

Presiding Clerk's Report to the Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends
From: Phillip Veatch, Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting (Cambridge, MA)
Meeting Date: February 28, 2026

Overall

If it is true that, "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity," then we are in a time of great opportunity. I feel a yearning from Friends to be engaged in the world during these tumultuous times. And many meetings are reporting a surge in attendance as newcomers seek to find out what Quakers have to say. I believe that many of them are, at least in part, following the advice of, "Don't worry about what to do, worry about who you want to do it with." It is easy for yearly meeting leadership like the Permanent Board and C&A to be focused on immediate practical issues that naturally demand our attention and energy. I urge us to take some time to step back and consider who we are and what do we want to be known for. In the deepest sense, are we using our time and other resources in ways that best serve what we are called to be?

Planning for Sessions 2026

Sessions 2026 will be held at Mt. Holyoke College. The theme is, "Spring forth O well and makes us whole." Planning for the schedule is well underway. The Theme and Speakers team has identified potential speakers, and we are waiting for their discernment on our invitation. Similar to recent years, Friends will be encouraged to arrive on Friday, July 30 with the opening ceremony on Saturday morning, August 1. We hope to have a few structured activities for early arrivers on Friday, including an opportunity for extended worship similar to last year's worship event.

Our wonderful coordinators of Childcare and Junior Yearly Meeting for the past few years (Rainer Humphries and Kenzie Burpee) will not be able to continue for 2026 Sessions. We are actively searching for new coordinators for these positions. If you have any suggestions, please contact Kara Price at kara@neym.org .

Health of Quarterly Meetings

I continue to engage with quarterly meetings jointly with the clerk of Permanent Board to find ways to more deeply connect quarterly meetings to the work of Sessions. It is a long-term goal to have quarterly meetings be places where the yearly meeting can have time for deep discernment and generate articles that come before our annual gathering.

Draft Charge for Conflict Response Team

The group responsible for redrafting the charge for the Conflict Response Team has finished its work and is bringing its draft to Permanent Board for approval. I believe the drafting group has done a thorough job and hope the PB is clear to move forward with their proposal.

Reminder of upcoming events

- 1) Living Faith will be held March 28 at Portland Friends School. "From the deep well of worship and shared listening, our witness springs forth—sometimes as a quiet trickle, sometimes as a bold flow—bringing the Love and Truth we experience inwardly to one another, our meetings, and our wider communities. Together we will explore how the Spirit's living water rises among us, what has grown from our faithfulness, and how our lives, joined with others, may bear witness in this time."
- 2) Visioning Day: Thriving Quarters. The gathering will be on April 11th in Haverhill, MA. Each quarterly meeting is encouraged to send 3–4 people for an in-depth visioning of the roles of quarterly meetings within our communal life.