

Permanent Board
Concord Monthly Meeting (hybrid)
December 13, 2025

PB 25-63 Approval of Permanent Board Recording Clerk

The clerk of Permanent Board requested approval of nomination of Frances Lightsom (West Falmouth) as recording clerk of Permanent Board.

Friends approved.

PB 25-64 Roll Call

Frances Lightsom (West Falmouth), Recording Clerk for the Permanent Board, read the roll.

Bold is present in the room.

Susan Davies (PB Clerk), Frances Lightsom (PB Recording Clerk), Travis Belcher, Connie Kincaid Brown, Darcy Drayton, Sarah Gant, Elizabeth Hansen, Meg Klepack, Edward Mair, **LouAnne McDonald,** Allison Randall, **Martha Schwope,** Newell Isbell Shinn, Liesa Stamm, **Jacqueline Stillwell, Willa Taber,** Palma Vaccaro, **D. Morgan Wilson, Kathleen Wooten,** Mary Zwirner

Ex-officio members

Sadie Forsythe (YM Nominating Committee Clerk), Marian Dalton (Treasurer), Janet Hough (YM Ministry & Counsel Clerk), Douglas Keith (Finance Clerk), **Noah Bishop Merrill** (YM Secretary), **Phillip Veatch** (YM Presiding Clerk)

Absent members

Kimberly Allen, Thomas Brenner, Martin Forsythe, Carolyne Jordan

Visitors present

Chris Gant, Elizabeth Hacala, Linden Jenkins, Kristina Keefe-Perry, Mary Link, Leslie Manning (Durham), **Lucy Meadows,** Karen Reixach, Nia Thomas, Carl Williams, **Maille Wooten**

PB 25-65 Permanent Board Clerk's Comments

Susan Davies (Vassalboro), clerk of the Permanent Board, welcomed Friends and expressed gratitude for Concord Friends hosting us, the capable help of Maille Wooten in technical support, and Janet Hough serving as online host this morning. The clerk also thanked those who faithfully prepared business for this meeting, especially the revised Legacy Gift Committee Memorandum of Understanding which was shepherded by Mary Link, former Clerk of the Legacy Gift Committee, with input and review from Morgan Wilson and JR Robinson.

PB 25-66 MOU for use of Salem Quarter Fund

The clerk presented a Memorandum of Understanding to enable the Legacy Gift Committee to resume carrying out the discernment of grantmaking from the Salem Quarter Fund. Permanent Board approval of the MOU is required during the Salem Quarterly Meeting period of sabbath rest from business. Morgan Wilson (Framingham) answered questions.

Friends expressed gratitude for the drafting of the MOU. Friends expressed concern that, due to their hiatus, Salem Quarterly Meeting has been unable to disburse funds for monthly or quarterly meeting expenses outside the purview of grantmaking and about the impact of the MOU on the perceived necessity of maintaining an active Quarterly Meeting.

Friends **approved** the Salem Quarter Fund MOU for Legacy Gift Committee, attached.

PB 25-67 Update on Salem Quarterly Meeting Status

Kristina Keefe-Perry (Fresh Pond/Three Rivers) presented an overview of continuing discernment within Salem Quarterly Meeting (SQM) about the future of the Quarterly Meeting, which began a sabbath period 2022 with the intention to stop doing business but to focus on rebuilding relationship. In 2025, the Salem Quarter Sabbath Planning Committee invited monthly meetings to send representatives to a meeting for discernment of a path forward, but only heard from 5 of 10 local meetings. The Sabbath Planning Committee hopes that the 5 meeting representatives will gather early in 2026 to discern a future Quarterly Meeting that has life.

Friends expressed gratitude for the efforts of the Salem Quarter Sabbath Planning Committee as well as regret that Friends from other quarterly meetings have not assisted more in the care of Salem Quarterly Meeting.

Friends considered changes in Friends' lives that influence our need and availability for quarterly meeting gatherings. In regions where traditional quarterly meeting forms no longer hold life, can new forms be given space to grow? The special cultures and bioregions of different areas call for listening and relationships that are rooted in place. Examples of other successful or struggling

quarterly meetings were offered. Suggestions included a relaxation of the requirement for monthly meeting representation for quarterly meeting business; inviting quarterly meetings to season business for yearly meeting sessions; continuing the practice of recording ministries at quarterly meetings; encouraging less formal arrangements for mutual support among monthly meetings.

Permanent Board clerk asked Friends to hold the care of Salem Quarterly Meeting as a Permanent Board concern and suggested that a small group of us could hold this concern and advise the clerk on responsible, efficacious action.

Friends expressed concern that quick efficient action might not allow unfolding of a form with new life. Listening as well as action is needed. Friends noted that work has begun already in response to Sessions in 2022 and 2024 calling for attention to the health of all the quarterly meetings. A suggestion was made that Friends might facilitate or clerk Quarterly gatherings on behalf of Permanent Board so that Salem Quarterly Friends could all participate fully.

Friends **approved** the clerk reaching out to Permanent Board members to work with the SQM planning and consultation group forming in Salem Quarterly Meeting as a short-term working group that will recommend some practical steps in care of the quarterly meeting.

PB 25-68 Implementing the Actions Approved at the Called Meeting on Gaza

A written report from Phillip Veatch, Presiding Clerk of NEYM, is attached. In his spoken report, he called attention to the October 18 called meeting of New England Friends “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” (Sessions Minute 2025-57).

After verifying that the called meeting was a faithful response to the Sessions minute 2025-57, Friends **approved** the minutes of the October 18 called meeting.

At the October 18, 2025 called meeting on Gaza, the following minute was approved:

The meeting charged the Presiding Clerk, the Clerk of Permanent Board and the Israel-Palestine Resource Group to convene to explore, in consultation with those with experience in the region and who could provide context on the ground, the idea of sending witnesses to Gaza from the Yearly Meeting. After this consideration, this group will bring a recommendation forward to Permanent Board for their discernment.

The resource group and clerks have met with several people with experience in Gaza. Their conclusion is that, at this time, it is not feasible for NEYM to send witnesses into Gaza for three principal reasons:

1. It is not safe for people to travel into and around Gaza.

2. The Israeli government is not allowing outsiders into Gaza.
3. The scarcity of food and other resources in Gaza means that even if someone could get into Gaza, their very presence would be taking away resources from residents who are in dire need.

The Israel-Palestine Resource Group of NEYM is continuing to actively explore two other initiatives that are in keeping with the spirit of the minute's request: 1) travel opportunities in the next few months to the West Bank; and 2) exploring ways in which the yearly meeting might create long-term relationships with people living in Palestine, such as strengthening our relationship with the Ramallah Friends School. The travel would most likely be for individuals travelling with other groups such as the Civilian Peace Force in the West Bank. The resource group is also keeping track of a longer term AFSC initiative that might lead to work service camps in Gaza. As details become clear on these initiatives, the resource group expects to return to Permanent Board for discernment and support. (See the Informational Report to the Permanent Board from the Israel-Palestine Resource Group (IPRG), dated December 3, 2025, attached.)

Friends expressed concern that the NEYM relationship with Palestinians is not built on meeting-to-meeting connections as is Puente de Amigos, although meeting relationships with Ramallah Friends School exist and might be expanded. Friends suggested that local meetings concerned about this situation could invite consultation with IPRG.

PB 25-69 NEYM Presiding Clerk Report

A written report from Phillip Veatch, Presiding Clerk of NEYM, is attached. In his spoken report, he called attention to the following items in addition to responses to the called meeting on Gaza.

Draft Charge for Conflict Response Team. The group creating a revised charge for the Conflict Response Team is meeting regularly. It is currently developing a detailed outline of what types of conflict the team is expected to engage with, along with guidance about other ways Yearly Meeting can handle internal conflicts that are not expected to come to the Conflict Response Team. The drafting group hopes to have a draft charge ready for the next Permanent Board meeting in February. The current members of this group are Janet Hough, Becky Jones, Rebecca Leuchak, Alysia Parkes, Carl Williams, Susan Davies, and Phillip Veatch.

Support of the Rights of Asylum Seekers. In consultation with the Yearly Meeting Secretary, the Presiding Clerk signed a letter on behalf of NEYM to the Canadian Prime Minister in support of protections for asylum seekers. The letter is attached.

Planning for Sessions 2026. In researching potential sites for Sessions 2026, 44 sites have been reviewed. About 20 met our requirements and requests for proposals were sent out. Our goal for having a site selected by early December has been delayed by waiting for critical responses to

come back. We hope to announce site selection and dates before Christmas. Based on strong feedback from Sessions 2025 we are focused on sites near central Massachusetts. It should be noted that every site comes with trade-offs in regard to our preferred accommodations. Plans are based on an expectation that the Sessions will end at mid-day Tuesday.

PB 25-70 Coordinating and Advisory Committee Report

A written report from Phillip Veatch, Clerk of Coordinating and Advisory Committee, is attached. In his spoken report, he called attention to the following areas of the committee's work.

Retrospective Restorative Justice, scope of work charge. The Permanent Board asked the committee to make recommendations regarding how the yearly meeting should work on retrospective restorative justice for communities other than Indigenous communities. The committee has begun discerning this and expects to bring suggestions to the February Permanent Board meeting.

Faith and Practice Revisions. At the request of the Faith and Practice Revision committee, the Coordinating and Advisory committee is editing and updating the 1985 chapter on the organization of the yearly meeting.

Legacy Gift Committee. The clerk of the committee and the Yearly Meeting treasurer are in discussions over how best the treasurer might support the committee's work.

Upcoming Retreat. The Coordinating and Advisory Committee will be holding its three-day winter retreat January 27-29.

PB 25-71 Purpose, Procedures, and Composition of Earthcare Ministry Resource Group

Sarah Gant, clerk of the Meeting Accompaniment Group, introduced a Purpose, Procedures, and Composition document for the Earthcare Ministry Resource Group, for approval by Permanent Board. This document is attached.

Friends expressed concern about the frequency of review and reports from Resource Groups and Committees, balancing the need for transparency about important concerns while not overburdening Friends. Friends were assured that C&A is considering the review and report calendar.

Friends **approved** the document on Earthcare Ministry Resource Group Purpose, Procedures, and Composition for final approval at Sessions.

PB 25-72 Yearly Meeting Secretary's Report

A written report from Noah Bishop Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, is attached. In his spoken report, he called attention to the following areas of his work.

- Local meeting witness for religious freedom and the consultation and resources NEYM is providing.
- The new NEYM Ministry and Eldership Resource Group for sharing local meeting experience with encouraging, supporting, and holding accountable Friends carrying gifts of ministry and/or eldership.
- A revision of the NEYM personnel policies. Permanent Board members are asked to review, ask questions, and make suggestions on a new draft of the Personnel Policy (attached) to enable a final proposed set of personnel policies for Permanent Board's consideration and approval at our February 2026 meeting.
- Development and relationship-strengthening among New England Friends, including the local meeting visits of the Living Stream Travel Team and the participation and resources NEYM is providing. Members of the Travel Team gave a version of their presentation to Permanent Board and welcomed questions, feedback, and guidance.

After the presentation, Friends expressed concern about how the Living Stream presentation fits with meetings that have many new Friends, and suggested asking how many Friends present are new, how many are already involved with NEYM, etc. Friends asked what, from the presentation, they should take back to local meetings, and whether the presentation is available for local meetings to show. Friends suggested inclusion of a benchmarking slide that addresses how NEYM finances are typical of similar organizations, and explicit reference to what yearly meeting is providing to assist Friends in meeting spiritual challenges.

PB 25-73 Update on NEYM Financial Status

Marian Dalton (Brunswick), Yearly Meeting Treasurer, presented an overview of our FY2025 budget versus actuals, attached. She called attention to increases in donations from individuals and meetings; the net income versus expenses from Sessions was a shortfall, as expected, due to the significantly higher cost of meeting at University of Massachusetts; continuing operational deficits are a concern as we discern where the life is in NEYM.

Friends affirmed the shared concern about the risks of continuing deficits, along with recognition that operational reserves are slowly increasing. Friends affirmed the importance of continuing attention to vision, strategy, and priority-setting.

PB 25-74 Nominating Committee Report

Lucy Meadows (Beacon Hill, moving to Hanover)) presented the report from the Nominating Committee, attached.

In her spoken report, Lucy mentioned that the work of nominating committee includes calling Friends to learn how they might be interested in serving NEYM and invited Permanent Board members to suggest Friends they might call.

This meeting is the second reading, for approval of the following nominations:

Archives & Historic Records Committee clerk - Elizabeth (Betsy) Cazden (Providence Monthly Meeting) to begin immediately, class of 2026

Youth Ministries Committee member - Jana Noyes (Westerly Monthly Meeting), to begin immediately, class of 2028

Puente de Amigos Committee, members:

Bob Watt (Providence Monthly Meeting), to begin immediately, class of 2028

Chris Jorgensen (Friends Meeting of Cambridge), to begin immediately, class of 2028

Hannah Colbert (Portland Friends Meeting), to begin immediately, class of 2028

Kim Bolshaw (Durham Friends Meeting), to begin immediately, class of 2028

Friends **approved** these nominations.

PB 25-75 Memorial Minutes

Friends received three memorial minutes for approval at this meeting: Nancy First (Northampton), Lucy Townsend (Hartford), and William Ray Taylor (Hartford).

Eight additional memorial minutes arrived without necessary dates of monthly meeting approval and are available for first reading. These are memorial minutes from Friends Meeting Cambridge for Christine Connaire, Joan Austin, Lynn Lazar, Ghanda DiFiglia, Mehmet Rona, Joan L. Griscom, Roger Webb, and Patricia Anne Hogan.

Monthly meetings are reminded to consult the 2017 guidance on preparation of memorial minutes so that memorial minutes can be accepted and included in the NEYM archives.

Friends **accepted** the memorial minutes for Nancy First, Lucy Townsend, and William Ray Taylor for Yearly Meeting Sessions.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frances Lightsom, Recording Clerk