, she said, is how we balance the awfulness, pain, suffering, and grief, with the Love and Joy. Our challenge is to be present to the awfulness, but not forgetting where the watering holes are that we need. She offered us some words to keep in our toolbox: “What do you need?” “What can I do to help?” “Thank you for being here!”

Our musical plenary was provided by Kim Moberg, from the Tlingit people of Alaska, who shared with us her suite of songs called “The Seven Fires Prophecy: Suite for Humanity,” which is based on a legend of the Anishanaabe peoples. She closed with her belief that all races and peoples of Turtle Island will learn to live together because “we are one,” and “our superpower is love.”

We came together with spirits again heavy with the loss of life in Gaza, and we are also burdened this year by the harm to cherished friends, neighbors, and community members by unjust policies of the current administration of our nation regarding immigrants and transgender and other LGBTQIA+ people. We heard a call to act to help at-risk people in our communities. Through a number of gatherings for Worship Sharing we have voiced our despair over the genocide occurring in Gaza as its people are being displaced, starved, and killed, struggling simply to survive the continuing attacks on their land and communities. We also heard a powerful message from Rania Ma’ayeh of Ramallah Friends School describing the resilience of the students and teachers in facing incredibly difficult conditions under military occupation. We look for hope and ways that we as a community and as individuals can act to help alleviate the suffering and recognize the human dignity of the Palestinian people.

Both here and in many other countries we see these and other deep challenges to Friends' Testimonies. As we gathered together as a body of New England Friends, we have sought directions for our community to address these challenges, sharing ways to move beyond our despair through individual acts and group efforts in love and service. We have been reminded of Friends' long history of standing with those experiencing great losses to help alleviate their suffering and despair, and we have asked what we are called to today.

Our Quaker Indigenous Boarding School Research Group has completed the painful research that they were tasked with in 2022, and the group has now been laid down. Now it is time for the Yearly Meeting, monthly meetings, and individual Quakers to use what we have learned as we move forward with the work of retrospective, reparative justice and of building right relationships with our Indigenous neighbors. As we embark on this next phase of the work with our Indigenous neighbors, we are also reminded of the unfinished reparative work NEYM still has before us with African Americans and other marginalized peoples. We will endeavor to do this with humility and a consciousness of past mistakes.

Throughout our time together we have been reminded that our work in the world as Quakers must be motivated by careful attentiveness to the will of the Divine, not by human fear and anger. We know that we must move from a foundation of faith and love, and find hope and joy in the presence of Spirit. The Living Water is a stream which sustains and guides us. Through it we hope to be the hands of God and become streams in the desert ourselves, bearing waters of hope and comfort to others who need them.

Let us recall the words of Isaiah (43:19 NIV) from which our theme this year was drawn:

See, I am doing a new thing!

Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

Kirenía explained that God is advising us, here, not to get stuck in grieving for the past, but to learn to live in the desert and to build, with hope, a better future. We can do this, as Kim Moberg said, because "Our Superpower is Love!"

Yours In Peace, Love, and Light,

New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk

Young Friends Epistle

Wednesday, 7th August 2024

Dear Friends everywhere,

This year six to ten Young Friends gathered at the annual sessions of New England Yearly Meeting in UMass Amherst from August 1–6, 2025, with the sessions theme, "Streams in the Desert."

UMass Amherst was a big change from Castleton State University! We enjoyed exploring our air-conditioned dorms, trying new foods, and getting lost around campus (secret tunnels).

Although our group was smaller this year, we still were able to make memorable memories. Some of our favorites include ice skating with JYM and JHYM, capture the flag, the lake trip with JHYM, and having a hair-braiding session before bed.

We ate dinner with Kirenía Criado Pérez, pastor of Havana Friends Meeting and Bible Half-Hour speaker, who told us about the camp programs that Cuba Yearly Meeting runs. She invited us to travel to Cuba to attend in person, and we are very excited about the chance to go!

This year was Collee's last year as Young Friends coordinator. Collee has been our coordinator for the past 18 months and we are saddened to see them go, but excited to welcome our new coordinator Xinef. We're extremely grateful for the hard work and dedication you've put into the Young

Friends program. Best of luck on your next adventure, Young Friends will be behind you all the way!

With love,
The Young Friends of New England Yearly Meeting

Junior High Yearly Meeting

Hello Friends,

We are greeting you from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts. It was difficult this year because we had New England Yearly Meeting at a new location. A lot of us got lost and confused, not being able to find our way, especially on the first day.

That first day we spent the whole afternoon decorating our room which we called the Oasis. It is called the Oasis because the theme for Yearly Meeting this year is Streams in the Desert.

Afterwards we had an ice cream social. We also made collages that represented things we were passionate about or cared about. Later we assembled the collages into a “quilt.”

When we started on Saturday we had 23 in attendance, including 8 adult staff. Then, our beloved Coordinator, Amy, tested positive for COVID-19 and had to go home, along with two others from our group. It was hard to have to wear masks inside. But we moved most of our activities outside and fortunately the weather was good. Throughout the week some new JHYM-ers came and others left. In all, there were about 25 in our community this year, including six who were moving on to Young Friends.

Many of us attended the Yearly Meeting plenary where Gretchen Baker-Smith spoke about the state of our world in darkness and how to find hope.

Throughout the week we did many different activities, including tie dye, ice skating, decorating oatmeal boxes for the 8th graders, playing Capture the Flag, Beach Day, and playing Mafia and One Night Ultimate Werewolf.

Overall, most of the week was a blast! We hope everyone will find Light in dark times. In the Light,

The Junior High Yearly Meeting of the New England Yearly Meeting

Junior Yearly Meeting

Dear Friends everywhere,

We are 35 children in grades K-6 from all over New England. We enjoyed spending time with new and old friends. We had a very fun and busy week in a new location, UMass Amherst. We had conversations about being kind and welcoming each other in our new and building community.

We were grateful for the sunshine that lasted all week! This good weather meant that we could do many of our activities outside surrounded by nature. We started our week by tie-dying t-shirts, and we waited all week to see how they would look when the dye was rinsed out and the shirts unraveled. On Sunday we had All-Ages Worship, where we tied ribbons together with new people we found connections with to make a stream to represent our theme Streams in the Desert. We also read a story and sang with the whole Yearly Meeting. Later on Sunday we walked around the pond and made nature bracelets by sticking items from nature that we liked and putting them on the tape around our wrists. That afternoon, many of us played capture the flag with the older groups, Junior High and Young Friends. While some Friends played capture the flag, others sat in the field and explored how beans and lentils could be used to create a mandala. There were many new and special opportunities that being at UMass Amherst had to offer, like the ice-skating party and our walk to the conservatory, which had a koi pond and many beautiful plants!

We also had many special visitors this week! These visitors included Cuban Friends coming to visit and teach us a song in Spanish, Megan from Right World Sharing coming to teach us resource sharing games, Rachel, who is a mom of two JYMers, came to teach us about refugee children in the world, and Gretchen Baker Smith, our plenary speaker, who came to make candle holders with us and talk about our inner light. All of these visitors helped us to understand some of the different ways that children like us live across the world, and how each of us has a unique story or gift to share with others. Some of the children that we learned about this week had stories that made us feel sad, like the children in Gaza and Palestine, who had to leave their homes behind. With stories like these, we worked together to create artworks and messages of hope, and Rachel is going to help us share and send them to help encourage them to not feel alone. With all of our visitors, we shared our ideas and learned new things!

Other activities that we did this week were water play, singing with all of the youth groups, and building with Lego and K'Nex! This is how our first ever giant JYM tower came to be! Standing at over 7 feet tall, our staff are still not quite sure how we got this tower to reach so high!

This was a week well spent, learning from our visitors and from each other too, enjoying our friends old and new, and of course, piling our soft-serve [ice cream] high at every meal. We are excited to meet again.

JYM K-6 2025

Under 5s Program

Dear Children Everywhere,

Nine Friends under the age of 5 met at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst from August 1st to 6th, 2025. We had extraordinary weather that allowed us to play outside with scooters, balls, sidewalk chalk, and bowling pins, as well as watch the construction workers for as long as they would allow. We developed new friendships over the week with both each other and our staff volunteers, and like the streams in the desert we were nourished from being together. We enjoyed being on a new campus and spending time in community, and we look forward to Sessions in the future!

The Under-5 Program at New England Yearly Meeting

Epístola de Los Amigos (Cuáqueros) en Cuba

Epístola de la 97 Asamblea de la Junta Anual de Los amigos “Cuáqueros” en Cuba.

Saludos que les enviamos a nuestros amigos y amigas de todo el mundo desde la 97 Asamblea de la Junta Anual de Los amigos “Cuáqueros” en Cuba.

Guiados con el lema “Una Familia Unida en la Misión” e inspirados en el texto bíblico situado en Hechos 2, 42: “y decidieron vivir como una gran familia. Y cada día los apóstoles compartían con ellos las enseñanzas acerca de Dios y de Jesús, y también celebraban la Cena del Señor y oraban juntos”. TLA

Nos hemos reunido en la Junta Mensual de Gibara siendo cordialmente recibidos por nuestros jóvenes. Llenos de dicha hemos podido apreciar como la iglesia siente gozo porque a pesar de los desafíos correspondientes a las características de nuestros tiempos, se ha evidenciado todo un año de intenso trabajo acompañado de la mano de nuestro buen Dios. Muestra de este trabajo fue el reconocimiento de los dones pastorales del hermano Luis Carlos Jomarrón Rivero; además del emotivo homenaje a la pastora Mileydis Batista Sintés quien ha arribado a la edad de jubilación tras una vida de arduo servicio en la obra de Los Amigos.

Los mensajes recibidos durante este período nos invitaron a considerar esencias que nutren la espiritualidad. La cita que nos acompañaba generó una minuta que reconoce el valor del puente de amor con la presencia de las juntas de Dover, Portland, Durhand y Providence.

Además se a intencionado con recomendaciones, motivar el trabajo evangelístico, exhortados por el texto que ha acompañado a la Asamblea; llenos de gratitud al Señor pudimos escuchar todo lo que compete al maravilloso trabajo desarrollado por el ICCP a lo largo de este año, trabajo del cual todos formamos parte como una familia unida en la misión.

Que el Señor del amor y de la verdad nos inspire a ser testimonios vivos de este sentir.

En la luz, Junta Anual en Cuba

Cuba Yearly Meeting Epistle

Epistle of the 97th Assembly of the Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers) in Cuba

Greetings to our friends around the world from the 97th Annual Assembly of the Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers) in Cuba.

Guided by the theme “A Family United in Mission” and inspired by the biblical passage found in Acts 2:42: “And they decided to live as one great family. And every day the apostles shared with them the teachings about God and Jesus, and they also celebrated the Lord’s Supper and prayed together.” TLA

We gathered at the Gibara Monthly Meeting and were warmly welcomed by our youth. Filled with joy, we witnessed the church’s joy because, despite the challenges inherent in our times, a full year of intense work accompanied by the hand of our good God has been evident. Evidence of this work was the recognition of Brother Luis Carlos Jomarrón Rivero’s pastoral gifts, as well as the moving tribute to Pastor Mileydis Batista Sintés, who has reached retirement age after a lifetime of arduous service in the work of Friends.

The messages received during this period invited us to consider what is essential in nurturing spirituality. The passage that guided us led to a minute recognizing the value of the Bridge of Love through the presence of Dover, Portland, Durham, and Providence meetings.

In addition, recommendations were made to promote evangelistic work, encouraged by the text that accompanied the Assembly. Filled with gratitude to the Lord, we were able to hear everything

related to the wonderful work carried out by the ICCP throughout this year, work of which we are all part as a family united in mission.

May the Lord of love and truth inspire us to be living witnesses of this sentiment.

In the light, Yearly Meeting in Cuba

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New England Yearly Meeting of Friends

901 Pleasant Street, Worcester, MA 01602-1908
voice: 508-754-6760 • fax: 877-257-2834 • website: www.neym.org

Accounts Manager

Frederick Martin
508-754-6760
accountsmanager@neym.org

Events Coordinator

Elizabeth Hacala
740-478-2539
events@neym.org

Friends Camp Director

Anna Hopkins Buller
207-445-2361
director@friendscamp.org
www.friendscamp.org

Office Manager

Sara Hubner
508-754-6760
office@neym.org

Children & Families Ministries Coord.

Kara Price
508-997-0940
kara@neym.org

Meeting Accompaniment Group Clerk

Sarah Gant
617-964-9775
accompaniment@neym.org

Permanent Board Clerk

Susan Davies
207-660-1323
pbclerk@neym.org

Presiding Clerk

Rebecca Leuchak
clerk@neym.org

Program Director

NiaDwynwen Thomas
978-886-7179
nia@neym.org

Treasurer

Marian Dalton
treasurer@neym.org

Yearly Meeting Secretary

Noah Merrill
617-615-6396
ymsec@neym.org