

Permanent Board Agenda

May 9, 2026

Wellesley Friends Meeting

9:00 AM - 3:30 PM EDT

PB agenda items

- 8:30 AM Greetings and fellowship
- 9:00 AM Opening Worship
- Roll Call
- PB clerk's comments
- **For Approval** - new PB member, to start immediately
- **For Approval**- February 28, 2026 Permanent Board Minutes,
- Yearly Meeting Secretary's Report
 - Friends Camp Strategic Priorities, informational update, Anna Hopkins
 - Living Stream Travel Team update
 - **For PB Approval to send to Sessions:** NEYM budget and commentary
 - Reflections from YM Secretary
- Reports and initial discernment regarding Cuba crisis and Cuban Friends

Afternoon

- Announcements
- Request for PB letter releasing the Brentwood Cemetery as not a Quaker cemetery
- Presiding Clerk's Report and Coordinating and Advisory Report
 - **First Reading**-Draft Charge: Retrospective Restorative Justice working group
 - **For Approval**- PP&C for Israel Palestine Resource Group

- Sandwich Quarter Minute on threats to Haitian Temporary Protective Status
- Report and query from delegation to Oklahoma Tribes

- **For Approval** - Four Memorial Minutes

Kate Kerman, Monadnock MM and Northwest QM; LVM Shelton, Plainfield MM and Northwest QM; Richard Schmitt, Worcester MM and Southeast QM; Diana White, Portland and Durham Friends Meeting, Falmouth QM

Closing Worship

NEYM Nominating Committee Report to the Permanent Board
May 1, 2026

In keeping with current tradition of the Permanent Board - these advance documents are used as the first reading for nominations to be approved at the coming meeting. Please contact me as soon as possible if you would like to discuss any of these nominations.*

The Nominating Committee will bring most of our upcoming nominations to sessions in August 2026. We did feel it would be helpful to bring forward one nomination to this meeting, to begin service on the Permanent Board at this meeting if approved.

Permanent Board

“The Permanent Board acts with the authority of the Yearly Meeting between Annual Sessions. It implements decisions and policy made by Sessions. It acts upon matters where, in the opinion of the Board, a decision cannot await Sessions. It seasons issues which come to its attention, presenting recommendations to Sessions if appropriate. On the recommendation of the Coordinating and Advisory Committee, it considers the work of Yearly Meeting committees.” - [Purposes, Procedures and Composition document of this committee](#)

Permanent Board, Dulany Bennett (Hanover Friends Meeting) to begin immediately, class of 2031

Dulany is a life-long Friend, having attended a Friends elementary school and college, and then teaching and heading several Friends Schools. She has a long history of service with the American Friends Service Committee, as a committee member, a board member, and national clerk for four years. Dulany now lives at Kendal at Hanover, a Quaker-based retirement community. She has one son, Tommy Bennett, a lawyer, who, together with his wife and three daughters, attends Bethesda Meeting. She also shared, “I belong to Hanover meeting, which I love, and consider myself very lucky to have landed here for my last decades.”

Thank you for your consideration of this nomination, and your own service among Friends as a member of Permanent Board. Please contact me directly with any questions.

With appreciation and care,

Sadie Forsythe (Putney/also attending Mt Toby)
Clerk, NEYM Nominating Committee
nomclerk@neym.org or 215-360-1815

Nominating Committee members: Beth Hansen, recording clerk (Westerly), Chris Gant (Beacon Hill), Darcy Drayton (Weare), Kathleen Wooten (Lawrence), Tim Lamm (Worcester), Martha Schwope (Wellesley), Leslie Manning (Durham), Lucy Meadows (Hanover), Sadie Forsythe (Putney)

* The process for approving nominations by the Permanent Board during the year is to send *first readings* in a written report a week or so in advance of the Permanent Board meeting. Any concerns, questions or affirmations should be communicated immediately to the Nominating Committee clerk. The clerk will follow-up with a nominee to share concerns without naming who brought them forward. The focus will be on the concerns and how they may be addressed. Depending on the outcome of this exchange, the nominee will either be brought forward for second reading, or withdrawn from the nomination. Depending on the situation, there may be a brief mention of the concerns and response.

Draft Minutes for Approval

Permanent Board

Meeting Online

February 28, 2026

The meeting began with worship during which a Friend mentioned the current situations in Cuba and Iran and shared words of Isaiah 26:3 “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.”

PB 26-1 Roll Call

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

Present permanent board members:

Susan Davies (PB Clerk), Frances Lightsom (PB Recording Clerk), Travis Belcher, Elizabeth Hansen, Carolyne Jordan, Meg Klepack, Edward Mair, LouAnne McDonald, Allison Randall, Martha Schwope, Newell Isbell Shinn, Liesa Stamm, Willa Taber, Palma Vaccaro, D. Morgan Wilson, Kathleen Wooten, Mary Zwirner

Present ex-officio members:

Phillip Veatch (YM Presiding Clerk), Noah Bishop Merrill (YM Secretary), Marian Dalton (YM Treasurer), Douglas Keith (Clerk of YM Finance Committee), Sadie Forsythe (YM Nominating Committee Clerk), Janet Hough (YM Ministry & Counsel Clerk), Sarah Gant (Clerk of Meeting Accompaniment Group), Jacqueline Stillwell (YM Secretary’s Supervisor)

Absent members:

Kimberly Allen, Thomas Brenner, Connie Kincaid Brown, Darcy Drayton, Martin Forsythe, Rebecca Leuchak (Immediate Past YM Presiding Clerk)

Visitors present:

Elizabeth Hacala (Operations Manager), Leslie Manning (Durham and Three Rivers), Frederick Martin (Accounts Manager and Beacon Hill meeting), Karen Reixach (Keene), Nia Thomas (Northampton), Carl Williams (Plainfield), Maille Wooten (Lawrence)

PB 26-2 Permanent Board Clerk’s Comments

Susan Davies (Vassalboro), clerk of the Permanent Board, encouraged Friends to spread the word about Quarterly Meeting Visioning Day on April 11 in Haverhill MA. The clerk also thanked those who faithfully prepared business for this meeting, especially Leslie Manning who

was invited to report from the Israel-Palestine Resource Group, which is under care of Permanent Board, and Karen Reixach, clerk of the Legacy Gift Committee which is renamed to the Gift Committee, whose updated Purpose, Procedures and Composition document is for approval today.

The clerk lifted up Marian Baker's faithfulness in ministry to Friends in East Africa, reading endorsements to Marian's travel minute from African monthly meetings and from Robert Wafula, Principal of the Friends Theological College in Kaimosi, Kenya.

Friends **approved** a note of appreciation for Marian Baker's ministry.

PB 26-3 Travel Endorsements

The clerk presented a travel minute for Bruce Hawkins (Northampton), for traveling beyond the yearly meeting to foster dialogue among those who seem to be in opposition. The minute has been found clear by Northampton Monthly Meeting and Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting.

Friends expressed concern about the vagueness of the statement of the call to travel. Travel to whom is not clear. In addition, the meaning of "us" when it is used in the minute is unclear. It could mean an "us versus them" attitude and imply that the conflict being addressed is with Quakers, that Quakers all have the same perspective, or that those with different opinions are wrong. Friends suggest that opposition is much larger. In the travel minute, as much clarity as possible would encourage faithfulness to the call.

Friends **approved** entrusting the Permanent Board clerk to reach out to the Monthly Meeting and Quarterly Meeting clerks to see if the travel minute could be corrected and brought back to Permanent Board.

Friends **did not approve** endorsement of the travel minute for Bruce Hawkins.

The clerk presented a travel minute for Benigno Sanchez Eppler (Northampton and Puente de Amigos Committee), who has a strong leading to visit Cuban Friends in this time of blockade and hardship, to acknowledge their affliction and share in it. Cuba Yearly Meeting has formally invited Benigno to visit; his travel is expected to occur in March 2026. The clerk advised Friends that they will hear more about Cuban Friends' situation in the YM Secretary's report.

Friends **approved** endorsement of the travel minute for Benigno Sanchez Eppler, attached.

PB 26-4 Approval of Minutes.

Friends **approved** the Permanent Board minutes from the September 27, 2025 meeting.

Friends **approved** the Permanent Board minutes from the December 13, 2025 meeting.

PB 26-5 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.

- An update on the lawsuit concerning New England Friends' witness for religious freedom and humane immigration policies. A preliminary injunction is still in place which stated that the suit is more than likely to prevail. Although the trial is being delayed, plaintiffs' standing and the validity of the trial have been maintained. Related witness goes forward among New England Friends. NEYM can provide meetings with materials and information through the website, regularly scheduled phone calls, and direct contact with Noah. More details from attorneys are expected soon.
- Gratitude for the new NEYM Ministry and Eldership Resource Group, which is starting by listening to Friends across New England and taking intentional initial steps.
- Continuing progress on the full revision of the NEYM Personnel Policy, which is not yet ready for review and approval. With awareness of the wisdom of not rushing at the end, the revision will now include clarification of policies that relate to Friends Camp and the Camp's future needs. Noah expects the policy will be brought to the Permanent Board at a subsequent meeting.
- Gratitude to Elizabeth Hacala for completing a contract with Mount Holyoke College for hosting NEYM 2026 Sessions. Much preparation work is continuing.
- The April Quarterly Meeting Visioning Day to support quarterly meetings' important roles in many threads of NEYM work, including discernment, maintaining relationships, and youth ministry.
- Noah's participation, with New Hampshire State Council of Churches and AFSC-New Hampshire, in testimony before the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee of the New Hampshire House of Representatives, and in supporting the work of Friends United Meeting and Friends World Committee for Consultation.
- Progress of the work of the Living Stream Travel Team, which plans to complete visiting nine local meetings before Sessions and to continue afterward. The Team is listening and learning, nurturing relationships with and among local meetings.

Noah also expressed a particularly urgent concern of both FUM and FWCC, and for many in our Yearly Meeting and others: Searching for guidance and support in how we can collaborate to strengthen our presence with and care for Friends in Cuba as they seek to live their faith in a profoundly uncertain and harrowing time. After the United States cut off all oil supplies to Cuba, Cuban Friends report the "worst conditions since the Cuban revolution." A recently announced adjustment to allow some oil to be imported has not yet helped. Cuban Friends fear an invasion and are suffering the lack of both transportation and food; Cuban YM will suspend its annual

sessions this year. Friends organizations are discerning what is within our strength and what is given us to do, to support Cuban Friends spiritually as well as financially.

Friends briefly held Cuban Friends in spirit.

When asked how individual meetings could help financially, Noah advised directing donations through NEYM with a designation of “Puente” or “Puente de Amigos”.

Friends asked, considering the Quaker history of travelling in ministry, whether it is an infraction of our free exercise of religion, for our government to limit travel between NEYM and Cuba. Noah agreed to bring this question to the new NEYM general counsel for advice on acting as “wise as serpents and gentle as doves.”

PB 26-6 Update on Friends Camp Financial Status

The Yearly Meeting Secretary presented a Statement of Functional Expenses of Friends Camp during FY2025, attached. The report is a new format that clearly separates funds with and without restrictions. The report highlights strong financial performance during the year and contributions to the newly established Campership Endowment Fund. The Camp needs to have a financial surplus to be able to respond to potential needs to care for buildings.

Friends **accepted** the Friends Camp financial report.

PB 26-7 Update on NEYM Budget and Financial Status

The Yearly Meeting Secretary was joined by Marian Dalton (Brunswick), Yearly Meeting Treasurer, to present a detailed record of our FY2025 financial outcome and a summary of finances for the first quarter of FY2026, attached. Their spoken report emphasized priorities and events affecting NEYM finances, including a contract with a CPA for advice on bookkeeping and financial practices; NEYM staff examination of the costs of offering year around programs; and relationship building activities of the Living Stream Travel Team. The Finance Committee has only begun to work with staff in developing a FY2027 budget so it was not shared at this meeting.

Marian provided an explanation of the current NEYM financial report.

The full FY2025 financial report provided in the advanced documents for today has only incidental changes to the provisional budget vs actuals report that was presented to Permanent Board in December. But today’s report is not final in the sense that, while the numbers shouldn’t change, the layout of the report that will be presented to Sessions may change somewhat as a result of consultation with our contracted accounting firm on the best way to present certain aspects of our finances.

To represent the overall health of our finances, in recent years we have been monitoring the value of our “reserves” which are available to support annual work. On the last page of the FY2025 report in the advance documents, the reserves value is \$56K, which is double that at the end of FY2024. But the FY2025 reserves increase is nearly entirely the result of the \$51K we received in federal Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) funds last year.

Since the pandemic, we have shared concern about our operating financial results. We have not yet recovered a balance between operating income and expenses, despite increases in reserves resulting from one-time influxes of cash. The net negative operating income for NEYM was \$-63K in FY2023, \$-62K in FY2024 (despite that being the first year of not sending donations to organizations of which we are members), and \$-22K in FY2025. Reduced attendance at Sessions for several years contributed to these deficits, but the financial reports suggest other factors.

- We have budgeted increases in individual fundraising that haven’t materialized: not that donations haven’t been going up, but that they haven’t reached the levels we budgeted.
- Monthly meeting donations have exceeded budgeted amounts for the last two years, reflecting the better predictions possible with more adequate data.
- Retreat program fees have not met budget for three years.
- Travel reimbursement for NEYM representatives to annual conferences has been fully covered in the past but may need to be reduced in order to fit within budgets.
- Staffing costs are about 60% of our budget, including healthcare, retirement, disability, etc. Staff wages increase based on the federal COLA rate, but our income may not increase at the same rate. Our budget has not included putting aside funds for sabbatical pay.
- Preparing for Sessions is a large financial commitment, taking about a third of staff time in recent years. In addition, we have offered about \$30K per year in discounted fees to Sessions attenders who fill key roles.

As a result of our concern about deficits, NEYM took actions both last year and this year to address recognized budget challenges.

- Knowing that the location of last year’s Sessions at UMass Amherst was an expensive option, as a precaution, we approved releasing approximately \$60K from the Future Uses Fund to cover Sessions losses. While it was a necessary move, this was not new income.
- To focus on new income, we began working with a development consultant (Michael Wajda). We have seen encouraging trends in individual donations to date, which are up \$19K over this time last year.
- NEYM staff have been evaluating youth retreat fees, which have not changed in some time, to discern a level that is sustainable.
- The Living Stream Travel Team is on the road reaching out to local meetings with a goal to both communicate what the Yearly Meeting provides and to listen to what local meetings need.

- On the expense side, a new Sessions location was found, and an abbreviated Sessions schedule is being developed for this year in hopes of reducing expenses and increasing attendance.
- Changes in the structure of NEYM staff may provide efficiencies.

In the present FY2026 fiscal year, at about the time of the December Permanent Board Meeting, NEYM General Division and Friends Camp unexpectedly received the last of the ERTC pandemic era federal government payments we had applied for: NEYM received around \$52K, and the Camp another \$110K. Earlier this month, in light of this payment from the IRS to cover pandemic expenses, the Camp Committee approved returning to NEYM \$20K that NEYM gave to the camp during the pandemic to help them cope with the camp shutdown at that time. This generous surprise, on top of our own refund, is a very welcome boost to this year's finances.

In summary, the treasurer asked us to continue paying attention our financial situation. This year, receiving the ERTC funds and the gift from the Camp provides one more year with a financial buffer. The actions already taken may also provide some relief. Starting in FY2027, we truly need to have dealt with the ratio of our operational income to expenses. The Finance Committee is putting together the budget for FY2027 now; If you have any suggestions for actions we can or should take, please contact someone on the Finance Committee or Doug Keith, clerk.

Friends expressed gratitude for the treasurer's financial work and detailed report. Friends noted that Friends Camp and schools and youth programs, beyond retreats, are an investment in the future. These may need restructuring and fine-tuning, but inclusion of youth is an important part of witness and ministry. Friends asked about plans to reopen the question of contributions to other organizations. How do we continue to be clear in communicating with the other organizations? If not a question for our 2027 funding priorities, this is a concern to remember.

Friends asked if the increase in donations covered the cost of the consultant. We were assured that the increase was more than the cost. The consultation was an investment in new skills that will bear more fruit in the future and was paid through the NEYM Future Uses Fund.

PB 26-8 Recommendation on NEYM Financial Priorities

The NEYM Secretary introduced financial recommendations from the Coordination and Advisory Committee by lifting up key elements of our current situation. Since the pandemic, New England Friends have come to expect a tapestry of year-around NEYM events that link resources to, and among, local meetings across the region, as well as NEYM support services under the guidance of spirit that include the meeting accompaniment group and support for local youth ministers. In this context, work to balance income with operating expenses has sought to increase income from annual contributions of individuals, households, and monthly meetings, as well as major gifts, potential income from use of our property, reviewing suggested program fees

consistent with a pay-as-led approach, and the connection-building work of the Living Stream Travel Team. Reduced expenses are sought through savings in operations and administrative costs, for example office space and staffing assignments, and through a new site for Sessions that enables site expense to better scale with attendance.

For FY2027, the budget recommendations from the C&A Committee can be summarized as “Stay the Course”:

- Maintain staffing levels to carry out existing plans, including cost increases consistent with NEYM policy for healthcare, cost of living, etc.
- Use the Future Uses Fund to continue approved support of development efforts and to support early transition to a new staffing model to enable operating cost savings.
- Hold in prayerful awareness our yearning to increase financial support of other organizations, including Friends groups with which we are affiliated, and the new needs for welcoming, religious education, spiritual formation, and mentoring that are resulting from an increase in newcomers arriving in many local meetings.

Friends **affirmed** this direction.

PB 26-9 NEYM Presiding Clerk Report

A written report from Phillip Veatch, Presiding Clerk of NEYM, is attached. In his spoken report, he called attention to planning for Sessions 2026, which will be held at Mt. Holyoke College. The theme is, “Spring forth O well and make us whole.” Planning for the schedule is in progress, and potential speakers have been invited. Adria Dicapua has accepted the invitation to speak for Bible Half Hours. The opening ceremony will be on Saturday morning, August 1, with some activities offered for early arrivers on Friday including an opportunity for extended worship similar to last year’s worship event. We are actively searching for new coordinators of childcare and Junior Yearly Meeting because the previous coordinators are unable to continue.

PB 26-10 Israel-Palestine Resource Group Report

Leslie Manning (Dover and Three Rivers) presented a written report from the Israel-Palestine Resource Group, attached. In her verbal report she emphasized the following items.

Today’s US-Israel bombing of Iran could make the travel recommendations in the written report no longer operable. US has recalled American citizens from Israel. The American Friends Service Committee intends to continue its work in Gaza, despite Israel’s expulsion of foreign representatives, because AFSC funds local people.

Because there is censorship of information about the human rights situation, people in Israel and Palestine ask us to show up, witness, and speak when we can. Live connections between NEYM and Friends in Ramallah are very important.

The Resource Group remains committed to facilitating discussion and discernment about Palestine and Israel, and is clear to seek ways for NEYM to provide support for travel to the region. The written report provides detailed information about multiple opportunities to learn about current situations in Palestine and Israel, including details about groups and programs that organize travel to Palestine and Israel for solidarity, witness, and support.

Friends asked for clarification about actions other than travel. Leslie strongly recommended the weekly AFSC Action Hour for Palestine which sends a recap with recommended actions <https://afsc.org/events/action-hour-palestine>. Some possibilities are working for divestment, apartheid free communities, and maintaining relationships with legislators that build on our faith connection.

Friends affirmed the direction being taken by the Resource Group.

PB 26-11 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 clarified procedures for quarterly meetings to submit memorial minutes to be read at Sessions including an email address to use;
- reported that C&A reaffirmed the existing practice that clerks of committees are appointed by the Nominating Committee in consultation with members of each committee;
- reported that C&A is starting to clarify NEYM committee requirements for membership in monthly meetings.

In addition, he asked Permanent Board to consider the question of changing the size of Permanent Board.

Friends expressed awareness that people are busy and tired: is Permanent Board a good use of Friends' time? Providing new Board members with more mentoring and clarity about board member responsibilities might make 3-year terms possible and reduce the term commitment required. Would a smaller Permanent Board be more responsible?

Friends addressed the balance between small size for a workable board and large size to enable greater representation. Visitors and observers are already welcome. Could quarterly meetings be a way of ensuring representation and communication?

Friends observed that new members joining the Board helps the Board and is a way of bringing Friends into the workings of the Yearly Meeting. Yet a Friend's membership in Permanent Board grows from a prior relationship among local Friends and NEYM. The technical requirements for hosting a hybrid meeting reduce the number of local meetings who can host a Board meeting and reduces the number of Friends who feel a connection to the Board. Are zoom meetings a problem or a solution?

Board consideration of the topic resolved with a shared realization that NEYM structure was formed decades ago: we need a structural review and that is not the nominating committee's job. What is the problem we're trying to solve – representation? What is the purpose of permanent board -- conduits of information or discernment? It is time for Friends to review the Purpose, Procedures and Composition document for Permanent Board.

PB 26-12 Purpose, Procedures, and Composition of Gifts Committee

Karen Reixach, Gifts Committee clerk, introduced a Purpose, Procedures, and Composition (PP&C) document for the Gifts Committee. Following the Ten Year Review of the Legacy Gift Funds, in 2024 Sessions approved consolidating the funds into a single fund called the Witness and Ministry Fund. This Purposes, Procedures and Composition document provides updated guidance to a re-named Gifts Committee. In addition to the change in name, the new document addresses the additional funds that the Gifts Committee allocates and the difference in restrictions on use of those funds.

Friends expressed concern about specific mention of the Salem Quarter Fund in the PP&C. After some discussion, Friends concluded that it was appropriately given as an example of funds that NEYM may ask the Gifts Committee to care for in the future.

Friends **approved** the attached document on Purpose, Procedures, and Composition of the Gifts Committee.

PB 26-13 Purpose, Procedures, and Composition of Conflict Response Team

Phillip Veatch and Janet Hough, clerk of Yearly Ministry and Counsel, presented a proposed Purpose, Procedures and Composition document for the Conflict Response Team, attached. The document responds to NEYM Annual Sessions Minute 2023:42. Janet highlighted the history of the Team and the use of web addresses in the document. The document doesn't answer all questions about how the Team will work; the Team does not respond to all conflicts.

Friends asked for clarification about how confidentiality and transparency are addressed in the document.

Friends **approved** the document on Purpose, Procedures, and Composition.

PB 26-14 Recommendation for a Retrospective Restorative Justice Working Group

Phillip Veatch presented the Coordinating and Advisory Committee response to Permanent Board's request for recommendations regarding how the yearly meeting should work on retrospective restorative justice for communities other than Indigenous communities. His presentation began by noting that in spurring the Yearly Meeting to take up this work at this time, Hal Weaver offered both an important impetus, and through The Black Quaker Project, an important resource.

C&A's recommendation is that the Board endorse the creation of a working group modeled after the NEYM Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools Resource Group with an overarching goal of enabling meaningful reflection among Friends across NEYM in a way that positively impacts the choices we are making today. There is a historical part to this work that should consider the involvement and actions of New England Friends in chattel slavery and systemic racism. This includes the involvement of individual Friends as well as involvement of NEYM institutionally (as evidenced in our minutes, committee structures, and finances). A review of current and previous efforts towards reparations would be part of the group's charge. The Working Group would be asked to provide an overview, not something book length, with a goal of making the information accessible to New England Friends of different ages and backgrounds. The group would be charged with reaching out, in a listening mode, without presumptions, to affected communities to learn their understanding of what retrospective justice requires, and bringing possibilities for meaningful action back to the yearly meeting. If the Permanent Board endorses this approach, C&A will draft a more complete Purpose, Procedure, and Compositions document for consideration at the May Permanent Board meeting.

Friends observed that Friends are interested in the personal and institutional history of New England Friends' participation in racial injustice and in the question of what retrospective justice requires for our future action.

Friends **affirmed** the direction of the C&A approach to NEYM action on retrospective restorative justice.

PB 26-15 Nominating Committee Report

Sadie Forsythe (Putney) presented the report from the Nominating Committee, attached.

This meeting is the second reading of the following nominations:

Clerk of Permanent Board – Liesa Stamm (Hartford Monthly Meeting) to begin after Sessions in August 2026, class of 2029, after a 6-month period of working with the current clerk.

Representative to Friends World Committee for Consultation, Section of the Americas – NiaDwynwen Thomas (Northampton Friends Meeting), to begin immediately, class of 2029.

Friends **approved** these nominations.

PB 26-16 Report from Friends Committee on National Legislation

Scot Drysdale, NEYM representative to FCNL, presented a report, attached. In his spoken report he showed the FCNL website. He also summarized changes in meetings of the FCNL General Committee in order to reduce costs; new bylaws to reorganize NEYM governance; plans for the Friends Changemaker Weekend; the success of advocacy teams lobbying in all 50 states, a new FCNL policy statement on artificial intelligence; and the opportunity for local meetings to participate in a process, currently underway, to set FCNL priorities for the 120th Congress.

PB 26-17 NEYM Program Director Report

Nia Thomas, NEYM Program Director, gave a spoken report on upcoming programs. She spoke of retreats, gatherings, and opportunities for Friends in different life stages; monthly online gatherings of Friends who share interests and challenges; and the annual cycle of NEYM Saturday gatherings in different parts of the region. In planning these programs, goals of the program staff are to complement and enrich local meetings, benefitting communities, not just individuals; to honor capacity limits and leave space to respond to spirit; to foster mutual accompaniment, conversation and wisdom sharing among individuals; and to respond to the reality of new people coming to our meetings.

PB 26-18 Memorial Minutes

Friends received nine memorial minutes for approval at this meeting: Cynthia West (Hartford), Joan Austin (Cambridge), Christine Connaire (Cambridge), Ghanda DiFiglia (Cambridge), Joan Griscom (Cambridge), Patricia Hogan (Cambridge), Lynn Lazar (Cambridge), Mehmet Rona (Cambridge), and Roger Webb (Cambridge).

Twelve additional memorial minutes are available for first reading. These are memorial minutes from Friends Meeting Cambridge for Hugh Barbour, David Bonner, Robert Carter, Elisabeth Cotton, Russell de Burlo, Jr., Malcolm Forbes, Walter Lenk, Everett Mendelsohn, Lita Newdick, William Watson, Marilee Wheeler, and Charles Woodbury.

Friends **accepted** the memorial minutes for Cynthia West, Joan Austin, Christine Connaire, Ghandi DiFiglia, Joan Griscom, Patricia Hogan, Lynn Lazar, Mehmet Rona, and Roger Webb for Yearly Meeting Sessions.

Respectfully Submitted,
Frances Lightsom, Recording Clerk

Friends Camp

Strategic Priorities and Pathways Forward

2026-2028

A Ministry of New England Yearly Meeting

South China, Maine

The mission of Friends Camp is to give youth and families a unique outdoor camp for spiritual, emotional, and creative growth. Friends Camp strives to be a caring and accepting community that embraces the faith and practices of Friends (Quakers) as one of many ways of helping youth discern a true and healthy path into adulthood with group worship, recreational activities, artistic pursuits and work projects.

Approved, Friends Camp Committee 4/18/2026

Introduction

Friends Camp is a vital and flourishing ministry of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends. In 2025, we served 462 campers with 65 staff members, achieved full enrollment, and provided nearly \$150,000 in campership (scholarship) funds to 233 campers. Camper, family, and staff satisfaction are high overall. We now have some financial cushion that we can allocate to strategic goals beyond normal summer operations. We ended the fiscal year with net operating income of \$44,509 and by creating a Campership Endowment Fund. Additionally, recently received Employee Retention Tax Credit funds create an opportunity to invest the long-term health and thriving of Friends Camp.

As affirmed in our 2023 Visioning Report, Friends Camp both draws from and contributes to the spiritual fire tended by New England Yearly Meeting. Our camp culture—characterized by acceptance, simplicity, and seeing the Light in every person—flows directly from Quaker faith and practice.

The plan presented here builds on the 2023 Vision Process, several years of work by a highly engaged Camp Committee, a decade of experience from the Camp Director, and the Vision document accepted by the Camp Committee last year that had short-, medium-, and long-term goals.

In the pages that follow, we are presenting 4 strategic priorities:

- (1) Strengthen operational resilience & governance
- (2) Exercise longer-term planning for financial sustainability
- (3) Deepen programmatic intentionality
- (4) Strengthen long-term site planning & management

The state of our nation calls us to deepen our programming around integrity, faithful action, justice, and peace-building. As Quaker meetings in our region see increased attendance and youth involvement, we seek to increase our own engagement with these Monthly Meetings as well as Quarterly Meetings and New England Yearly Meeting more widely. Doing so may deepen our work at Friends Camp as well as provide richness and resources to other, more regional groups of Friends.

Alongside the above strengths and opportunities, we also have some strategic challenges. Current operations depend heavily on a single Camp Director, with little organizational resilience in staffing. Operational tasks require so much of the Camp Director's time that we fall short of following through on longer-term strategic goals such as emergency planning, long-term financial sustainability through development efforts, and programmatic intentionality.

Rather than pursuing further growth, we must now focus on securing our sustainability—building our organizational capacity to weather any upcoming disruptions, further fulfill our mission, and be responsive to the needs of our community and New England Yearly Meeting in the future. This plan maintains our current enrollment of approximately 450 campers per season. As was affirmed in the 2023 Visioning Process, our size is integral to the intimate, transformative community culture that makes Friends Camp distinctive. In the last decade, Friends Camp has grown in capacity. Camp enrollment has increased by 35%, and the number of staff has increased by 57%. We have reached ideal capacity, and growing further at this time would strain our financial and physical plant resources and diminish the benefits of our small community.

Priority 1: Strengthen Operational Resilience & Governance

Goal: Ensure camp thrives through transitions and reduces dependency on any single individual.

Key Objectives

1. Create Associate Director Position

- Establish year-round Associate Director role, creating a partner for Camp Director who has professional experience. (full-time in summer, flexible in off-season for the right candidate).
- Balance the year-round workload between multiple professional employees, supporting the goals in this plan.
- Maintain seasonal Assistant Director position for a promising former counselor alongside year-round professional Associate Camp Director, to allow for continued leadership pathways and more support in the summer season.

2. Develop Leadership Pipeline & Succession Planning

- Continue efforts to document core operational processes.
- Engage in succession planning for all year-round and seasonal leadership roles.
- Continue developing sustainable staffing models (e.g., nursing structure with overseeing nurse plus weekly nurses)

3. Ensure Camp Committee Member Recruitment & Engagement

- All 15 Committee seats full by 2027 with expertise in fundraising, non-profit finance, emergency management, facilities, youth ministry, legal/risk management.
- Increase familiarity about Camp Committee with camper families, former staff members, and Friends to generate more interest in serving on Camp Committee or sub-committees. Deepen our “bench.”
- Ensure all sub-committees have clerks and meet regularly.
- Continue increased committee site visits (goal: each member visits every two years).

4. Build Committee Fundraising Leadership

- Involve entire Camp Committee in donor cultivation and alumni engagement.
- Achieve 100% committee participation in annual giving by 2027.

Indicators of Operational and Governance Resilience

- Two year-round staff capable of managing operations.
- Committee membership grows to 15 active members.
- Committee members report high satisfaction (and impact) with their roles.
- All sub-committees meeting regularly with documented goals.
- Director and Associate Director able to take planned time away, or necessary urgent leave, without disruption.

Priority 2: Exercise Longer-Term Planning for Financial Sustainability

Goal: Increase annual giving and endowment funds to ensure long-term campership access and organizational stability. Ensure financial systems are strong and sustainable by implementing new system for financial review.

Key Objectives

1. Campership Endowment Fund

- Reach \$300,000 in contributions by December 2026, using fundraising plan already created.
- After first year of Endowment Fundraising is complete, set an appropriate goal before the end of 2028 and implement plan to achieve goal.
- Engage development consultant to guide major donor outreach.
- Create materials to encourage Planned Giving and engage donors in this when appropriate.

2. Annual Giving Program

- Grow individual contributions from \$82,000 (FY2025) to \$100,000+ by 2028.
- Implement donor stewardship program with regular communications, especially with Monthly (Nest Club) and major donors (\$500+).
- Increase donor base to 200+ annual contributors, emphasizing long-term relationships with donors and ongoing relationships with camp alumni from all eras of camp.

3. Financial Review & Controls

- Determine most appropriate path forward for financial review, complete review, and implement recommendations.
- Use Camp Director & Associate Director staffing structure to implement new financial control mechanisms, thus reducing the load on the Volunteer Treasurer role.

Indicators of Financial Sustainability

- Endowment Fund receives contributions of \$300,000 by December 2026.
- Annual giving increases by 25% from 2024 to 2028.
- Financial review complete and recommendations implemented.

Priority 3: Deepen Programmatic Intentionality

Goal: Using the 2023 Visioning Report, more clearly communicate to staff, campers, and families the outcomes we seek. Recruit, empower, and prepare staff members to work with campers to bring about these outcomes. Create more opportunities for campers and staff, as well as our wider community, to deepen their spiritual lives through time spent at camp.

Key Objectives

1. Articulate Program Outcomes & Reflect Often

- Identify individual & community outcomes that we aim for, grounded in foundation as Friends.
- Notice and enrich opportunities for the entire camp community to regularly reflect on and discern new desired outcomes, whether they are specific / time-bound, or general.
- Pursue grant funding to support program outcomes (ACA Character Grant, Obadiah Brown Fund)
- Prepare camp counselors to incorporate program outcomes into camp programming and worship time, while keeping the spirit of “zany” camp programs alive and well.

2. Expand Rising Leaders Program

- Develop curriculum in Quaker youth ministry, facilitation, and community building.
- Track and support continued involvement, including expansion to 2 sessions.

3. Establish Quaker Chaplains or Similar Programs

- Reflect on the “Quaker Fellows” program implemented in 2017 and note important learnings.
- Create new ways for Friends of varying ages to participate in Friends Camp activities and to offer wisdom and spiritual guidance, whether Quaker Fellows, Chaplains, or other.

4. Encourage Diverse Perspectives at Camp & Embrace Diverse Spiritual Wisdom

- Notice ways in which the contributions of staff and campers from different religious, cultural, racial, or national backgrounds enrich our spiritual life at camp. Encourage their retention by listening to and supporting their needs.
- Live into the Campership Policy approved in Fall 2025, referencing it often.

5. Improve Staff Experience

- Continual improvement to the staff experience (fair compensation, comfortable housing, adequate support) will allow staff to bring their best selves to programmatic elements, whether formal or informal.

Indicators of deepened program intentionality

- Documented program outcomes guide camp activities
- Grant funding secured for program development
- Increased proportion of staff with Quaker background or commitment to values
- Increased staff retention (65-75% camp counselors returners or former Rising Leaders)

Priority 4: Strengthen Long-Term Site Planning & Management

Goal: Incorporate long-term site planning and property needs, and incorporate these needs more fully into financial planning and budgeting. Improve overall property management to have stronger record-keeping, maintenance checklists, and more.

Key Objectives

1. Property Planning

- Develop a multi-year property maintenance plan with cost projections, developed from the existing depreciation schedule.
- Document buildings/grounds inventory and maintenance schedules.

2. Support Transition of Long-Time Maintenance Director

- Work on a succession plan with the long-term Maintenance Director who plans to retire by the end of 2028.
- Network locally with potential future Maintenance Directors, to expand the pool of future applicants.
- Foster seasonal leadership in the maintenance department to allow flexibility with future hires.

3. Create Stronger Systems to Adhere to New Licensing Laws

- Stricter licensing laws in Maine require more stringent adherence to water temperatures, kitchen practices, and more. Create systems to support meeting all property-based requirements.

4. Strengthen Decision-Making Processes

- For annual capital project budgeting, create systematic way for camp staff & committee members to review potential projects and evaluate priorities.
- Create decision-making guidelines regarding possible land acquisitions, through purchasing or donations.

Indicators of Strengthened Long-Term Site Planning & Management

- Multi-year property plan is included in practical applications and budgeting processes.
- Adequately prepared to launch a hiring process for a new Maintenance Director.
- Successful State of Maine Licensing Visits (unannounced visits generally every other year).

Responsibility, Reporting & Review

The Camp Director and Camp Committee are primarily responsible for the implementation of this plan. The Camp Committee will review progress on this strategic plan twice annually (September and May meetings). An annual written report will be provided to the Camp Committee and NEYM Permanent Board, including progress on objectives, unexpected new leadings or challenges, and any adjustments to the plan.

Financial Considerations

Implementing this plan will require investments of energy, time, and also funds. The plan also has the potential to increase revenue as well as impact. Specific spending plans will be incorporated into the annual budgeting processes so that they are carefully considered in the context of Friends Camp's overall financial health.

Investments to Consider:

Associate Director Position: \$50,000-90,000 annually (partially offset by eliminating part-time Communications / Office Support role)

Development Support: \$5,000-10,000 for consultant/coach

Staff Housing Improvements: \$15,000- \$50,000 over three years or beyond

Site Improvements: Unknown, dependent on emergent goals and annual capital needs

Conclusion: Tending the Fire

The 2023 Visioning Report offered us a powerful metaphor: Friends Camp and New England Yearly Meeting tend the same spiritual fire. NEYM brought the foundational logs and the spark of Quaker faith; each summer, Friends Camp adds new sticks with every camper and staff member experiencing Spirit at work, making the flame grow brighter and spread farther.

This strategic plan is about tending that fire with skill, care, and integrity. We recognize that fires do not burn endlessly without consistent attention. As we strengthen our leadership capacity, ensure long-term financial stability, and bring intentionality to our programs, we are creating the conditions for this vital ministry to continue burning brightly for generations to come.

This work will make Friends Camp more resilient, more sustainable, and more responsive to what we are called to do. We seek to ensure that every young person who comes to camp can experience the transformative power of being truly seen and known, of living simply in community, of encountering silence and Spirit, of discovering joy in being rather than achieving.

To: Permanent Board
From: Finance Clerk
Date: 05/01/2026
Subject: Finance Committee Report

The accompanying draft 2027 Fiscal Year budget (Sept. 2026-Aug. 2027) was approved by the Finance Committee on April 9th projecting a tiny surplus. I am also including Frederick's notes on this budget. We are keenly aware that our priority needs to be to stem the deficits we have been running since 2019 and begin to rebuild our reserves.

For the 2027 budget proposal we have tried to be realistic/conservative in estimating our income from individual contributions and Monthly Meeting contributions by leaving them flat from this year though there have been encouraging responses from the Living Streams Team visits to Monthly Meetings. And now that our 2026 Sessions is set for Mt. Holyoke, with good reason to hope we will be able to continue using that site in coming years, our cost structure should be much more predictable which should also make it easier to decide how to set our fees and fee waivers for future Sessions. Elizabeth will be explaining more about this.

On a less happy note, we continue to be unable to propose restarting our "Support of Other Organizations" for obvious budgetary reasons, but also because starting to do this raises discernment issues of which organizations to fund and how we would allocate the budgeted funds among those organizations. In a similar vein that is emblematic of the sacrifices that our dedicated staff make, we continue to make no contributions to our sabbatical and paid leave fund even as our office staff work to identify ways to reduce NEYM's expenses. As soon as possible, when our Yearly Meeting's finances return to a more healthy condition, our expectation is resume making both types of these contributions.

Faithfully,
Doug Keith, Finance Clerk

New England Yearly Meeting
FY2027 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget - Proposed

Draft 5A - 4/8/2026 - approved by Finance Committee

Category	Actuals		Budgets			Δ FY26 to FY27 Budgets	FY2027 Draft Budget		
	FY2019	FY2025	FY2019	FY2025	FY2026		FY2027 draft budget total	Notes	Sessions break-out
Income									
4010 Individual Contributions Total	210,194	212,545.06	212,000	228,000	239,000	-	239,000		27,000
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions Total	333,257	353,484.47	373,000	345,000	362,250	1,000	363,250	3	10,000
4025 Unallocated Income				0	10,873	(56)	10,817	4	
4030 Organizations Contributions	1	250.00	0	0	500	-	500		
4050 Interest and Dividend Income	9,303	4,760.76	4,000	11,000	5,712	(962)	4,750	5	
4070 Books & Other Sales Income	20,077	6,024.36	16,000	10,500	8,800	(2,000)	6,800	6	6,500.00
4080 Retreat Program Fees	44,618	28,796.65	50,000	37,500	41,350	(3,350)	38,000	7	
4085 Sessions Program Fees (net of contra-revenue below)	202,936	196,313.65	185,000	214,895	201,000	(18,229)	182,771	2	182,771
4090 Change in Fair Market Value	960	-7.00	0	0	0	-	0		
4099 Net Assets Released To/From	660	0.00	8,500	0	0	-	0		
Total Income	822,005	\$ 802,167.95	848,500	846,895	869,485	(23,597)	\$ 845,888		\$ 226,271
Expenses									
Total 5000 Staff	379,198	495,659.60	363,915	516,314	517,758	8,825	\$ 526,583	8	
Total 5100 General & Administration	89,142	\$ 100,358.34	133,511	87,449	93,650	2,750	\$ 96,400		\$ 15,500
Total 5300 Travel & Conferences	32,007	\$ 17,576.61	36,000	22,300	23,000	-	\$ 23,000	12	\$ 2,000
Total 6000 Programs	243,348	\$ 206,085.76	259,020	213,850	227,700	(33,860)	\$ 193,840		\$ 165,140
Total 6140 Books & Other Sales Expense	17,447	\$ 4,828.49	14,500	8,000	7,000	(1,000)	\$ 6,000	6	\$ 6,000
Total 6200-6590 Support of Other Organizations	43,471		45,975	0	0	-	\$ 0		
Total 6600 Publications	3,522		4,000			-			
Total Expenses	808,137	824,509	856,921	847,913	869,108	(23,285)	\$ 845,823		\$ 188,640
Net Operating Income	13,868	(22,341)	-8,421	-1,018	377	(312)	65		37,631
Other Income									
9940 Other Income - Transfers from other funds	32,072.22	60,009							
Total Other Income	32,072.22	60,009							
Other Expenses									
9950 Other Expense - Transfer to other funds		8,607						0	14
Total Other Expenses		8,607							
Net Other Income	32,072.22	51,402							
Net Income	45,940.46	29,061						65	

New England Yearly Meeting
FY2027 Operating (Non-Camp) Budget - draft 5A
Version of 4/8/2026

Category	Actuals			Budgets				Δ FY26 to FY27 Budgets	FY2027 Draft Budget		
	FY2019	FY2024	FY2025	FY2019	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026		FY2027 draft budget total	Notes	Sessions break-out
Income											
4010 Individual Contributions											
General Fund Contributions	188,088	179,020.78	173,361.06	191,000	198,000	201,000	212,000	-	212,000	1	
Pay-As-Led /Equalization Contributions	22,106	27,688.00	39,184.00	21,000	25,000	27,000	27,000	-	27,000	2	27,000
4010 Individual Contributions Total	210,194	206,708.78	212,545.06	212,000	223,000	228,000	239,000	-	239,000		27,000
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions											
General Fund Contributions	317,286	333,973.47	339,935.47	350,000	333,000	336,000	353,250	-	353,250		
Equalization Contributions	15,971	10,695.00	13,549.00	23,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	1,000	10,000		10,000
4020 Monthly Meeting Contributions Total	333,257	344,668.47	353,484.47	373,000	342,000	345,000	362,250	1,000	363,250	3	10,000
4025 Unallocated Income					0	0	10,873	(56)	10,817	4	
4030 Organizations Contributions	1	1,450.00	250.00	0	0	0	500	-	500		
4050 Interest and Dividend Income	9,303	7,172.34	4,760.76	4,000	12,000	11,000	5,712	(962)	4,750	5	
4070 Books & Other Sales Income	20,077	8,677.41	6,024.36	16,000	10,500	10,500	8,800	(2,000)	6,800	6	6,500.00
4077 Consulting Fee Contribution								-			
4080 Retreat Program Fees	44,618	30,422.00	28,796.65	50,000	37,500	37,500	41,350	(3,350)	38,000	7	
4085 Sessions Program Fees (net of contra-revenue below)	202,936	161,365.50	196,313.65	185,000	249,475	214,895	201,000	(18,229)	182,771	2	182,771
Volunteer etc fee waivers		30,132.00	28,160.00				0		0		23,520
Pay-As-Led usage discount			63,781.35								65,000
4090 Change in Fair Market Value	960	72.07	-7.00	0	0	0	0	-	0		
4099 Net Assets Released To/From	660	0.00	0.00	8,500	5,000	0	0	-	0		
Total Income	822,005	\$ 760,536.58	\$ 802,167.95	848,500	879,475	846,895	869,485	(23,597)	\$ 845,888		\$ 226,271
Expenses											
5000 Staff											
5010 Salaries & Wages	284,515	360,924.10	316,110.87	267,426	380,988	389,236	330,235	(7,977)	322,258	8	
5037 Housing Allowance			60,000.20				60,000	-	60,000		
5020 Payroll Taxes	21,100	27,077.77	23,495.36	20,511	29,146	30,195	25,723	(604)	25,119		
5030 Benefits											
5033 Health Benefits	39,036	52,982.14	55,193.12	41,785	49,199	51,796	58,399	17,946	76,345	8	
5035 Retirements	30,106	36,435.95	38,137.48	26,743	38,099	38,924	39,424	(798)	38,626		
5040 Disability	1,402	983.41	1,036.08	1,800	1,100	1,013	1,057	353	1,410		
5045 Workers' Compensation	812	682.00	647.00	700	760	600	620	5	625		
5050 Spiritual Retreats		727.00	150.00	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	-	1,200		
5060 Staff Development	2,228	1,257.03	789.49	3,750	3,250	3,250	1,000	-	1,000		
5070 Sabbatical & Paid Leave		100.00	100.00		100	100	100	(100)	0	8	
Total 5030 Benefits	73,584	93,167.53	96,053.17	75,978	93,708	96,883	101,800	17,406	\$ 119,206		
Total 5000 Staff	379,198	481,169.40	495,659.60	363,915	503,842	516,314	517,758	8,825	\$ 526,583	8	
5100 General & Administration											
5110 Administration											
5120 Bank Expense	7,280	8,530.37	9,734.47	6,000	7,000	7,000	6,750	3,000	9,750		5,000
5130 Contracted Services	18,702	28,655.71	20,225.00	60,396	18,000	18,000	22,500	(2,000)	20,500	9	6,500

Category	Actuals			Budgets				Δ FY26 to FY27 Budgets	FY2027 Draft Budget		
	FY2019	FY2024	FY2025	FY2019	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026		FY2027 draft budget total	Notes	Sessions break-out
5135 Accounting Services	4,000			4,000	0	0	0	-	0		
5140 Legal Services	7,771	2,500.00	2,500.00	7,750	2,500	2,500	1,500	1,000	2,500	10	
5145 Infrastructure					0	0	0	1,000	1,000		
5150 Liability Insurance	4,071	6,835.49	7,852.49	4,000	5,250	5,250	7,000	1,000	8,000		
5160 Payroll Service	5,229	7,518.60	8,593.75	4,500	5,500	5,500	7,500	1,000	8,500		
5170 Recruiting Expense			125	500	0	0	0	-	0		
5180 Rent	9,350	9,350.00	9,350.00	9,350	9,350	9,350	9,350	-	9,350	11	
5190 Misc. Expense	488	467.93	766.81	0	0	0	0	-	0		
Total 5110 Administration	56,890	\$ 63,858.10	\$ 59,147.52	96,496	47,600	47,600	54,600	5,000	\$ 59,600		\$ 11,500
5200 Office								-			
5220 Archives Office Expenses				0	0	0	0	-	0		
5220 Cleaning Services	264	300.00	300.00	265	299	299	300	-	300		
5230 Maint - Equip & Hardware	0	89.99	86.80	1,250	500	500	100	-	100		
5240 Postage	3,218	2,200.39	1,844.46	3,750	3,750	3,750	3,600	-	3,600		100
5250 Office Equipment	331	237.55	2,381.32	3,250	1,500	1,500	1,000	-	1,000		
5260 Office Supplies	1,376	1,539.57	1,588.90	2,500	1,600	1,600	2,000	-	2,000		500
5270 Printing & Copying	14,614	7,415.95	8,146.87	14,500	9,500	9,500	5,350	(250)	5,100	11	2,500
5280 Software & Updates	9,128	23,017.05	22,095.72	7,000	19,000	19,000	22,700	(2,000)	20,700	11	700
5290 Telephone	3,179	3,833.26	4,651.50	4,500	3,700	3,700	4,000	-	4,000	11	200
5295 Misc. Office	142	112.20	115.25	0	0	0	0	-	0		
Total 5200 Office	32,252	\$ 38,745.96	\$ 41,210.82	37,015	39,849	39,849	39,050	(2,250)	\$ 36,800	11	\$ 4,000
Total 5100 General & Administration	89,142	\$ 102,604.06	\$ 100,358.34	133,511	87,449	87,449	93,650	2,750	\$ 96,400		\$ 15,500
5300 Travel & Conferences								-			
5310 Travel - Committee	7,217	1,536.36		3,000	1,400	1,400	1,500	-	1,500		
5320 Travel - Clerk	3,552	4,990.75	3,554.10	5,000	2,500	2,500	3,000	-	3,000		
5330 Travel - Programs	1,460	3,853.02	798.49	4,600	3,100	4,100	3,800	-	3,800		
5335 Travel - Representatives Travel	4,746	8,299.70	2,059.63	5,000	2,000	2,000	2,400	-	2,400		
5350 Travel - Staff	15,032	12,455.81	11,164.39	18,000	12,900	11,900	11,900	-	11,900		2,000
5360 Travel - Ministries				400	400	400	400	-	400		
Total 5300 Travel & Conferences	32,007	\$ 31,135.64	\$ 17,576.61	36,000	22,300	22,300	23,000	-	\$ 23,000	12	\$ 2,000
6000 Programs								-			
6110 Sessions Room & Board	173,649	127,106.70	139,021.78	170,000	169,442	135,570	171,500	(29,360)	142,140	2	142,140
6112 Retreats - Room & Board							0	-	0		
6114 Room Rental	17,625	13,988.00	12,498.00	20,000	10,000	10,000	11,700	-	11,700		
6150 Food Expense	15,130	9,413.65	13,073.81	18,000	10,000	10,000	9,450	-	9,450		
Total 6112 Retreats - Room & Board	32,754	\$ 23,401.65	\$ 25,571.81	38,000	20,000	20,000	21,150	-	\$ 21,150		\$ 0
6125 Program Expenses								-			
6105 Honoraria - Speakers/Wkshp Ldrs	15,814	16,796.92	17,177.00	16,500	24,000	21,000	18,000	-	18,000		14,500
6107 Honoraria - Volunteer Leadership		11,250.00	9,750.00		15,000	15,000	4,500	(4,500)	0	13	
6115 Equipment Rental	5,412	7,708.79	3,379.70	6,000	6,500	6,500	4,000	-	4,000		4,000
6121 Supplies and Other Expenses	5,078	8,068.30	4,554.16	9,300	9,000	5,000	5,400	-	5,400		3,000
6165 Pre-Sessions Expense	1,406	1,409.44	1,429.66	1,000	1,500	1,500	1,500	-	1,500		1,500
Total 6125 Program Expenses	27,710	\$ 45,233.45	\$ 36,290.52	32,800	56,000	49,000	33,400	(4,500)	\$ 28,900		\$ 23,000
6130 Committee Expenses - General	5,838	2,100.00	1,685.61	11,700	6,350	4,400	1,250	-	1,250		

Category	Actuals			Budgets				Δ FY26 to FY27 Budgets	FY2027 Draft Budget		
	FY2019	FY2024	FY2025	FY2019	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026		FY2027 draft budget total	Notes	Sessions break-out
6134 Childcare	788			2,000	2,000	2,000	400	-	400		
6137 Committee Day Expenses				500	0	0	0	-	0		
Total 6130 Committee Expenses - General	6,626	2,100.00	1,685.61	14,200	8,350	6,400	1,650	-	\$ 1,650		
6160 Program Support								-			
6163 Friends Camp	2,309	3,240.00	3,512.00	2,220	2,220	2,880	0	-	0		
6167 Religious Education & Outreach	300		4.04	1,800	0	0	0	-	0		
Total 6160 Program Support	2,609	\$ 3,240.00	\$ 3,516.04	4,020	2,220	2,880	0	-	\$ 0		
Total 6000 Programs	243,348	\$ 201,081.80	\$ 206,085.76	259,020	256,012	213,850	227,700	(33,860)	\$ 193,840		\$ 165,140
6140 Books & Other Sales Expense				0	0			-			
6142 Books	10,068	3,568.64	2,130.81	14,500	8,000	8,000	3,600	(500)	3,100		3,100
6145 Other Items for Sale	1,650		762.4	0	0	0	0	-	0		0
6147 Consignment Sales	5,730	3,175.11	1,935.28	0	0	0	3,400	(500)	2,900		2,900
Total 6140 Books & Other Sales Expense	17,447	\$ 6,743.75	\$ 4,828.49	14,500	8,000	8,000	7,000	(1,000)	\$ 6,000	6	\$ 6,000
6200 Support of Other Organizations								-			
Total 6200-6590 Support of Other Organizations	43,471	0	0	45,975	0	0	0	-	\$ 0		
6600 Publications								-			
6610 Yearly Meeting Minute Book				1,000	0		0	-	0		
6620 New England Friend (Sessions Issue)	3,522			3,000	0		0	-	0		
Total 6600 Publications	3,522	0	0	4,000	0	0	0	-	0		
Total Expenses	808,137	822,735	824,509	856,921	877,603	847,913	869,108	(23,285)	\$ 845,823		\$ 188,640
Net Operating Income	13,868	(62,198)	(22,341)	-8,421	1,872	-1,018	377	(312)	65		37,631
Other Income											
9940 Other Income - Transfers from other funds	32,072.22	5,000	60,009								
Total Other Income	32,072.22	5,000	60,009								
Other Expenses											
9950 Other Expense - Transfer to other funds			8,607							0	14
Total Other Expenses			8,607								
Net Other Income	32,072.22	5,000	51,402								
Net Income	45,940.46	(57,198)	29,061						65		

To: Permanent Board

From: Frederick Martin, Accounts Manager

Date: 05/01/2026

Subject: Notes for draft 5A FY27 NEYM operating budget proposal – 4/8/2026
separated from spreadsheet for easy reference

1:

4010-100 Individual Contributions - General: Flat between FY26 goal - FY27 goal.

Historical perspective: Actual growth rates FY22-FY24 averaged 9.4% per year. FY15-FY19 (during a campaign) was 13.7%; within that, FY16-19 averaged 17.6% per year; FY17-FY18 saw 42% growth in one year. Longer term: FY15-FY24 was 5.6%, and FY2008-FY2024 was 6.5%

2: Sessions-related:

Pay-As-Led individual donations (4010-730): Ballpark figure due to anticipated lower costs and our lower requested fees in new venue. \$12K reduction from FY25 actual, around the same as FY24 actual.

Sessions 2027 budget is now (draft 5) based on Mt Holyoke contract.

The last column breaks out "placeholder" Sessions numbers; the FY2027 Budget column still includes Sessions.

Sessions income goal now set at less than halfway between FY24 and FY25 actual income. Elizabeth's initial estimates support a higher potential income but we hope to lower our requested fees.

Pay-As-Led "utilization" - requested by Budget Subcommittee 1/10/2025 - the aggregate amount paid *less than* Traditional Fee (among those who paid less). FY27 is necessarily a rough estimate.

Fee waivers calculated at 64 Sessions roles (volunteers/staff/speakers) with waivers, at the Limited-Income Fee each. Separate from Pay-As-Led usage, which does not include fee waiver roles in its calculation.

Sessions expenses:

Line 6110 Sessions Room & Board is where the whole site invoice goes (Castleton, UMass, Holyoke, etc).

Sessions cost estimate: From Elizabeth's "Sessions 2027 Cost Narrative"

Assumes: 490 attenders on campus & 119 online, same as 2025.

For FY26: \$135,371. Assume 5% increase to FY27: \$142,140 ... an increase of \$6,769

Other lines in 6125 Program Expenses, and other lines in the Sessions column, are round numbers based on 2025.

In 2014-2019, the Sessions budget (which does not include staff time) had an *average* actual surplus of \$31,700 each year; 2019 Sessions surplus was \$35,700

The model is that Sessions pays for *part* of the staff time needed to organize it, while unrestricted contributions cover the rest. While the proposed surplus is slightly larger than average, we believe that the change of venue combined with the higher fees realized last year can make this a realistic goal.

3:

4020 Meeting contributions for FY26 were set at a 5% (or \$17,250) increase over the \$345,000 budgeted for FY25. Actual FY25 was \$353,484, \$8,500 above goal, or \$347,250 -still above the goal - not counting one-time windfalls like a meeting laid down, lawsuit or special Equalization contributions.

This FY27 budget keeps meeting contributions at that level. Based on information MMs have given us YTD, FY26 is expected to reach \$352,100, or \$10K short of the goal.

MM Equalization: FY25= \$13,549, but of that \$3,600 was one-time from Portland

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

Alta & DeBurlo's combined expense rate is about 0.79%; if we had drawn 0.6% for FY25 it would be \$10,873. Several staff spend many days of work each year on investment-related admin work.

Total investment income actual FY25: \$66,540

Total Pooled Funds (NEYM) value 12/31/25: \$1,802,834 ... 0.6% of that: \$10,817

5: **4050 Interest Income** based on FY2025 actual.

6: **Bookstore** at Sessions, roughly based on last year's results, includes about \$500 of profit.

7: **4080 Retreat Program Fee** income: Increased relative to FY25 actual - based on plans in progress with program staff. Decreased relative to FY26 budget - because of unrealistically high goal.

8.

5000 Staff salary/benefits: Increase salaries by cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) of 1.6%, January 2026 CPI average of Boston metro (1.4%) & New England (1.8%)

Recent previous COLAs have been: FY26 3.0% (avg 12-mo 2025), FY25 2.0%, FY24 6.1%, FY23 6.3%, FY22 0.5%, FY21 2.22%. Change of position structure lowers cost considerably; but...

5033 Health Benefits (insurance) increased cost: We assumed (guessed) a rate of health insurance increase at 9%. Actual increases FY25-26 was 9.2%; FY24-25 was 10%! We have not received any forecast information from FMHG.

5070 Sabbatical returned to zero.

9. **5130 Contracted Services:** FY27 budget reduced relative to FY26 budget, to just above FY25 actuals, primarily because Archivist used less in FY25 than FY24.

10. **5140 Legal Services:** Increase by \$1000 due to anticipated increased usage.

11. 5200 Office: Office cost savings efforts ongoing, new Operations staff in FY27 will offer opportunity to re-evaluate tools. \$2000 reduction in Software probably achievable within 6-9 months.

5180 Rent (actually in 5100 Admin, not Office): consider renegotiating space use and rent cost with Worcester Meeting

5270 Printing & Copying: reduced relative to FY25 actuals because c. \$4000 of development mailings can be taken from Future Uses Fund

5280 Software/apps - about 25 of them. **Reduce by \$2000.** Example annual costs of some more expensive components: Basecamp \$450/year, Zoom \$5,800, Airtable \$3000, QuickBooks \$3,120, Slack \$880 for 12 seats, etc etc

Electronic billing and paperless recordkeeping could also reduce costs

5290 Phone - includes wifi/internet at Worcester office & cell phone (Spectrum, \$2600) + two Verizon hotspot lines (\$1400) for operations & payment processing at events.

12. 5300 Travel: Assumes management of travel expenses. 2026 is a Triennial year for FUM, usually meaning higher Reps Travel usage (so FY2027 may be lower). YM can negotiate number of reps we fund.

13. 6107 Honoraria for Volunteer Leadership ended, following the minute on laying it down.

14. 9950 Other Expense: removed the \$1000 for reserves proposed in draft 3.

Restarting **Support of Other Organizations** now would bring discernment questions for which the Finance Committee may not be suited (or ready): which organizations to fund, and how much? It may be better to minute a request for that discernment to continue.



NEW ENGLAND QUAKERS

April 17, 2026

Dear Friends (Richard, Carolyn, Benigno, Noah and Jackie),

I am writing to invite you to bring several reports, representing your valued and varied perspectives, to the upcoming May 9th Permanent Board meeting, to be held at Wellesley Friends Meeting. The dire humanitarian crisis and political turmoil in Cuba, sharpens our desire to prepare ourselves to meet this crisis in the most spiritually responsive, effective and coordinated way possible.

Many individuals and sister organizations are united in their concern for the welfare of the Cuban people, and for Cuban Friends in particular. These include, in NEYM, Puente de Amigos, and those many NEYM Friends who have traveled, in spiritual fellowship, and loving solidarity among Cuba Yearly Meeting Friends. Friends World Committee-Section of the Americas, and Friends United Meeting also have ministries of support and relationship with Cuba. It is imperative, at this time of crisis, for those in the position to do so, to coordinate our efforts so that Cuba and Cuban Friends can best be supported, and so that our ability to send material support, and intervisitation is not jeopardized by our urgency to help. Each of you, in your roles, carry unique perspectives, relationships, and senses of mission towards Cuba. I invite you to help us enlarge the group of Friends holding these concerns by sharing your wisdom, knowledge and experience with the Permanent Board on May 9th.

- I would like to begin with a report from Richard and Carolyn, the clerks of Puente, about recent activities and delegations to Cuba, the practical, and spiritual outgrowth and impacts of Puente's recent activities, and your sense of how NEYM, as a Body, can help to carry this ministry.
- Benigno Sanchez-Eppler traveled to Cuba in March and carries in his heart the most intimate understanding and connection to Cuba. Benigno is also a NEYM representative to FWCC-Section of the Americas. I invite you to share your very recent experiences among Cuban Friends, and your sense of what will best meet this time of crisis.

- Noah Bishop Merrill and Jackie Stillwell have extensive experience and insights from multiple trips to Cuba, as well as relationships with Friends holding concerns for Cuba in FWCC and FUM. Permanent Board will benefit from hearing a sense of institutional relationships, and the importance of partnership and coordination.

Though we would hope for your presence in person at the May 9th Permanent Board meeting, the meeting will be hybrid, making participation by Zoom possible if needed. Please let me know if you are willing to bring a report to the Permanent Board.

In faith,

Susan

Request to Permanent Board
May 1, 2026

Dear Friends,

I have recently been in conversation with Jim Hajjar, the Superintendent of Cemeteries of Brentwood, NH. This conversation started as an email thread including a number of Dover Quarterly Meeting's local meeting clerks, the clerk of Dover QM, and our NEYM office manager.

The cemetery committee is hoping to do the following with a local cemetery in Brentwood:

As we discussed, the goal is to allow the Trustees to properly maintain the cemetery (it is Town owned land) and assure that the wishes of the Quakers are also met. The goal would be to have a basic clean up and remove any trees that may have fallen in/on the cemetery. The local historic society also would like to put up a small sign with a QR code that would identify the Quaker Cemetery and allow visitors on South Rd to scan the code and read about the history of the Quakers in Brentwood and the Association Test at Brentwood in 1776. This is being done to highlight Brentwood stories of the American Revolution as part of the 250th celebration.

I plan to attend the upcoming cemetery meeting in Brentwood on May 7. I have visited the cemetery a number of times, it is quiet and somewhat overgrown, with a few very weathered headstones. The Dudley Family cemetery also is adjacent to the location.

This request is simply an ask for the members of the Permanent Board to be aware of the history of the area, and the tender care with which the cemetery committee hopes to keep the property tidy and remembered. The cemetery sits on town land, and there is no need for "permission" for them to maintain the property, but I have been impressed with their efforts

to amplify the complicated and extensive Quaker history of their town. **I would like the Permanent Board to minute their appreciation for their care.** See below for more detailed information!

Where is this cemetery?

Located on north side of South Rd., east of old Pheasant Farm, near entrance to Lake Rd., Brentwood NH. New Hampshire Old Graveyard Association database cemetery code B16—006

What is the basic Quaker history surrounding this area?

From the minutes of Hampton NH Meeting:

“Jan. 15, 1751, in Monthly Meeting at Hampton, now the part called Seabrook, agreed that the Friends in Brentwood be authorized to establish a meeting.” James Bean, Benjamin Scribner and Samuel Dudley are named as being there. The Brentwood Meeting existed (according to NEYM records) in Brentwood, N.H. from 1751-1756.

The meeting was visited multiple times by elders from Amesbury in its last years. The elders insisted that the meeting follow the discipline of the NEYM, or be discontinued. The meeting was discontinued by NEYM in 1756. Some members joined other meetings, others remained and started the “Discontinued Quaker Meeting” which continued to exist independently for a few more years.

In 1776, there were still Quakers in the area. Many of them refused to sign the “Association Test” and serve in the American Revolutionary war. The Brentwood historical society lifts these Friends up as an early example of civil disobedience, and following of conscience. This is the history the Daughters of The American Revolution would like to note on the sign they hope to place near the property.

There are more interesting Quaker history stories from this time and place. The discontinuation of the meeting itself is quite complicated. In addition, Samuel Bean’s son Joseph (with his wife Hannah Bean) left New England

Friends and went out firstly to Iowa YM (serving as superintendent until he was disallowed from membership there) and then became a founder of the San Jose Friends Meeting, an independent meeting. They eventually ended up as/with Hawaiian Friends. The Beans were often ostracized and not allowed membership in various Yearly Meetings due to their beliefs, and eventually ended up in membership back at Dover Meeting, NEYM before the end of their lives. I hope to document all of this further and share the stories in an upcoming NEYM newsletter and on our website. Jim Hajjar is also keen to write the history and share with the Brentwood NH Community. I will keep you all informed as I learn more!

Do local Quakers want to be involved of ownership of this property?

No. There is no leading to officially “own” the care of the property from West Epping, Gonic, or Dover Meeting. I have kept up contact throughout this process with their clerks and the clerk of Dover QM. I, of course would love to invite them to any local history talks about this!

Will there be any ongoing conversations after the clean up?

I hope so! The president of the current Daughters of the American Revolution group has been grateful for my offer to help make sure the history of the area is correct, and QR codes on their signs link to active, living Quakers in the area.

In faith and service,

Kathleen Wooten
Lawrence MM

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: May 9 2026

Planning for Sessions 2026

As previously announced, Sessions 2026 will be held at Mt. Holyoke College with the theme, "Spring forth O well and make us whole." Our plenary talk will be given by Wess Daniels and the Bible Half Hour speaker is Adria DiCapua. Please see the biographies of these exciting speakers in the May Yearly Meeting Newsletter.

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 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. Over 40 people recently attended a Quarterly Meeting Visioning Day held in Haverhill, Massachusetts. The morning was spent sharing and discussing the history and purposes of Quarterly Meetings in New England. In the afternoon there were workshops on Corporate discernment, Care for local meetings, Ministry and eldership, and Innovation and leadership. Two future ideas that emerged from our time together were: a) Create a mechanism that makes it easier for Quarters to talk to each other; and b) At Sessions, discern if there are common topics that the Quarters wish to consider throughout the following year. I would like to thank this event's planning team for making this a deep and productive gathering, including Nia Thomas, Elizabeth Hacala, Kristina Keefe-Perry, Fritz Weiss, Janet Hough, and Susan Davies.

Haitian Temporary Protected Status (TPS) -- SEEKING PB ENDORSEMENT

Mattapoisett Monthly Meeting approved a minute expressing their support for continuing TPS for Haitians who have come to the United States and for whom it is not yet safe for them to return to Haiti. This minute was considered and endorsed at the recent Sandwich Quarterly Meeting (see advanced documents). Sandwich Quarter wished to bring the minute to the Permanent Board though they did not explicitly say what they wanted the PB to do with it. After researching this issue I have found that the U.S. House of Representatives has passed a bill extending Haitian TPS for three years. The bill is now waiting for action in the Senate. In the spirit of continuing the work of the minute, I am asking the Permanent Board to endorse the action of the presiding clerk sending a letter of support for this bill to each of our New England Senators. A copy of the letter is in the advanced documents

How the yearly meeting does its work

In recent years, the yearly meeting has been evolving its use of different types of groups for different types of tasks. The three most common groups are: standing committees that do work on behalf of the yearly meeting, resource groups that help monthly and quarterly meetings work on specific areas, and working groups that typically are short-lived with very specific tasks. I encourage us to share a common understanding that the role of resource groups is to help meetings discern. When resource groups do bring proposals directly to permanent board, I encourage us to determine if it needs to go to monthly and quarterly meetings so they can discern if that is where the yearly meeting is being led. The creation of a proposal by a resource group is an excellent first step but if we are seeking deep engagement by the wider body, it seems necessary that it go out to our monthly and quarterly meetings where, if a proposal finds life, it will come to Sessions in a well-seasoned form. I don't see this as a strict rule but as an aspirational goal.

TO: Susan Davies, Clerk NEYM Permanent Board
FROM: Molly Cornell, Recording Clerk Sandwich Quarterly Meeting
DATE: May 4, 2026
RE: Mattapoissett Minute, sent by Sandwich Quarterly Meeting to Permanent Board

Dear Susan,

Thank you for your correspondence (April 30, 2026) in response to receipt of the Mattapoissett Minute, sent by Sandwich Quarterly Meeting to Permanent Board. In the interest of the need to be as clear as possible, let me first explain that my role is in service as Recording Clerk of SQM. I was asked to be “the messenger” and send along the Mattapoissett minute, with a cover letter providing some context. I can only try to express my sense of what is clear.

John Rider, member of Mattapoissett Monthly Meeting, presented the Mattapoissett minute (February 1, 2026) to Sandwich Quarterly Meeting for business on April 18, 2026. SQM was in unity that, although the minute itself was out-of-date because the court hearing to which it was addressed had been appealed, the spirit-lead substance of the minute was important and should be shared widely with Friends in some manner, with the hope that Friends would endorse the spirit of the minute and take action.

New Business: Mattapoissett Friends presented their minute of support for plaintiffs in a court case seeking to maintain Temporary Protective Status (TPS) for Haitians. The minute is dated February 1, 2026. Although the court case was eventually won in favor of the plaintiffs, and because the Administration has appealed the lower court decision, the substance of the minute remains urgent. Meeting approved sending the Mattapoissett minute, along with a cover letter providing context, to NEYM Permanent Board and Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL). Meeting also approved sending the minute to New York Yearly Meeting and Southeastern Yearly Meeting (Florida), in the hopes they will adopt or endorse it, because there are large Haitian populations in these areas.

At the same SQM meeting for business, we read and considered a Pendle Hill statement (no date) titled *Our Call to End and Reform Unjust Immigration Enforcement Practices and Laws*, which was endorsed by AFSC, FCNL, West Philadelphia Mennonite Fellowship, a few mostly-Philadelphia area Friends Meetings and 18 individuals. The call closed with the words: “We invite you to join us and other organizations in sharing this statement widely and making it your own.”

It is my (personal) sense that these two expressions, combined --- the first one focused on maintaining legal protection status for asylum seekers, the other calling for action to address the injustice of ICE enforcement practices and laws --- speak to Friends' deep concern for the need for immigration reform. It is also my (personal) sense that these two items formed the basis for SQM reaching out to NEYM with the ask: *Will NEYM take up the call for immigration reform?*

At our meeting for business on April 18th we simply ran out of time to draft a minute stating specifically what we would like Permanent Board or NEYM to do. Complicating matters was the fact that court decisions, ICE practices, bills in Congress ... all such matters are in motion or pending. Some issues are time sensitive, others are more broad. We got as far as reaching unity (1) to send the Mattapoissett minute, with an accompanying letter to provide context, to Permanent Board and FCNL, NYYM, SEYM and (2) to ask our own Meetings in Sandwich Quarter to respond to the call from the Pendle Hill statement.

On a related yet slightly different topic, I am very encouraged to hear that a Time Sensitive Statement could be sent to the Congressional delegations of each of the New England states, largely based on what is presented in the Mattapoissett minute. I don't see that there is time for back and forth, or that permission is needed from SQM [see "...with the hope that Friends would endorse the spirit of the minute *and take action*" above]. I'd say to PB— Go for it! But I may be mistaken.

To answer your question, no Friend was recorded to represent SQM or to present the Mattapoissett minute verbally at Permanent Board on May 9th. The Quarter is aware, however, that Fran Lightsom is a member of PB and plans to be present and would be available to answer questions, and could present the minute at the request of PB.

All for now-
Molly Cornell

Cc/
Kathy Olsen, John Wojtowicz, co-clerks SQM
Fran Lightsom, clerk Sandwich Monthly Meeting
John Rider, Mattapoissett Monthly Meeting

PS- I will draft a cover letter in memo form to PB asap! But not tonight...

Mattapoissett Friends
Minute from Feb. 1, 2026

26:02 Support for Maintaining TPS Status for Haitians

Based on our long-standing testimony of Equality and Peacemaking, we support the Haitian Evangelical Clergy Association and the Service Employees Internation Union Local 32BJ who are plaintiffs in a court case seeking to maintain TPS status for Haitians living in the United States.

The Mattapoissett Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) strongly opposes the removal of TPS status for Haitians currently living in the USA which may end on February 3, 2026. Our State Department warns of the widespread dangers and instability still present in Haiti due to rampant gang violence throughout that nation. Our citizens still in Haiti who are outside the embassy are told to shelter in place if they cannot leave. Warnings like Level 4 Do Not Travel -State of Emergency, due to kidnapping, crime, murder, and robbery make it of vital importance for our nation to retain TPS status for Haitians living in the USA until their nation is safe again.

The lack of essential services such as fuel, clean water, medicine, and medical care in Haiti would also threaten the safety and lives of Haitians losing their TPS status if they returned to Haiti now. Returning would likely give these individuals a death sentence. Therefore, we strongly encourage our government to maintain the TPS status for Haitians living in the USA so their lives can be spared.

To: The Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends

From: Phillip Veatch, Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting (Cambridge, MA), Clerk of Coordinating and Advisory Committee

Re: Report from C&A in preparation for the Permanent Board Meeting on May 9, 2026

1) **Action Item: request for names** - C&A has been asked in several different settings if there are guidelines for the use of artificial intelligence tools in the work of the yearly meeting. I bring it up here both to alert PB that this is an area of active interest and to ask if there are names that occur to you that we might ask to be on a working group to create AI guidelines. Please send any such names to the clerk of PB.

2) **Request for Approval** - PB recently approved a PPC (purposes, procedures, and composition) for the Indigenous Relations Resource Group. The Nominating Committee, while working on helping the former temporary working group transform into a more longer term resource group, requested that this PPC be modified to note that members of the group will serve three year terms with overlapping terms so there can be continuity within the group. Nominating can ask members of the group to serve more than one term. PB is asked to approve this minor change to the PPC.

3) **Request for Process Approval** – While working groups can be created by the PB, the creation of committees and resource groups require the approval of the yearly meeting at Sessions. This leaves a slightly gray area regarding who needs to approve new or modified PPCs for committees and resource groups. C&A suggests that PB adopt the process whereby new or modified PPCs for committees and resource groups can take effect as soon as PB has approved them but that these PPCs must come to Sessions for final approval. In other words, while PB-approved PPCs can be used, they are understood to have a temporary status until final approval at Sessions.

4) **First Reading of a PPC** – At the PB's last meeting, C&A was requested to draft a PPC for a new working group, to be called the Retrospective Justice Working Group. A draft of this PPC is in the advance documents. C&A suggests that PB consider this document now and, if it is generally acceptable, allow Nominating to begin finding names that can be approved at Sessions. Meanwhile the PPC itself will come up for PB approval at a called meeting in July. If approved at the called meeting, the PPC will be on the unity agenda at Sessions for final approval.

DRAFT 3 April 30, 2026

Israel-Palestine Resource Group Purpose, Procedures, and Composition

Purpose:

The purpose of the Israel-Palestine Resource Group (IPRG) is to serve as a resource to monthly and quarterly meetings, to help them, and the Yearly Meeting to live into the spirit of the [2017-46 minute](#), and in YM Minute 2019-36: [Requests from Northwest Quarter Concerning Gaza and the West Bank](#), addressing the Israel/Palestine conflict. IPRG will provide expertise, guidance, and accompaniment, as called upon, or offer programs to meetings on its own initiative; it may also track and periodically report to Yearly Meeting on trends and areas of need. YM Minute 2017-46 specifically charges individuals and local and quarterly meetings to:

- *Support and learn from the many organizations that bring Israelis and Palestinians together for justice and peacemaking.*
- *Examine how anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, racism, and privilege affect our understanding of the conflict.*

The IPRG offers help for meetings in their efforts to take to heart Yearly Meeting minutes of action, and to be part of the movement to bring peace with justice in Israel-Palestine. The IPRG provides resources of insight, experience, and expertise to assist individuals or groups who are led to exercise their faith publicly, through travel, in solidarity or witness, to the people of Israel and Palestine. The IPRG may assist with networking and coordination with other organizations carrying a concern for the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Procedures:

The IPRG assembles and shares links to resources on the Israel-Palestine conflict, recruits subject matter expert speakers, and offers speaker programs for local and quarterly meetings, which may be shared more widely via hybrid technology. Resource group members may visit local meetings to bring programs and facilitate meeting conversations. IPRG may sponsor book-reading discussion groups, workshops, breakout groups and sponsored conversations at YM gatherings. When the IPRG plans significant communications initiatives with meetings, Friends broadly, or the wider public a communications plan will be developed in partnership with staff and approved by the Yearly Meeting Secretary.

The IPRG brings periodic reports to Permanent Board and to YM Sessions, and is under the care of the Permanent Board.

Resource groups are reviewed by Coordinating & Advisory at least every three years, or when there is a perceived need to discern whether the work is still needed in this form, or if adjustments or further support may be appropriate.

Composition:

The IPRG consists of five to seven individuals, nominated by the YM Nominating Committee and approved by the Permanent Board. In consultation with the Committee, the clerk is named by the NEYM Nominating Committee, and approved by the Permanent Board. Members serve for staggered, 3-year terms. Friends may be appointed for a second term. The NEYM Nominating Committee appoints a shepherd to facilitate coordination and support for the resource group. For the purpose of coordinating activities, resources and recommendations pertaining to NEYM as a whole, the Yearly Meeting Presiding Clerk and the Permanent Board Clerk serve as *ex officio* members of the RG.

IPRG members may include Friends who:

- have traveled in Israel and/or Palestine, or have studied the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- carry a concern for conflict transformation and forging peaceful resolution to conflict
- have gifts or training in non-violent communication
- have the ability to listen with compassion and authenticity to conflicting perspectives, and who understand that multiple things can be true at once
- are led to help discern and support the ministry and witness of others

Grounding Documents:

- This Purpose, Procedures and Composition document, approved by Permanent Board
- A Communications Plan prior to significant or far-reaching outreach initiatives (see Procedures)

Lifespan:

Variable, with periodic, as-needed check-ins with a Nominating shepherd, and review by Coordinating and Advisory every three years (see Procedures).

Supports Provided:

The Nominating Committee provides candidates for membership; a Nominating Committee shepherd periodically checks in with the clerk and/or the full committee; the Permanent Board receives reports and is available to assist with discernment as needed; the YM Office Manager assists with maintenance of a page on neym.org, with the text of this framing document; an neym.org contact email address will be provided, if needed; meetings with

NEYM communications and program staff, as needed, to integrate communications and programmatic initiatives with wider NEYM outreach protocols; reimbursement for travel and caregiving costs during meetings and qualifying service. For more information, contact the Office at office@neym.org.

Add date of approval of the PP&C

Purpose:

The near term goal of the Retrospective Justice Working Group is to prepare the way, through historical documentation, and development of an action plan, for Friends in New England Yearly Meeting to deeply engage with our complicity in past practices of chattel slavery, and past and current oppressive actions and behaviors towards African Americans. The overarching goals are ultimately for NEYM to take meaningful steps towards healing the harm caused by the actions of NEYM Friends, and to provide a foundation to enable meaningful reflection, among Friends across NEYM, in a way that positively impacts the choices we are making today.

The historical part to this work should consider the role (arc of involvement; actions) of New England Friends in chattel slavery and systemic racism. This includes the involvement of individual Friends, and also any involvement of NEYM institutionally.

Without presuming that we (the Yearly Meeting) know what is the best approach for retrospective restorative justice, the group is charged with reaching out to affected communities to learn their understanding of what restorative justice requires, and bringing possibilities for meaningful action back to the Yearly Meeting with the recognition that effective accompaniment requires relationships.

Procedure:

The working group is under the care of the Permanent Board.

Historical Work:

- The group will review current and previous efforts towards reparations undertaken by New England Yearly Meeting and create a summary of these efforts.
- Produce a historical summary of the role of New England Friends in chattel slavery and systemic racism, including individual Friends and also any involvement of NEYM institutionally (as evidenced in our minutes, committee structures, and finances). The purpose of this summary is not an exhaustive piece of research but an overview with sufficient detail with the primary goal of making the information easily accessible to New England Friends of different ages and backgrounds.

Present Day Work:

- As modeled by the work of the NEYM Quaker Indigenous Boarding School Research Group, develop relationships that can provide understanding of desired restorative justice actions from communities affected by the actions of individuals and organizations within the yearly meeting. Such outreach might include outreach and engagement with People of Color within NEYM; African American leaders of faith communities; African American leaders of social and racial justice organizations; those who have engaged in truth and reconciliation efforts from other contexts.
- Consult with existing groups such as the Indigenous Relations Resource Group and the Black Quaker Project who have experience in similar work.

- At 2027 Sessions the group will bring a report of their work and suggestions for possible meaningful actions that the yearly meeting can take to further relationship-building with affected communities and to advance retrospective restorative justice. If the working group finds that they require more time, the report at 2027 Sessions will be an update of what they have done and a timetable for completion of their work.

Composition:

5-7 Friends who together bring a range of qualities, gifts, and experiences needed to complete this charge, including the capacity for deep listening and prayerful holding of difficult and painful conversations, and openness to the diverse perspectives and experiences present in local meetings. Familiarity with a variety of approaches to anti-racism, restorative justice and reparations. Those with gifts or skills in historical research. Commitment to meeting Friends where they are, and supporting further discernment. Skills in making presentations, communication, and resource sharing. Friends who are actively engaged in building relationships with BIPOC communities and organizations.

Members will be nominated by the Permanent Board clerk in consultation with the Nominating Committee and approved by the Permanent Board.

Plan for Laying Down of Working Group

It is hoped that the working group will be able to complete their work and present their findings to Sessions in 2027 with the recognition that they may request an additional year before presenting their final report. The group will be laid down after delivering their final report to Permanent Board and Sessions, with the expectation that ongoing work of engagement with monthly and quarterly meetings will be accomplished by appointment of a resource group to carry the work forward.

Alan Eccleston

August 30, 1935 - May 14, 2025

A leading may become clear in a way that leads to action. In being faithful to the leading one may be an example to others and this may become a Ministry. We may experience disquiet about something that is troubling us. This could be Spirit's call to be open and go deeper into the disquiet. In doing that, we may sense a call to act rising up. Our meeting can help us find clarity. It is important that throughout the process we stay close to the root of love, responding to a leading's inherent invitation to us and extending that invitation to others to join as they may be led.

Alan Eccleston

Alan Eccleston died peacefully on May 14, 2025 at Hospice of the Fisher Home, just a few months shy of his 90th birthday.

Alan's life was a model of living faithfully. He had the ability to recognize the glimmer of a spiritual leading, and the patience and wisdom to take time to explore and season it, both inwardly and with the assistance of others, until the way forward was clear to him. Having discerned a direction, he followed that path faithfully and courageously. He measured his successes by how well he followed spiritual guidance rather than by traditional standards.

Alan was born in Hamilton, New York to DeEtta and Clifford Eccleston. After high school he entered a combined program at St. Lawrence University and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, receiving a degree in Architectural Engineering. After six months in New York City working for Turner Construction Company, Alan went on active military duty for two years as an ROTC second lieutenant. His assignment with a unit in Chun Chon, Korea, very near the DMZ, influenced his later transition to pacifism. Alan next worked for USAID where he oversaw construction of self-help housing and community-built rural schools, serving in Nicaragua, Panama, and Washington, D.C.

Upon completion of an MBA at Harvard Business School in 1964, Alan worked on building low-income housing for the Development Corporation of America in Boston. He then moved to Columbus, Indiana to work for J. Erwin Miller who served on President Lyndon Johnson's Committee for Urban Housing. Alan's efforts there contributed to the creation of Section 8 Affordable Housing with the passage of the 1970 Housing Act.

In 1972, Alan moved to Lexington, Massachusetts and started his own company to build well-planned, high-quality housing. After finishing an award-winning condominium project in New London, New Hampshire in 1980, he moved to Hadley, Massachusetts and focused on house design. His eye for beauty influenced his architecture, gorgeous gardens and flower arrangements and years of service on Mt Toby's Grounds Committee. He loved to garden and spend time outdoors. His artful flower beds accented and extended the beauty of the home he designed and shared with his wife Linda Harris, whom he married in 1995 under the care of Mt Toby. Taking walks surrounded by flowers brought him joy through his final days.

At age 53, Alan enrolled in the Organizational Development program at UMass, receiving his doctorate in 1991. He built a successful consulting practice emphasizing teamwork, leadership, and organizational effectiveness. After consulting with a group of progressive business people and educators focused on improving regional schools, Alan was hired as the first Executive Director of the Regional Education and Business Alliance.

Alan's unwavering pacifist spirit was exemplified by his leading to resist paying taxes that supported wars and killing. Alan served as Chair of the U.S. Peace Tax Fund, dedicating several years to promoting the Peace Tax Fund Bill, including testifying before Congress, so that we might all someday have a legal option to redirect the military portion of our tax dollars to peaceful initiatives instead.

After joining Acton Meeting in 1975, Alan transferred to Friends Meeting Cambridge and a couple of years later, in the early 1980s, moved his membership to Mt Toby. His gifts were quickly recognized and he served as Clerk of the Meeting from 1986 to 1988. Alan's quiet strength, wisdom and humble deep spirit anchored Mt Toby Quaker Meeting, his spiritual home. His vocal ministry grounded worship and invited us closer to God. Ever a seeker, his mentoring of individuals or the Meeting as a whole was mutual, inviting all into deeper meaning, understanding, faith and action. He was both intelligent and wise, considering the overall systemic whole while also attending to fine details and connections.

For Alan, faith and action were two essential parts of a whole. For many years, meeting monthly as part of a Quaker men's group sharing experiences and insights, Alan revealed how his Quaker faith shaped how he lived his life. Alan ably guided Woolman Hill Quaker Retreat Center through a transition period in the mid-1980s during his three-year service as Director. He was nearly always active on Mt Toby committees. His spiritual gifts especially blessed and guided the work of the Ministry & Worship committee on which he served multiple times. He skillfully led discussion groups - both planned and as invitations to impromptu worship sharing at the rise of worship when he sensed there was a need. He often set up letter writing tables after meeting, engaging Friends in that simple action toward making the world better, healthier, more just. Testing leadings in community and accountability were valued practices for Alan. For over a decade, his mutual spiritual accountability group provided a steady grounding and benefited from his insightful questions and love. He faithfully requested clearness committees for himself when discerning a new leading and served frequently as a valued clearness committee member for others. Through such connections, he saw and drew out our gifts, encouraged our engagement on committees and nurtured faithfulness among us.

Alan would sometimes invite others to join him in actions for social justice. In 1990, Alan and others started an Alternatives to Violence Program in the Osborn maximum-security prison in Somers, Connecticut, offering weekend trainings and engaging and mentoring new trainers there for the next 20 years. Carrying a concern for climate issues, he helped establish Mt Toby's Climate Witness Committee in 2013 and served as clerk until 2024. In that role, Alan coordinated an enormous project of installing a solar array and converting the meetinghouse to mini-splits for heating and cooling to reduce Mt Toby's carbon footprint. From a strong spiritual leading Alan launched the Voluntary Carbon Tax Witness program, welcoming participation of Friends from other meetings as well, resulting in thousands of dollars going to efforts countering

climate change. Through patient dedication - starting by quietly handing out queries at the entrance to the dining hall during yearly meeting sessions - Alan's efforts helped raise awareness and shift priorities among Quakers across New England, in addressing the urgency of climate change.

A competitive athlete, Alan was an avid skier and played tennis until 3 years before he died. Alan was a loving husband, caring father to Duncan and Heather "Cricket" and grandfather of four. He was a trusted friend and valued spiritual mentor who led by the example of his actions and moral strength. He was attentive to when a leading had come to an end and was ready to be laid down. He faced his death, clear to voluntarily stop eating and drinking, with the same courageous faithfulness by which he lived.

Approved by Mount Toby Friends Meeting April 12, 2026

Accepted by Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting on May 2, 2026

Frank Gatti

January 13, 1939 -September 2, 2024

Frank Michael Gatti of Amherst, died on September 2, 2024, after a four-month battle with kidney disease.

Frank was born on January 13, 1939, in Paterson, NJ to the late Michael and Esther Gatti. He graduated from Clifton High School, where he was involved in the school band, bowling club, and wrestling team. He graduated from Columbia University in 1959, having served in the marching and concert bands, and as the varsity wrestling manager. While at Columbia, he met his first wife, Bonnie Munro; they had four children together.

Planning a career in medicine, Frank received his M.D. from Northwestern University in Chicago in 1963 followed by a two- year pediatrics internship and a two-year general psychiatry residency at Upstate Medical Center, Syracuse, NY, and finally a residency in child psychiatry at Beth Israel Hospital, Boston. While in Syracuse, Frank became active in the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), traveling to Mississippi in August 1965 to assist with voter registration efforts during a period of high racial tensions.

The Vietnam War was at its peak in 1968 when Frank finished his medical training and began military service at Newport Naval Station, treating, as he described it, “emotionally traumatized Marines returned to the United States just days after being directly in the field of combat.”

Having this firsthand experience with the results of the horrors of war, and its disproportionate impact on a number of people of color, Frank became involved with the Peace Movement. In 1969, he started a bookstore in Newport that was a gathering place for anti-war activists. It was also during these years that he began the affiliation with Friends that would endure for more than 50 years.

Following his military service, Frank returned to Boston in 1970 and spent the next two decades working in community health as a child psychiatrist in Cambridge. He worked at Columbia Point Community Health center in Dorchester, Child Guidance Center in Cambridge, and Whitman Counseling Center and South Coves Community Health Center in Chinatown. While working in Cambridge, he met and married his second wife, Phoebe Sessions. They had one child.

In 1991, Frank moved to Amherst, MA to lecture and train residents at University of Massachusetts Medical School, while working in local clinics. He notably served as the

chief child psychiatrist at Worcester's Children's Friend Mental Health Clinic and in clinics in Westfield.

In 1997, Frank married Eleanor Manire. Early on in their relationship he shared with Ellie his dream of someday attending seminary, and almost immediately she produced applications for both of them; Ellie received her M. Div. degree from Newton Andover Seminary in 2005, and Frank his M. A. from Hartford Seminary in 2006. He remained devoted to Ellie -- into her development of dementia -- until his death.

Frank's M. A. Thesis, "Spirituality in the Practice of Child Psychiatry" reveals a mind and spirit at home both with modern biologically based medicine and spiritual/religious practice. In summary his thesis is a recommendation that the prevalent biomedical/biosychosocial perspective in psychiatry needs to be broadened to include a spiritual component.

Consistent with the views expressed in his thesis, he rejected what he saw as the insurance-generated "15-minute medication check," which he viewed as a barrier to quality child psychiatry. His goal was to have a meaningful impact on children and families, by attending to cultural, social and spiritual factors as well as internal family systems. Frank preferred working in community clinics and took special pride in his work in Worcester, where his tenure was the longest. Frank loved his work and only retired under the duress of Covid and the increasing difficulty of managing computer-based medical records.

Throughout his years of involvement with Mt. Toby Friends, Frank consistently demonstrated commitment and compassion. He was an active participant in Care and Counsel, support and clearness committees, and other meeting groups and committees. Thoughtful and gentle, Frank consistently made himself accessible and responsive to everyone and to needs that arose.

He informally brought his professional wisdom as a child psychiatrist to families at Mt Toby Meeting. Frank warmly engaged with families by hosting gatherings, organizing outings, and creating welcoming spaces, such as apple-picking events. His empathetic and non-judgmental approach provided comfort and support to parents, offering genuine guidance and attentive care whenever needed. An example of the kind of reassuring statement he would make: "Sometimes you just have to muddle through the challenges and that's okay."

Frank was an important member of the "Parenting with Spirit" group that met at Mt Toby in the late 90s. In this group families met to support each other in the quest to bring

spiritual wisdom to everyday parenting actions. All participants felt Frank's calm, loving presence as he held the group. During parent discussions, he gently asked questions and made useful observations without giving advice or making judgements. He connected with the children during group play times, offering a safe container and affirming words.

Frank shared his lifelong love of music with family and friends, as well as hosting a radio show on the local WMUA station that included music selections along with topical political discussions. He also traveled extensively, returning home to share new and broader perspectives on China, Cuba, Togo, Zimbabwe, Iran, Costa Rica, and Europe. He toured mental health facilities in Cuba and was in one of the first groups of Westerners allowed to visit China after the cultural revolution.

Eleanor Manire-Gatti, Frank's wife of 24 years, passed away on January 6, 2025. Frank is survived by his sons Michael Gatti of Honolulu and Daniel Gatti of Arlington, and his daughters Beth Gatti of Northampton and Jillian Yurko of Chelmsford. He was also the beloved stepfather of Aaron Manire of Mt Vernon, NH, and Kerry Taylor of Amherst. Frank will be sorely missed by his children, six grandchildren, and six step grandchildren. He was predeceased by his daughter Jane Rodman in 1995.

Frank will be remembered for his kindness, intellectual curiosity, humor, and professional devotion to the well-being of children and families, as well as his spiritual strength and community activism.

Approved by Mount Toby Friends Meeting April 12, 2026

Accepted by Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting on May 2, 2026

Janet Inez Snover Hoffman

November 6, 1939 - October 10, 2024

Jan, although not named as such, was a public Friend. She was an integral part of Mt. Toby Monthly Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, and the wider Quaker world. We remember her for her unwavering attention to faithfulness. We remember her for her strength and her vulnerability. We remember Jan for her wisdom and nurture; for the way she fostered connections and shared her understanding of Quaker process. Jan's unrelenting faithfulness created a channel where God's energy could flow through her, like a riverbed, where water flows in the channel because the space is prepared. While we may miss Jan's physical presence, the channel Jan carved continues to carry the living water.

Jan was born in Philadelphia, Pa., to Martha and Harold Snover. After graduating from Interboro High School, she studied at Wooster College in Ohio, where she majored in French literature, sang in the chorus, and met future husband Ken. This is where Jan and Ken came to Quakerism. Jan went on to get a master's in French literature from Tufts University. She taught French and Ken taught math at Talladega College in Alabama, where in the 1960s, they and others founded an integrated kindergarten so that daughters Mika and Jennie would not have to attend a segregated institution.

The family moved to Amherst, Mass., in 1970 and became part of Mt Toby Friends Meeting in Leverett. Jan worked at the Common School, first as a French teacher and later as librarian after developing a novel library cataloging system using shapes and colors that was more amenable to use by actual children. Jan's love of children's books continued unabated for the rest of her life.

Jan's ministry to the worldwide body of Friends was extensive. Although Jan sometimes felt a wavering in her ability to feel God's presence in her own life, the grace of God flowing through her was evident to members of Mount Toby Monthly Meeting, who benefited from her steady, faithful presence and service; to members of New England Yearly Meeting, who benefited from her exemplary service as yearly meeting clerk from 1984-1987; and to Friends beyond the yearly meeting. Passionate about Quaker business process, Jan began her journey of clerking at Mt Toby on several committees and as meeting clerk. Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting was enriched by her clerking for many years. Her love of children flowed into service as Coordinator of Junior Yearly Meeting, and workshops with Young Friends. Her gifts were further exercised clerking YM Ministry and Counsel, Permanent Board, Personnel Committee, Executive Council, Christian Education Committee and her longtime dedicated clerking of the Faith and Practice Revision Committee. Jan passed along this wealth of experience through teaching Clerking workshops. At Mt Toby, until her death, Jan kept track of us statistically through service as Recorder and spiritually through her final term on Ministry and Worship committee.

More widely, Jan served as a Friend in Residence at Oakwood School in New York and in 1993 with Ken at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in England, where she also gave workshops at several meetings. As a delegate from NEYM to the 5th World Conference of Friends, held in the Netherlands in 1991, Jan gained insight into the lives and challenges of Friends in developing countries and was inspired by cross-cultural conversations. An avid reader and writer, Jan published many talks and articles in Friends publications and served as clerk of Quakers Uniting in Publications, an international organization of Quaker publishers, distributors and authors. Her pamphlet on *Cleanness Committees and Their Use in Personal Discernment* is a much used resource. Jan's service in the late 1980s as Friends General Conference keynote speaker (*To Listen, to Minister, to Witness*), reading clerk of Friends United Meeting, participation in Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns gatherings, travel with Friends World Committee for Consultation and meeting diverse Friends while traveling—all in the same time period—exemplifies Jan's breadth of heart. *Wanted: Dead or Alive*, the theme of a 2007 Easter Retreat at Pendle Hill led Jan to the realization that God wants to/can use us dead or alive. We still bask in the continuing ripples of God's use of Jan.

Jan's ministry extended far beyond structural roles. She traveled widely as a speaker and workshop and retreat leader, as well as accompanying others as an incisive elder. Friends meetings, schools, Quaker retreat centers, yearly meetings and wider Quaker organizations from New England to across the US and internationally, sought her spiritual wisdom and grew closer to God from her messages. She had particular concerns for spiritual discernment, same-gender marriage, books of Faith and Practice, and the relationship of minister and elder. Friends found her 1993 Bible Half Hours at NEYM and Easter retreat weekends insightful and inspiring. Her vulnerability was part of her faithfulness when speaking. She rarely spoke from a prepared text, often waking in the night to write down "anchor threads" for the next day. She relied upon elders before, during, and after speaking, for support and also protection from "the adversary" that she felt after her ministry. Jan's concluding question for herself was always, "was I faithful?"

Jan's ministry included documents. She had an enormous collection of printed resources, and she was generous in sharing photocopies. They regularly appeared in specially decorated envelopes, memorable to any who received correspondence from her. She herself was a searcher and, as a librarian, was like a living encyclopedia—embodying our history, faith and practices. She was our go-to person for questions about our history, Quaker process, and spiritual discernment, both corporate and personal. We were initially lost when she and Ken died—without their memories, deep knowledge, and steady guidance.

Jan had a gift for making opportunities for individual prayer and counsel. She met with spiritual friends, with companions in the work of ministry, and with individuals in her meeting and those encountered in her travels. These opportunities were, in the deepest

way, mutual: a source of strength and nurture for Jan and occasions for mentoring, accountability, and care for others. Sometimes these opportunities were openings for her private ministry to and with abuse survivors. Jan's life was a witness that a broken vessel can still be an instrument of grace.

Because Jan was a survivor and experienced a presence she came to call "the adversary," she relied on various spiritual tools. Many of these were gifts. From a prayer shawl that offered covering protection, to stuffed animals that provided comfort and absorbed pain, to a prayer based on a bible verse. She used the structure of the liturgical calendar and held Advent and Lent as stabilizing practices. Art was also an important spiritual tool and her Oversight of Ministry committee was critical. She carried a hazelnut with Julian of Norwich's reminder that *"It lasts and ever shall, for God loves it. And so have all things their beginning by the love of God. In this little thing I saw three properties. The first is that God made it. The second that God loves it. And the third, that God keeps it."*

Early spiritual practices included her work as a beloved elder for Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns and through the years practices included periodic retreats for discernment and renewal. St. Scholastica Priory in Petersham was a sanctuary for Jan. She had a prayer room in her house and aspired to taking prayer time each day, often writing in a prayer journal. She held people in prayer, sending "swish prayers" throughout the day, and lived in the understanding that prayer is not limited by time or space. She also had a practice of creating "illuminations," where she brought meaningful text to life with illustrations, sizing, and order. Jan's regular practices prepared her for worship. At Mt. Toby, she arrived early and as her seat faced the door, she knew who was present, and her presence provided an anchoring force. Jan's vocal ministry carried power and deepened our worship. We learned from Jan that our practices create the path by which we live.

Jan's enduring passions included trains, tea, children's books, weeding, Chagall, Proust, Faulkner, and postage stamps. She had an amazing ability to connect with all kinds of people because of her own complexity, genuine curiosity and respect. She knew how to find joy in small things as well—ironed napkins, wingprints in the snow, coordinated colors, artfully arranged food on her lunch plate, and the perfect slice of baguette and cheese.

Jan gave her life to God. She felt God through others, and shared God through her work in Quakerism. Jan is in God now. *(and she is safe)*.

Approved by Mount Toby Friends Meeting April 12, 2026

Accepted by Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting on May 2, 2026

Kenneth Raymond Hoffman
March 2, 1941 to October 17, 2024

Ken Hoffman was a beloved part of the Mt Toby community for more than 50 years. We never felt any wavering in his love, care, and commitment. We remember him for the joy he found in life, learning, and reflection. We remember Ken for his lightness and his solidness. We remember Ken for his service to our community. We remember him for his unbiased application of process. When Ken died unexpectedly of a heart attack, exactly one week after Jan, his wife of 63 years died, the Meeting struggled to fill the space.

Ken was born in Pontiac MI to Stan and Mary Hoffman. His early years were spent both as a member of a privileged class and as a minority in Canton, China, where his parents worked as medical missionaries, and on the Navajo Reservation in Tuba City, Arizona. He grew up aware of intercultural interactions and power dynamics. He attended the College of Wooster, where he met Jan, who became his lifelong partner. This is where they came to Quakerism. After graduation, Ken went on to pursue a doctorate in mathematics at Harvard University, but never finished his dissertation because he felt that there were more interesting things to do in life and he was uncomfortable with external signifiers of status. They moved to Alabama to teach. There they helped found an integrated kindergarten and were engaged in civil rights struggles. In 1970, the family (Ken, Jan, and their daughters Mika and Jennie) moved to Amherst, MA, where they lived in the farmhouse of an old dairy farm, surrounded by woods and fields - where he planted an amazing variety of native and non-native trees - along the Fort River.

Ken was a founding faculty member of Hampshire College and taught there for 43 years. Like Quakerism, Hampshire College fit him because he could be more of his full self, teaching courses outside of his formal discipline and exploring learning in ways that let people be themselves; judged on actions not privilege.

Ken and Jan arrived and departed Mt Toby meeting together. Each offered unique strengths and depth to the life of the meeting. They were unique and different individuals – to the point that more than one newcomer expressed surprise to learn they were a couple. Yet they were not independent. They gave each other much and drew much power from their relationship although they struggled, separately and together, with what it meant to be faithful to their leadings and to each other. The meeting benefited from the ways their gifts complemented each other. As one Friend put it, “What would Jan say and what would Ken do?” Jan, a gifted minister, had messages often rooted in the liturgical year, while Ken’s rare messages, when they rose, were rooted in experience and the natural world. Sitting in their customary seats on the angled benches across the front of the meeting room from each other, they could seem quite literally to be pillars of the meeting as a worshipping community.

Ken took his sense of obligation as an invitation, not as a burden. In addition to serving as Clerk and Recording Clerk of Mt. Toby Meeting, Ken served over the years on the Fellowship

and Hospitality, Young Friends, Meetinghouse, Gay and Lesbian Concerns, Grounds, Handbook, Nominating, Childcare, and Land Use committees, and was the Plantings Keeper, Newsletter Editor, and Email minder for one or multiple terms. He participated in meeting groups, such as Friendly Eights and supported Friends with their Committee work. Ken also served as NEYM Treasurer for several years. At the time of his death he managed the newsletter distribution, the meeting directory, the Zoom account, and served on the finance committee.

Ken was a vibrant thinker and questioner. In Friendly Eights discussions he could be counted on to come up with an unexpected, often challenging, angle on the subject. But his spirituality was expressed in doing, not saying. Perhaps the most remembered example of his emphasis on doing was his decision not to become, formally, a member of the meeting. He requested a clearness committee for his decision on membership. Meeting was central to his life. There was never a question of his devotion to the community, but what mattered to him was the thoughtful consideration of the question, and the practice of commitment to the community. For Ken, membership was superficially symbolic; he was committed to individuals, not institutions. We remember him in this query for prospective members: "Has the person thoughtfully considered their relationship to the meeting, and are they committed to it?"

Ken's service was grounded and generous and everywhere in the life of the meeting. His faithful participation in monthly meeting for business was an expression of his commitment. He served as clerk and recording clerk, and helped others to do the same, with careful, loving, relentless pursuit of integrity. He insisted that our procedures should be strictly and conscientiously followed because he understood that lovingly established processes could prevent unnecessary conflict and hierarchies that distract us from listening to Spirit. He was concerned that minutes be simple and clear; that they should not attempt to capture the ineffable qualities of the meeting for business as a form of worship. In addition to the informal arboretum that he tended in his family's back field, he planted and nurtured particular trees on the meetinghouse grounds. As the plantings keeper for over 20 years, Ken put into practice Nelson Henderson's pithy observation that "the true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit." He planted and nurtured and mapped memorial trees in honor of past members of the Mt Toby community. In this work, he reminded us that Spirit is present in relationships across species boundaries and through time. At Jan's burial, he spoke of the trees by name, and said they gave him comfort. When a memorial Bur Oak tree was diseased and had to be removed, Ken wrote an announcement to the meeting that shared the science of the pathogen and honored the life of the former member. He informed us that he had germinated some of the acorns and hoped to replant a sapling at the Meetinghouse.

The natural world brought him joy. Ken, outdoors, was childlike in his wonder. Hikes with Ken were often diverted into intriguing sidetracks. His eyes were such that he often needed to stop and bend down or hold something very close in order to observe it well. This habit on hikes revealed his attention to the world around him. He was a deeply knowledgeable,

scientific naturalist, but the natural world always offered him a new and miraculous experience. And he wanted to share it. He especially loved trees, and enjoyed the personalities of different plants, standing up even for the most maligned, like the poison sumac that he planted in his yard.

Ken's pursuit of integrity, in his own life and in the life of the meeting, was loving and relentless. He needed to experience life, to feel joy, and not shirk difficulty. This spilled over into his expectations of how things should be done, which sometimes was a challenge to Jan and others in his sphere.

Ken's life was an example that taught us much about how to be a Friend. His advice to incoming clerks was to do what they were led to do and have fun. We continue to live by his example.

Approved by Mount Toby Friends Meeting
March 15, 2026

Accepted by Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting on May 2, 2026

Kate Kerman

Kathryn “Kate” Hammer Kerman was born on April 16th, 1949, in the top-secret town of Los Alamos, New Mexico, which did not show up on any map until years later. She left us on July 28th, 2025 in Keene, NH, surrounded by family in her final hours. She was a Quaker, farmer, educator, writer, an exceptional friend, wife, mother, grandmother, sister, a fierce advocate for children and non-violent conflict resolution.

She grew up on a 10-acre farm just outside Madison, Wisconsin. Her parents, Hilda Knight Hammer and Preston Clarence Hammer were unconventional, and promoted an atmosphere of open-mindedness, tolerance and intellectualism. Around age 13 she took a catechism class in a local church, but refused to be confirmed because she could not wholeheartedly believe in the creed she was expected to recite.

Her family moved to State College, Pennsylvania just before her senior year in high school. She was accepted at Kalamazoo College in Michigan, and when she arrived there in the fall of 1967 she took a folk dancing class for Physical Education credit. There she met Ed Kerman, who’d taken the class the year before and was assisting the instructor.

She began attending the Quaker Meeting in Kalamazoo with Ed. “I basically became a Quaker the first time I walked in,” she said. “I’ve never thought of myself as anything else since I liked their approach to life”. She dropped out of college in the spring of 1969, deciding to take hold of her own education and learn what she wanted without worrying about grades.

Later that year while Ed was out of the country, his mother, Cynthia, had a car accident and Kate moved to Ann Arbor to care for her. She attended Ann Arbor Friends Meeting, which at that time was anchored by strong women, including Elise Boulding, Mabel Hamm and Margaret Blood. Kate said to Ed “I want to be part of a group like this, where women grow old in their strength, rather than being pushed aside in their weakness.”

Kate and Ed were married in 1970 at Friends Lake Community and moved to Chicago for a year and a half. When their first child, Ada, was born in Fremont, Michigan in 1972, Kate realized she wanted to get a teaching degree so she could legally home-school her children. She got that degree from Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, MI in 1977. As a follower of John Holt’s philosophy of unschooling and a pioneer of home-schooling she published three pamphlets and several articles about it.

In 1983 the family, now including Hannah (1976), and Jesse, (1979), moved to Pennsylvania. Kate studied Quaker history, produced indexes for the songbook “Rise Up

Singing” and learned Therapeutic Touch, an energy healing technique, from the Institute for Therapeutic Touch and Integrated Modalities. Five years later they moved to New Hampshire, following Ada to The Meeting School, an alternative Quaker boarding school. Kate and Ed became house parents at the school, where Kate was the head of the Mathematics Department. She taught many classes including Conflict Resolution and Spiritual Autobiography, and she influenced a new generation of young people, and everyone around her.

The family moved in 1996 to a 29-acre farm in Marlborough, NH and Kate became a leader among Small and Beginning Farmers of New Hampshire. She focused on supporting and training women farmers, and ran classes in Holistic Management, a systems thinking approach that was developed for grazing management. She continued her practice of mediation by joining Cheshire Mediation, and launched the peer mediation program at Keene High School.

She supported teenagers in New England Yearly Meeting by volunteering at Young Friends retreats. She earned a Master’s degree from Lesley University, MA in 2007 to support her conflict resolution work. In recent years she put a lot of attention into connecting with the Koasek band of the Abenaki nation, taking classes in the Abenaki language and attending Pow Wows. She organized an Abenaki program in September 2024 for the Northwest Quarterly Meeting retreat, to introduce Quakers to their local Indigenous neighbors.

For Monadnock Quaker Meeting she served on Ministry and Counsel, and Adult Religious Education committees, kept the Directory up to date, and was the Recorder, keeping track of important changes in the lives of members. From 1999 she organized and facilitated Stillness Retreats four times a year, offering members and friends a weekend of blessed silence.

Kate leaves behind her husband, Ed, of 55 years; also three children, two grandchildren, two sisters and two brothers, as well as a vast network of extended family, beloved friends, colleagues, and former students, who will miss her warmth, wisdom and hearty laugh, and her no-nonsense approach to life.

Kate was a deeply spiritual person. To sit in worship with her was to enter a place where her solid presence helped gather the silence. Her attention was profound, both in prayer and in silent worship. One Friend said “her spiritual presence changed me, and everyone around her”. She was a great teacher and an amazing mentor; she seeded empathy and understanding. One former student spoke of her classes in Therapeutic Touch as “learning how to understand ourselves” and “a foundational point in my life.” Another said that as a young person under her care, “she could hold anything with love, and add

lightness”, no matter how difficult the situation. A member of the Abenaki tribe thanked her and her family for reaching out to them, sharing friendship, and building community.

Her “Celebration of life” on November 8, 2025 at Monadnock Meeting, opened with a song that she helped write, based on words from a letter by Fra Giovanni in 1513:

There is nothing I can give you which you need and haven't got
But there is much that you can take for your own.
Take heaven, take peace and joy.
Take peace and joy and heaven.

The song ends with the prayer that Kate lived:

So I greet you with the prayer that for you now and ever more,
The day breaks joyous and the shadows flee away.
Take joy, take heavenly peace,
Take peace and joy and heaven.

Approved 3/1/26 Northwest Quarterly Meeting

NWQM 20260301-5 Memorial Minute for Kathryn “Kate” Kerman

The minute was considered in worship and accepted by the Quarterly Meeting with gratitude for Kate's life and for the minute's words in bringing it to us.

Hartford Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Memorial Minute for Don Noel

November 27, 1931 – June 30, 2025

Don Noel was a man of his words: from journalism in middle school through a long career in newspapers and TV broadcasting, with a book and short stories added at the end of a long life.

Don was exposed to Quakerism from childhood. His mother, a convinced Quaker, took him to Matinicock Meeting while living in Long Island and Montclair Meeting when they lived in West Orange NJ where he graduated from public high school. He also attended Farm and Wilderness Camp in Vermont for two summers. He turned down a ROTC Scholarship to Stanford University's Journalism School in favor of Deep Springs Junior College in California, whose philosophy aimed to instill character and a commitment to public service, including labor on a cattle ranch, enforcing the testimonies of community and stewardship.

He graduated from Cornell where he met Brad Foulds at a meeting of young Quakers. After their marriage in 1953, Don registered as a conscientious objector and they accepted a 2-year assignment with AFSC In Tokyo to coordinate summer workcamps. A 6-month backpacking trip home through Asia and Europe, covering over 2 dozen countries, confirmed their commitment to the testimonies of peace, equality, integrity and simplicity. They later returned to Europe with their children (Emily, 1958, and Ken, 1960) in 1966 while Don studied the economics of river rights.

After moving to Hartford, Don began as a reporter for The Hartford Times in 1958 where he would become editor in 1974. After building a house in New Hartford based on Japanese ideas of simplicity, the Noels moved into an integrated neighborhood in Hartford in 1964 where they lived for 5 decades, sending their children Emily and Ken to public schools. He later served the community on the Blue Hills Civic Association and as chairman of the ACLU.

At the Hartford Times, Don was honored to win a Pulitzer special citation for a 40-page historical, sociological and anecdotal tabloid section on The Negro in Hartford. After resigning from the Times over a policy dispute with the conservative publisher, he became a Senior WFSB TV editorial correspondent hosting "Noel's Notebook" and "Face the State," where he was well-known for his colorful boutonnieres! He then returned to print as The Hartford Courant op-ed political columnist until his retirement in 1997. In a tribute, then US Senator Christopher Dodd wrote "Don was an old-school reporter in the truest and best sense of the term... he felt that part of his role as a journalist was to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."

Don and Brad were enriched by their long association with Hartford Monthly Meeting, where they made life-long friends and served on many committees. Don helped organize speakers in the Turn Towards Peace Program, and later counseled conscientious objectors during the Vietnam war. They made many bicycle and camping trips with friends from Hartford to

Tanglewood Music Festivals in Massachusetts, followed a full schedule of music and culture in Hartford, and found much pleasure in gardening, while allowing quality time for their family and their grandson, who paid loving tribute to the impact of his grandfather's legacy at his memorial service.

His self-published book, *Near a Far Sea*, is a memoir about building a beachfront rental house in Jamaica. After moving to Seabury Retirement Community, where Brad died in 2019, he earned an MFA from Fairfield University at age 86, and continued a prolific output of short stories, rounding out a full literary life.

Approved by Hartford Monthly Meeting November, 2025

Accepted by Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting on May 2, 2026

Richard Schmitt Memorial Minute

Richard Schmitt died on January 13th, 2024 at the age of 96. Born in 1927 in Frankfurt, Germany to a Jewish mother, he and his mother survived the Holocaust in Holland at a Quaker boarding school in a rural area and came to the US in 1946. He was a professor of philosophy at Brown University and was designated professor emeritus upon retirement. At Brown, his irreverence toward authority and his expertise in Marxism made him a pillar of student-led organizing in the 1960s. He became an adjunct professor at Worcester State College in 2001 (later Worcester State University). Richard felt that the students at the state college were more open to ideas and deep discussions than the Ivy League students at Brown.

Social justice and activism were integral parts of Richard's life. Over the course of decades, he was devoted to and immersed in global movements for pacifism, feminism, racial justice, and indigenous sovereignty. The author of many books and articles on philosophy and politics, he was endlessly curious about people and ideas, and he approached the dilemmas he encountered in the world with humor, skepticism, and a resistance to oversimplified answers. His sense of humor was refined and subtle, often having the effect of sinking in and making people laugh upon reflection.

In retirement, he trained and became active as a community mediator in the Worcester court system, as well as teaching at several local colleges. He loved being a member of the Worcester Friends Meeting (Quakers), where he was co-clerk of the Peace and Social Concerns Committee and was instrumental in starting the Facing Race reading group at Worcester Friends, motivated by his indignation at the deaths of several unarmed Black men. That group continues to this day.

Richard was involved in the training for prison visitation with the Alternatives to Violence (AVP) program. He and his partner Lucy Candib contributed to and volunteered with the local COSECHA group, a nonviolent movement fighting for permanent protection, dignity, and respect for all undocumented immigrants in the United States.

He was cherished and beloved by his community, and made many friends, across generations and geographies. His commitment to feminism extended to

his role as a spouse and a father, through which he lived his belief that raising children and doing housework should be shared responsibilities. He loved parties, especially as a means to build community through shared food and conversation.

Richard was physically fit even in his final years. His vitality belied his age and he often took on tasks that were surprising, showing a fearlessness that could be alarming to those around him.

He will be dearly missed by Lucy Candib, of Worcester, MA, by his daughters, Addie Candib and her partner Max Morange, of Bellingham, WA, and Hannah Schmitt and her partner Emily Shinada, of Chatham, NY and New York City, and by one grandson, Anatole Candib, not to mention the Worcester Friends Meeting and anyone who knew him as a teacher, a colleague, an activist, or a friend.

Approved, Worcester Friends Meeting, January 11, 2026,

Tom Brenner, Karen Sargent, co-clerk

Endorsed, Southeast Quarterly Meeting, March 15, 2026,

Elizabeth H. Hansen, clerk

La Verne Maria Shelton (LVM)

May 23rd, 1945 - February 15th, 2025

La Verne Maria Shelton, known to us as LVM, was a well-known Friend, with roots in multiple Monthly and Yearly Meetings, Pendle Hill, and Friends General Conference. She was revered for her spiritual insight and eldering, her work to transcend racism, her poetry and music, and her search for Truth and Love. She often spoke truth to power. At her memorial, a dear Friend shared the analogy that LVM was like a bright jagged Light. She was a woman of great complexity: a brilliant black woman philosopher in a field dominated by white men, a rare BIPOC Friend in a society of largely white Quakers, a talented musician and poet, and a seeker of Truth.

La Verne Maria Shelton was born in Louisville, Kentucky on May 23, 1945, the third child of Forest Nathaniel Shelton and Agnes Priscilla Woolridge Shelton, in a family not too many generations from slavery, amidst Jim Crow laws, and in a city deeply ingrained with racism. All her life, she carried pain from her own past and current experiences of racism, and part of her life's work was to mobilize those around her to examine the racism embedded in all of our lives, our internal racism, as well as in all of our society. She was stalwart in raising issues of white privilege and white supremacy through the Friends General Conference Committee for Ministry on Racism, the New England Yearly Meeting Noticing Patterns Working Group, through workshops at the Friends General Conference Gathering, and locally through challenges to vocabulary, creation of workshops, and suggestions on making declarations. LVM was a mentor and champion to the BIPOC pre-Gathering of Friends of Color. In 2018 she occupied the Vermont Statehouse as part of the revival of the Poor People's Campaign and was arrested.

LVM believed in searching for the Truth, both through logic and through spirituality. A powerful intellect, La Verne was one of a handful of the first black women philosophers, with a doctorate in philosophy. Later a masters degree in social work led to work with people labeled mentally ill. In the Quaker world, she was both a student and then a Friend in Residence at Pendle Hill - returning often for workshops and Zoom worship during COVID and beyond, regularly gave well-attended workshops at the Friends General Conference Gatherings, and served on the Friends General Conference Central Committee. She was a valued elder at the Faithfulness Group Trainings led by her friend Marcelle Martin for New England Yearly Meeting. She wrote articles and poetry which appeared in *Friends Journal*, as well as books of poetry and a memoir.

LVM centered her life in the Spirit. She sought out spaces of worship throughout the week: finding or creating midweek meetings; traveling for extended worship opportunities; and in her own daily meditation practice. With Zoom came the opportunities to join in on daily Meetings for Worship at Pendle Hill or meet with her New England Yearly Meeting Home Group. Some of her beautiful poetry arose from her spiritual experiences. LVM loved to worship outside, and said she had learned to incorporate any distractions into her worship, rather than blocking them out, at a

Madison street corner worship. At New England Yearly Meeting, she often served as an elder holding a Yearly Meeting business session in the Light. At the local meeting she would hold the speaker sharing her spiritual journey with deep non-judgmental listening. LVM was drawn to mentoring, especially youth, and created some deep and long-lasting friendships in that way. At the local level, as a Ministry and Counsel member, she took seriously the charge to tend to the spiritual health of the Meeting, suggesting programs and leading discussions. She also created a midweek group called Holy Experiment, modeled after such a midweek group in Greene Street Meeting (in Philadelphia), which drew in new people.

LVM moved to Vermont for the last decade of her life following a sense of leading. She did not worry about why, saying the calling was enough. Though LVM moved away from her previous spiritual centers, she kept in touch with dear Friends at Madison, Greene Street, and Pendle Hill. Every year she would travel eight hours through winter weather to play carols with the Greene Street Meeting or set forth on a long journey to attend workshops at Pendle Hill. She played her viola da gamba and recorders, sang in choruses, and then played hymns every Sunday at Plainfield, music being an essential connection to the Divine for her. She became a member of Plainfield Meeting and a frequent attender of the Burlington Midweek Worship Group, and later Burlington Meeting. Struggling through COVID, and its acute isolation, was deeply depressing, as must have been her awareness that her cancer of years ago had reoccurred. A very private person, she kept her illness quiet, parrying concerns from others who saw her fading. In time, falls led to emergency care, and then loving hospitality from two Friends who had been long time spiritual companions, followed by a peaceful and beautiful place of respite. This space was ordered, free from pain, and her many friends could text and visit and she could once again share worship and friendship. When it came time, LVM accepted death, ready to see what was next.

LVM's presence was that of a bright, jagged light. Journeying with her was not always easy, yet the inspiration of her friendships, her calls to action, the spiritual depth of her daily spiritual practice, and her call toward transcendent love will long continue.

Approved September 21, 2025
at Meeting for Business
Plainfield Friends Meeting
Plainfield, Vermont

Approved 12/07/25

NWQM 20251207-3: Memorial Minute for La Verne Maria ("LVM") Shelton

Friends approved and expressed appreciation for this excellently written tribute of a rich and inspiring life.

Northwest Quarterly Meeting

Alan Roy Tschetter
Memorial Minute

March 5, 1947 - September 15, 2024

Alan Tschetter was a man with extraordinary curiosity and a tenacious pursuit of spiritual understanding. He was truly a seeker.

Alan Roy Tschetter was born March 5th, 1947, in Mountain Lake, Minnesota. He was the oldest boy and fifth child in a family of eleven, raised in a religiously conservative and strict household. Alan grew up in Indiana and attended Purdue University. A conscientious objector during the Vietnam War, he joined the Brotherhood of the Spirit/Renaissance Community in Turners Falls toward the end of his service period.

Alan met his daughter's mother while still a part of that community. They both joined the Quaker Meeting in Amesbury, Massachusetts after their daughter Alethea's birth. Following his divorce, Alan moved to Phoenix, Arizona, and then to Chicago, Illinois, where he was a member of Northside Friends Meeting. When Alan eventually moved back to western Massachusetts, he became a member of Mt Toby Friends Meeting in 2007.

Alan possessed a powerful intelligence and was capable of careful logical analysis; he loved mathematics, speed chess, and worked as a computer programmer. Early in his adult years he learned that he had Multiple Sclerosis (MS), beginning a decades long journey of gradually diminishing physical ability. Upon learning of his diagnosis, one friend recalled that Alan saw the bright side: that he could more fully devote himself to contemplation and study.

A constant source of pithy spiritual and philosophical quotes, Alan was continuously interested in asking the right question as much as getting to an answer. His incisive, insistent questions and observations were deeply valued by those around him. In the sharing period after midweek worship, Alan would often lob out a pointed query or a random non sequitur, which without fail would lead to a far-ranging and nuanced conversation, exploring the depths of spiritual inquiry. More often than not, the exploration would be punctuated by laughter.

Alan had a keen, open mind and a fierce curiosity as he explored the mystery of life, and an articulate, sometimes intimidating intelligence which he shared freely with us. He often spoke of living with "radical acceptance" as a path to peace of mind. Radical acceptance is mindful, open and non-judgmental awareness of what is happening, without resistance, attachment, blame, complaint or shame.

Alan was a committed participant in many different communities of seekers throughout his life. He remained active within Re-evaluation Counseling everywhere he lived. Upon returning to western Massachusetts, Alan re-connected with other former members of the Renaissance Community and attended a weekly Saturday meditation with a dedicated group of them for many years.

For an extended period, he was also part of a weekly gathering that explored readings from *A Course in Miracles* and other spiritual works, and shared spirited discourse on their spiritual journeys. Alan was always an active, intense and deeply thoughtful participant and valued part of the group.

He attended Mt. Toby Friends Meeting and the midweek meeting at Woolman Hill regularly even as his health declined. Many recall knowing of his arrival at meeting by the sound of his crutches and later his motorized wheelchair. While he rarely gave vocal ministry, he often arrived early and settled into his familiar corner, creating a steady presence throughout worship. Afterward, he would wheel into the fellowship room, always ready to engage in meaty discussion.

Later in his life, he regularly attended Death Cafes. Alan believed it was important to discuss and recognize our mortality. He often talked of the afterlife, reincarnation, and his final wishes. Alan was very clear about his: he wished to be cremated, his ashes scattered in an ocean, and he asked that his website (www.alantschetter.com) serve as his memorial. In typical Alan fashion, his website leads with a question: If truth were a democracy, what kind of God would YOU vote for?

Mount Toby Friends are grateful for the deep dedication of Alan's daughter Alethea in the final years of her father's life and recognize that it took a significant toll on her.

Alan died Sunday morning, September 15th, 2024 at his home in Pelham, MA. A memorial meeting was held at Mt Toby Friends Meeting on November 9, 2024. Alan lived with radical acceptance, courage and dignity through a life of increasing challenge and adversity. He was and is an inspiration to all of us.

Approved by Mount Toby Meeting
November 9, 2025

Accepted by Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting on May 2, 2026

Memorial Minute
William Walkauskas
3/6/1949 - 1/22/2025
New Haven (CT) Friends Meeting

Bill was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania as one of six children, three boys and three girls. As a young child, Bill was accidentally hit on the head with a lead pipe, causing a seizure disorder that prohibited him from enjoying a typical childhood. He began elementary school at six years old. By high school most of his medical issues were resolved. He was able to play football as a front lineman.

Unfortunately, this was at a time when concussions were not well understood and over the course of high school Bill suffered several concussions. His grades and sportsmanship caught the attention of Yale University recruiters, and he played junior varsity his first year.

Bill's catholic working-class background and life experiences were in conflict with the extremely wealthy lifestyles he saw at Yale. Bill left in his sophomore year and started organizing unions at his workplaces. Eventually, after years of working at Toad Place in New Haven and with his proven ability to manage adults with difficulties behaving peacefully in multiple settings, Bill was offered a position working as a paraprofessional with older teens and young adults in the severe communications and behavioral disorders unit at Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES).

Bill met Sharon Ellsworth during the time they both worked at ACES. Over time friendship became romance and they married in November 1986. With marriage came the decision to seek a place of worship that aligned with their strong social justice beliefs and the need to offer an appropriate belief structure for Sharon's children. The family visited a number of congregations. Everyone decided to try New Haven Friends Meeting for 3 months. This became lifelong affiliations for Bill and Sharon. Bill helped Sharon raise her children, Leah and Jesse. Later they brought their granddaughters, Winter and Raven to Meeting who were attenders into high school years.

Bill abhorred violence and didn't like arguments or squabbles. He had a passion for social justice, human rights and union activities. Having found a religious home with New Haven Friends and New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM), Bill had a forum in which to actualize his faith. Bill often rose to share vocal ministry.

He was Clerk of New Haven Friends Meeting and active on many committees. One Friend remembered Bill as a gentle giant: warm and quiet but very funny, and a compassionate partner in difficult work. He also volunteered with two programs that grew out of leadings in this community: Haven's Harvest and Friends Center for Children (FCfC). Bill's foresight in early conversations about Friends Center for Children was followed by service on its Board of Directors and volunteering in the childcare center. A teacher at FCfC shared how delightful it was to see this large man, lying on the floor letting infants and toddlers climb and tumble over

him. During a meeting when Friends Center's Quaker Dimension Committee was working on an "explainer" about Quaker values, Bill, a staunch pacifist, suggested that we not refer to the above type of list as "bullets."

He served on several NEYM committees: Personnel (2007-10), Nominating (2011-14) and Permanent Board (2014-22). Bill rarely missed the lengthy Meetings for Business at Sessions and sat in the most comfortable front row. One friend remembered, "sitting near Bill, I could see the Word, the Work of the Spirit in him. How he would quietly grapple with the Seed planted, nurturing it, letting it take root and grow until, finally flowering, he felt ready to stand, and with passion, let the Spirit through vocal ministry pour forth."

With Bill's increased difficulty due to lifelong psoriatic arthritis and increasing memory impairment, Bill and Sharon moved to Maine in August 2024 where their daughter was able to help in Bill's care. Bill was diagnosed with cancer in September 2024 and died five months later at Sussman Hospice in Camden ME. NHFM held the memorial meeting for Bill on September 27, 2025.

Approved by New Haven Friends Meeting April, 2026

Accepted by Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting on May 2, 2026

Diana White Memorial Minute

April 22, 1951 – May 4, 2023

Diana White was a convicted, not a convinced, Friend who had a thirst for justice. Among Friends, Diana was known for her insightful, clear and sometimes stubborn observations, and for her wicked trenchant wit. She had a sharp mind, a powerful presence and substantive opinions. When she suffered deep physical and emotional pain, she responded by deepening her practice as healer to others. Again and again she worked to center her life on God. During her last days, Diana was clear that the most important thing she was experiencing was a profound and unexpected spiritual opening and learning about the interconnectedness of all. She felt accompanied into the unknown by Divine companions.

Diana was born April 22, 1951, in Paterson, N.J., the daughter of Alfred E. and Velma M. (MacLean) White and died with dignity in her daughter Jen's home on May 4, 2023 in Fayette, Maine after a four year journey with pancreatic cancer. Born into a staunch religious family, she was baptized twice, and grew up winning badges for her memorization of Scripture passages. Her father died when she was in her teens. Both her parents were union organizers and champions of civil rights. She was raised as an activist and a patriot. She in turn became a nurse, teacher and organizer. When Diana became a mother, she instilled her passion in her children, cultivating this multi-generational ideology.

Diana became familiar with Friends in Princeton, NJ and started attending Farmington, ME Meeting regularly in the 1990's. "I found Quaker thought and practice consistent with my sense of justice and activism.... Let your life speak and speak your truth."

Diana was the mother of two children, Jennifer Delker and Dylan Anderson. She taught nursing at Kennebec Community College, the University of Maine at Farmington and Fort Kent. Her pedagogy was rooted not only in a desire to craft the intellect of her students, but also in a greater vision of education as the most tangible path towards peace and liberation for a society. The teacher was not merely a disseminator of information, but a peacemaker. Many of Diana's students became lifelong friends. Teaching was so much a part of her that when she entered hospice she reached out to explore how to educate others about hospice.

She also worked as a union activist, lobbyist and organizer. Her work on behalf of Maine workers' health and safety resulted in some of the strongest laws in the country and served as the model for the federal "right to know" laws about workplace chemicals, commonly known as Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). Diana ran for public office in Maine three times, and achieved a "perfect record, 0 for 3."

At the peak of her career, she experienced a clear and compelling call to move to Alabama and teach at Tuskegee University in Alabama. In Alabama she primarily taught African American and

African students. She was enfolded into the Black community, and was inducted into Epsilon Chapter of CHI ETA PHI Sorority, Inc., a black women's sorority. Members of CHI ETA PHI attended and contributed to her memorial meeting. She maintained her Quaker membership in the Atlanta Monthly Meeting. Her experience in Alabama informed the book, *The Heartlessness of Dixie*, that she co-authored, published in 2016.

Before moving to Alabama Diana faithfully served her local Meetings, her Quarter and the Yearly Meeting. For the Yearly Meeting, she served as a recording clerk and as the first female treasurer of the Yearly Meeting and on both the finance committee and permanent board. She also clerked the Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy.

In 2019, faced with significant health issues, she returned to Maine where she was an active member of Portland and later Durham Meetings, regularly participating in the life of both meetings. She was a faithful attender in daily worship at Portland and in the bi-monthly Meetings for Healing.

She said of her life of living Quaker testimonies, “I was the witness. I was there, in Alabama, to witness. Change occurs in our society when many people work to make that happen. It is important that we witness, name the injustices we see, and stand with those who are burdened by injustice. We witness and we show respect, over and over and over again. ‘Until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.’”

Approved by Portland Friends Meeting and Durham Friends Meeting

November, 2025

Falmouth Quarter 4/25/26

Hal White

February 20, 1929 - January 7, 2025

Harold (Hal) White lived a life illuminated by spirit, from age 8 when he became aware that ‘something goes on inside a thinking or living, breathing person that one might call a religious, or spiritual, or inner experience,’ to age 95 when, at the end of his life, he reflected ‘It’s been wild! It’s been beautiful . . . but wild.’ Hal was a treasured part of the Wellesley, Monadnock, and Mount Toby Monthly Meetings, and active in New England Yearly Meeting. He died January 7, 2025, from complications following hip surgery after a fall in his Amherst home.

Born February 20, 1929, Hal grew up throughout the U.S. West and Midwest. Although his was not a churchgoing family, he was influenced by his maternal grandfather’s religious conviction. This grandfather and other relatives were Evangelical Friends – in fact, one of Hal’s uncles was a Quaker preacher. Hal found meaning and community with the Christian mission Young Life. As a teen, he met Charlotte (Char) Ann Hagy at Young Life summer camp. They reconnected while both studied at Wheaton College in Illinois. Char wasn’t sure she had a chance with Hal, but she took a risk and knitted him an argyle tie and put it in his mailbox. Hal saw that as permission to ask her out. The rest is history – they wed after graduating and remained married for 70 years.

Spirituality remained central to Hal’s life and work. After graduating from Northern Baptist Seminary, he joined the Young Life staff in Spokane, Washington. However, the Christianity he embraced as a young man came to disquiet him, and he eventually left Young Life. In 1960, Hal, Char, and their children moved to Needham, Massachusetts. Hal pursued graduate studies in American Literature at Boston University, while working and continuing to seek a spiritual home. Although they visited several churches, Hal remained restless until he and Char stepped into Wellesley Friends Meeting in 1969. Inspired by the peace testimony of Friends during the tumult of the 1960s, they decided to visit a Quaker meeting. They didn’t know what to expect from an unprogrammed meeting; although Hal had relatives who were Evangelical Friends, he did not know anything about minister-less Quaker meetings. But at this unprogrammed meeting, they immediately knew that they had found their place. Hal described the feeling with his favorite quote, from Saint Augustine: *‘You have made us for yourself, and we are restless until we find our rest in thee.’*

Wellesley Meeting became the center of his and his family’s life. Most notably, Hal and Char were the live-in caretakers of the Wellesley meetinghouse for 13 years (1978-1991), during which time their three children were in college. Living at the meetinghouse meant cooking meals in the shared kitchen downstairs (the apartment didn’t have its own kitchen) and spending each Saturday cleaning. Hal served as Clerk twice, and on numerous committees including Ministry and Counsel. He also led a Quakerism 101 course several times. In the wider Quaker world, Hal served on the New England Yearly Meeting Permanent Board, Moses Brown School and China Camp committees. The Wellesley Meeting community was also the hub of his social life; the family formed many lifelong friendships there.

Hal also delighted in books, bicycling, and family. Hal taught American Literature at Mass Bay Community College for 28 years. After retirement in 1992, he continued his work among books at Borders Bookstore. He often bicycled to work, and he and his then-teenaged son Matt shared the adventure of bicycling from Boston to Montreal. Hal and Char had three children: Connie, Paula, and Matt. Connie and Paula both attended a Quaker school, Westtown School, for their high school education.

After moving to New Hampshire to live with their daughter Paula in 2005, Hal and Char joined the Monadnock Quaker Meeting. They then finally settled in Amherst, Massachusetts to live near (and then with) their daughter Connie in 2012 and joined Mount Toby Monthly Meeting. At Mount Toby, Hal reflected on his spiritual journey and served on the Fellowship & Hospitality, Ministry & Worship, and Library Committees.

Hal is survived by his daughters Connie (husband Greg) and Paula, and grandsons Thaddeus, Everett, Lucas, and Dana. His son Matthew (wife Elizabeth) died in 2021, and Char died a few months after Hal, on July 18, 2025. He will be remembered with love by his family, friends, and the Quaker communities to which he contributed so much care.

Approved by Mount Toby Friends Meeting April 12, 2026

Accepted by Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting on May 2, 2026

2026 NEYM Visits to Oklahoma Tribes – compilation

by Mary Zwirner, Suzanna Schell and Gordon Bugbee

#1 6 March, Perkins – Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma (Báxoje)

“I felt tears forming in the corners of my eyes as we sat with the six members of the Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma Business Committee.” We were impressed that they had decided that they would all be there to hear what we had to say. We had not expected more than the Chairman, Jake Keyes, and 2 or 3 others.

The meeting came about because of a call Mary and Gordon received a year ago after returning from their last trip to Oklahoma. Iowa elder Linda BigSoldier called and asked if we were still in Oklahoma and expressed an interest in meeting. They had a brief conversation and they assured her they would be back and would be in touch to schedule a visit.

We wrote to Linda BigSoldier in February when we were informing the Tribes and Nations of our intention to visit again this year. We were delighted when we got a call from her looking to schedule a meeting between us and the Tribe’s Chairman. We were encouraged and excited that our trip would begin with this meeting.

Mary, Suzanna, and I discussed how we might introduce ourselves and the reasons for our visit. Several things seemed important. We needed to convey our sincerity and openness, and to offer context for our visit. We also needed to be clear that, in our minds, this was about them not us. Gordon was especially mindful of the missteps he made in his very first conversation last year. Beginnings are so important.

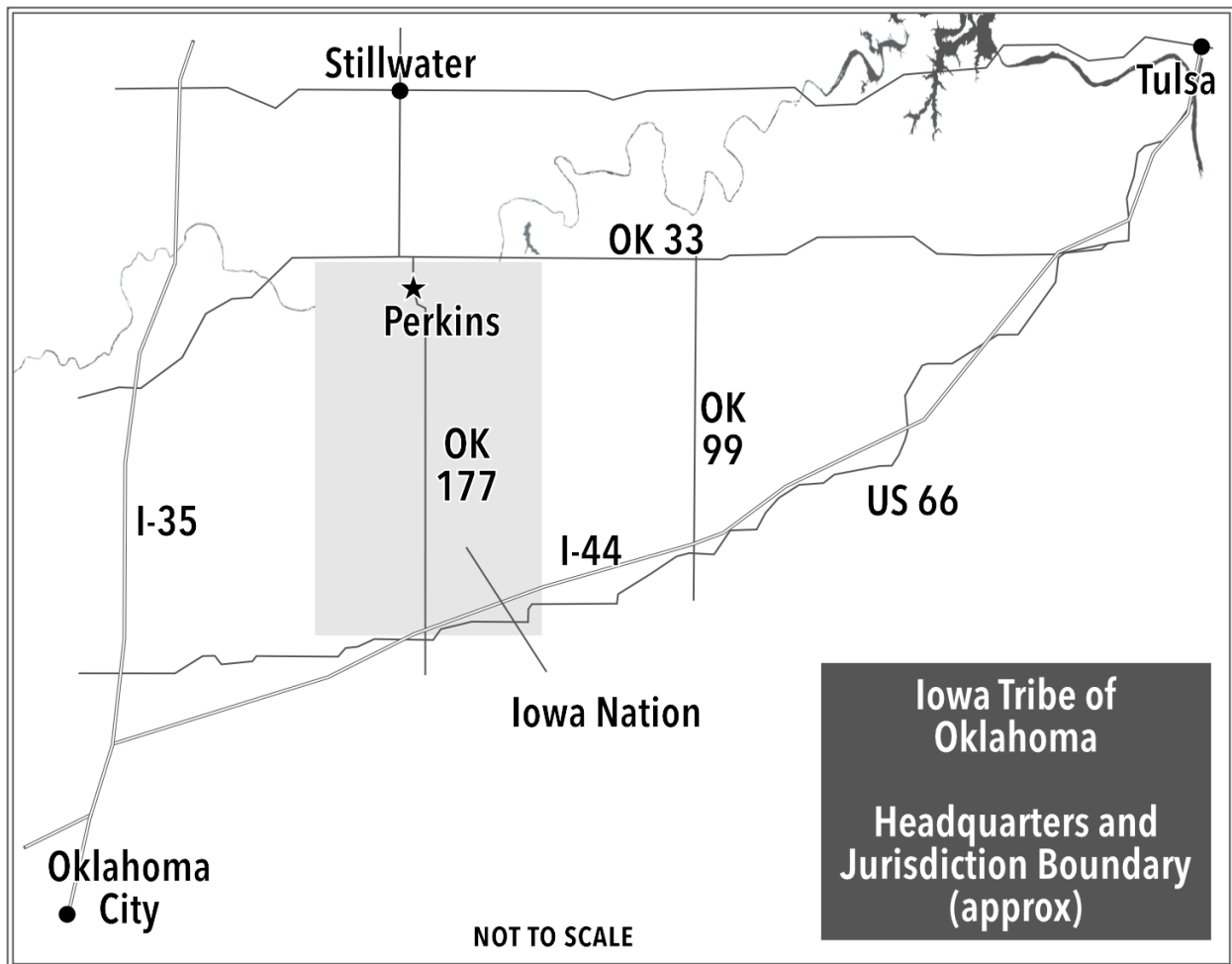
We began by expressing our gratitude for the honor of meeting with the Tribal leadership and our deep regret for the harms that followed our ancestors well-intentioned efforts in the nineteenth century. We also shared our hope that New England Friends might be of help in the work of repair and healing that many Tribes have undertaken. We emphasized that we had come to listen, not talk.

One by one, beginning with the Chairman, the Committee members expressed their gratitude for our visit, for our apology, and for our acknowledgement of the painful history. Each added their own comments about the particular issues the Iowa are facing, the importance of recognizing the whole history AND moving on. The youngest committee member shared his skepticism and reluctance to be at the meeting but but said he found our persistence to be compelling. That we returned to Oklahoma for a third time meant a lot.

The conversation that followed was heartfelt and deeply centered. We expanded on the history of NEYM’s concerns and the expanding focus that came as we began to understand the scope of our involvement as teachers, missionaries, and agents. They talked about the Tribes’s efforts to reclaim and pass on their culture and language and the stories of their ancestors. Several opportunities for collaboration were mentioned. They also expressed interest in the research findings of the NEYM QIBS research group.

As the meeting came to an end, we shared the gifts we brought, a Pendleton blanket for the Chairman, and bundles containing Maine blueberry jelly, sea shells, birch bark, and a small bag of tobacco for the other Committee members. We finished with a group photo, the exchange of contact information, and a mutual commitment to meet again.





#2 7 March, Perkins - Grey Snow Eagle House

Large plastic tubs, stacked 3 or 4 high, line two walls of the room. They are filled with the molted feathers of bald and golden eagles that have been brought to the Grey Snow Eagle House for rehabilitation or long term care. The birds have been injured in one way or another. As the ‘only creatures to have seen the Creator’ they are sacred to the Ioway.

Over the twenty years since its founding, the staff of the center have rehabilitated and released 50 eagles back to the wild. Others, too severely hurt to be released, will live out their days in peace, relatively, eagles are noisy, and dignified.

Established in 2006, the Grey Snow Eagle House was the first of a growing network of eagle sanctuaries operated by Native people. U. S. laws prohibit non-Native people from holding eagles or their feathers unless specifically permitted. The molted feathers may be



2026 NEYM Visits to Oklahoma Tribes – compilation

given to Iowa Tribal members or to other Tribes for regalia or ceremonial purposes.

The young committee member we met with earlier, and the rehab center's director, a zoologist and member of the Choctaw Nation, were our guides. Both have worked there since they were teenagers and seemed to feel a deep sense of pride and honor at being caretakers of these amazing birds.

The birds are large and commanding, fit for their role as the ones who carry our prayers to Creator. To protect the eagles and maintain a quiet and respectful atmosphere, visits are restricted. We were deeply honored to be given a tour.

Lunch at the Tribe's nearby casino with two of the Ioway elders gave us an opportunity to become better acquainted. They shared more of their experiences and history and expanded on some of the points they had made earlier. The flashing lights and frequent bells and chirps of the slot machines and the intermittent power failure did not detract from the rich conversation we shared. Deeply rooted in that place and anchored by their entwined faith, christian and Native, we would have been glad to sit with them for hours.

Their openness to sharing themselves was beyond anything we had expected, and left us feeling hopeful about deepening connections between New England Friends and the Ioway people.

#3 8 March, Hominy - Worshipping with Friends

It would be hard to imagine a warmer welcome. The pastor was just finishing his Sunday School lesson when we arrived at Hominy Friends Meeting. Several folks Mary and Gordon met when they visited last year greeted us and enthusiastically acknowledged our return. Further conversation would have to wait as the Meeting for Worship was already a little late in starting.

Helping them move the folding chairs, Gordon, remembered doing the same thing in his childhood church in Revere, MA, and was struck by how familiar the space felt – the dark stained wainscotting, the embossed tin ceiling, the simple pews with hymnal racks on the back, the piano (in need of tuning). Churches and houses of worship from a certain period all seem to have been made from the same set of building 'specs.' Besides the slow-cooker in the kitchen and the cellphone set-up for streaming the service, there was little the Osage elders who built the church in the early 1900s would not recognize.



But this place is not just connected to the past or that spot on the map. One member, who grew up in the area but lives in California, was back to check on the family home, another is a retired oilfield worker whose job it was to fix broken drilling equipment. Others work in child welfare and childcare. The pastor, David Nagle, has served on the boards of AFSC and FCNL and has recently joined the board of Friends Publishing. He is also connected to Earlham where his parents were librarians and to Olney Friends School where he studied biology with Marian Baker. The congregation is deeply connected to the Osage Tribe, some of the

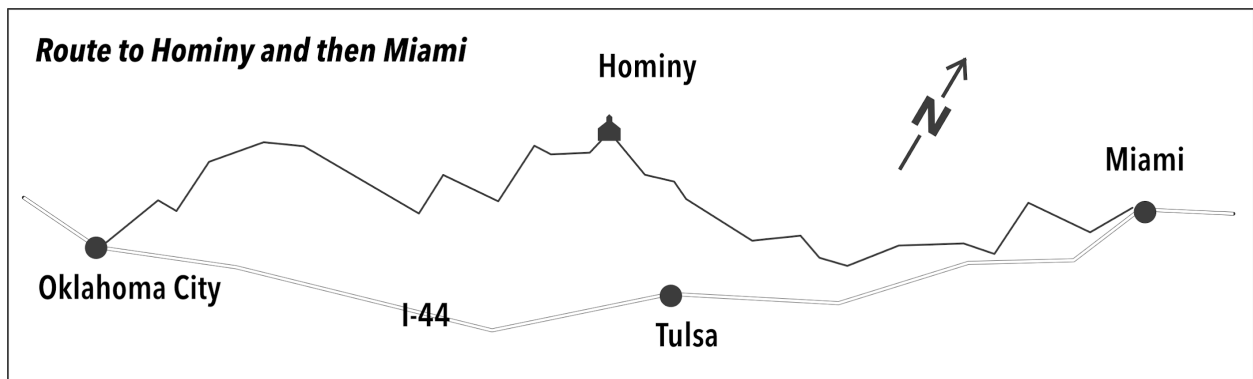
2026 NEYM Visits to Oklahoma Tribes – compilation

songs and prayers were said in Osage, and in the hollow behind the church is a large covered dance pavillion and numerous small arbors where families can gather during stomps and powwows.

After the service, that included a forceful sermon on the Samaritan woman and the meaning of ‘living water’, the celebration of several birthdays, and a deeply-centered period of open worship, we were treated to their monthly potluck and the opportunity to talk with folks and hear about what is going on for them. We didn’t discuss boarding schools or the historical trauma that plagues all of the Tribes. We chatted as friends and acquaintances about children and grandchildren, about certain unsingable hymns, and the recent fierce very changeable weather.

We will be back next year.

photo - Mary Zwirner, Suzanna Schell and Gordon Bugbee (with Pastor David Nagle)



#4 9 March, Picher – Tar Creek

The most disturbing scene of the trip has been the abandoned homes and mountains of “chat,” toxic tailings from mining, that cover one part of northeast Oklahoma.

Huge deposits of lead and zinc were discovered in northeastern Oklahoma, southeastern Kansas, and the adjoining area in Missouri in the late nineteenth century. Mining interests descended on the area and secured title or leases from the Quapaw people and other Native Tribes who live there. The same kinds of exploitation and manipulation that characterized the Osage oil boom hit the small towns of Picher and Cardin and the surrounding area. Enormous amounts of ore were brought up from underground. Crushed and smelted, the lead and zinc were taken away by railroad (much of it for ammunition used by the U. S. during World Wars 1 and 2) and huge piles of gravel and fine particles, contaminated by toxic, heavy metals, were left. They are so large, you can see them from miles away. The soil and groundwater soon was polluted and the land was literally undermined and began to collapse. Tar Creek, that flows through the towns and into the Spring and Neosho Rivers, turned orange and the fish died.



In the 1980s, the Environmental protection Agency (EPA) made expensive but unsuccessful attempts to mitigate the damage. In the early 2000s, those efforts were ended, and, what had been declared a Superfund site, was condemned. Residents were bought out. No one was satisfied.

We found the whole thing surreal.

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The Quapaw Nation refused to give up its land, again, and took over responsibility for clean-up and restoration. Working with University of Oklahoma scientists and local activists and using natural processes and bio-remediation, the Quapaw are working to restore the water and heal the land.

Tar Creek is another example of Native people asserting their sovereignty and applying traditional wisdom and values to make something good out of a very difficult situation.

It is work that will take decades.



(Tar Creek photo by Ian Maule, *Tulsa World*)

#5 9 March, Miami - Myaamia Ribbonwork

Made of many layers of carefully-cut silk ribbon, held in place by countless, practically invisible, tiny, hand stitches, this panel was one of two that decorated a pair of leggings. These would be worn with comparably elaborate skirts, shirts or blouses, and blankets. Several family members would work for months (or longer) to produce regalia like this. Care was taken in layering the ribbons to create the effect of “shimmering” when the wearer danced in the light. Being properly outfitted for important occasions was a sign of the regard in which an individual was held.

The disruption of families and communities that came about through relocation and allotment made it increasingly difficult to create this kind of collaborative effort. The skills and the knowledge required has nearly been lost.

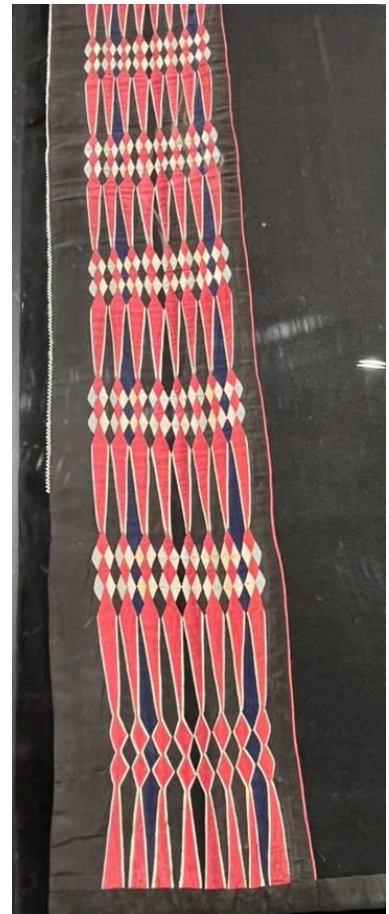
We were struck by the ingenuity and adaptability of the Myaamia artisans who recognized the possibilities created when trade with europeans introduced silk ribbons. It seemed to us an instance of incorporation into an existing tradition, rather than assimilation to foreign methods.

Walking through an exhibit of ribbonwork in the Myaamia Heritage Center and Archive we found ourselves marvelling at the ignorance and arrogance of those who labelled people who could produce this kind artwork ‘primitive savages’.

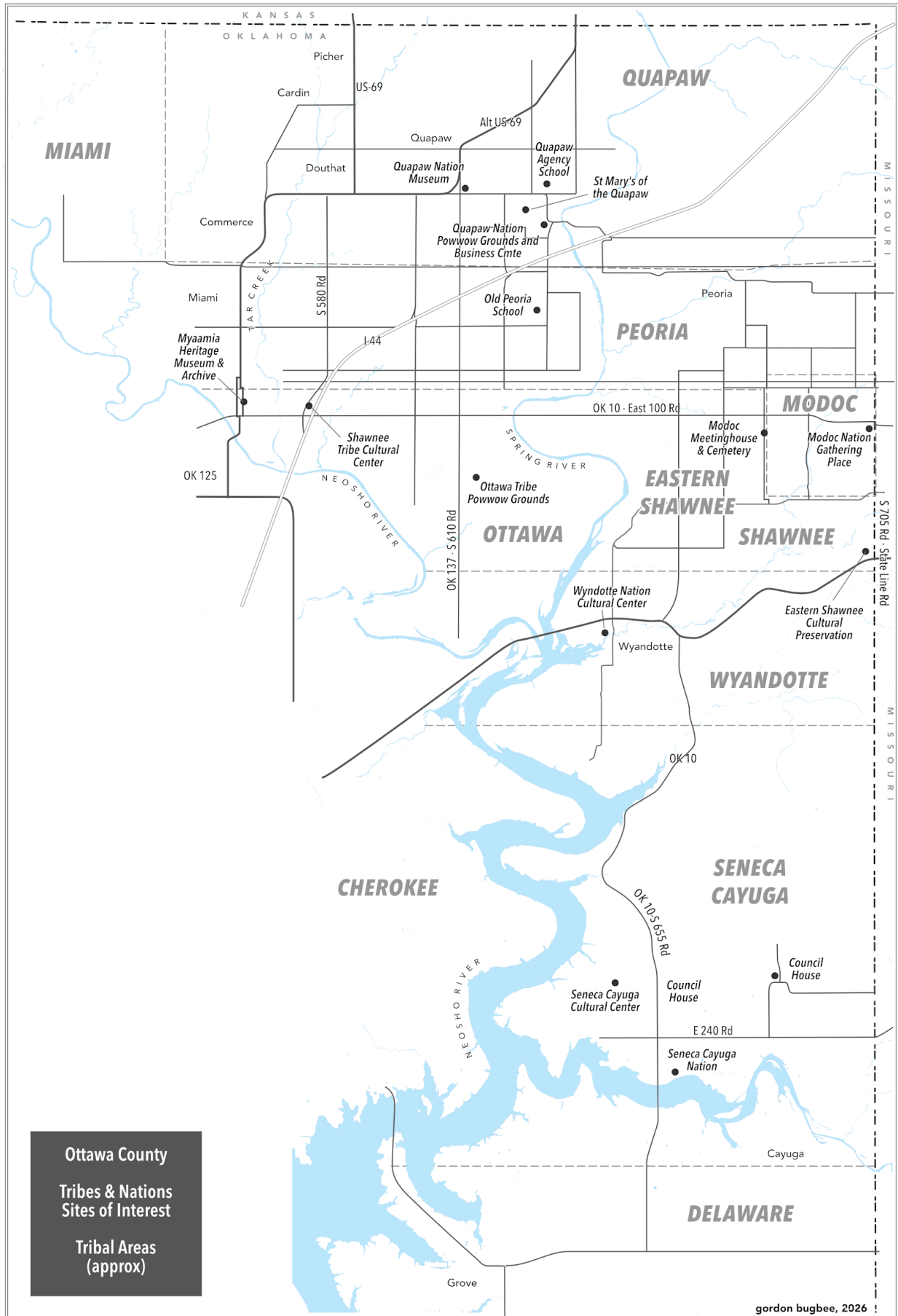
Toward the end of the exhibit, we encountered a disheartening quotation.

‘Milford Chandler later acknowledged how he took advantage of Myaamia and other Native communities’ financial situations: “Things I’ve collected have been mainly heirlooms. I can’t say I’ve ever found them eager to sell such things ... Indians have so little left.”’

It was sobering to realize that many of the objects we saw had been lost to the Myaamia and had to be purchased by the Tribe to bring them home.



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#6 10 March, Miami – Modoc Nation

Our visit with the Modoc cultural staff was different from our meeting with the Ioway. That was our first visit meeting with representatives of the Tribe and they were justifiably hesitant. Their memories of Quakers are limited and vague. Fortunately they were open and gracious, and our candor and readiness to acknowledge and be accountable for harms that occurred persuaded them of our seriousness. To Syd Colombe (Modoc), the Modoc Director of Cultural Preservation, and Rachael Blackstone (Cherokee) their Preservation Specialist, we are friends and collaborators.

During our visit last year, Mary and Gordon shared student lists from the Modoc and Quapaw schools. We discussed the history of the Modoc from their violent removal from California to the difficult conditions that awaited them when they arrived in Indian Territory. Syd spoke of their positive memories of Asa and Emeline Tuttle. There was little talk of Hiram Jones or the Quaker Ring that has been accused of defrauding the Modoc and other Tribes.

In June, 2025, Mary, Suzanna, and Gordon joined with Andy Grannell and Wayne Cobb of Portland Friends to honor the life of Frank Modoc. Frank was a Tribal elder and recorded Friends minister who had been studying at the Quaker Oak Grove Seminary in Vassalboro. He had fallen ill from tuberculosis and died in the home of Friends John and Myra Frye as he tried to get home. We held a Meeting for Worship at his gravesite and then had a time of reflection.

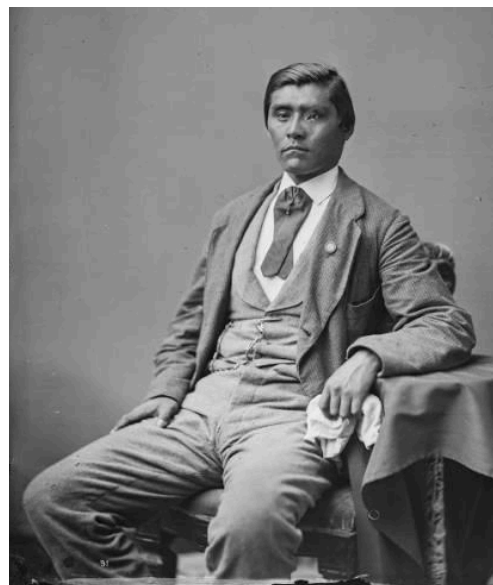
Since then, we have been able to help fund additional archival storage and tried to arrange a visit to the Portland grave of Frank Modoc for Rachael.

Our conversation this March touched on the Tribe's ongoing efforts to encourage use of the Modoc language and re-learning traditional lifeways. Rachael shared some of the topics she has been working on and asked for our help. She has received a few details from the Swarthmore archivist but needs more. Gordon agreed to try some other sources and has since been in touch with Friend's University in Wichita.

Our visit with Syd and Rachael was about broadening and deepening the relationship that began in March 2025. Research questions gave way to talk of families and possible travel plans. We hope to see Rachael in Portland in September to pay our respects at Frank Modoc's grave. We shared our commitment to continuing to show up, perhaps in the Fall, certainly next year around this time. Syd expressed an interest in inviting the cultural staff from other area Tribes to our meeting next time.

As we left, we shared the gift bundles we had brought, to their delight. In turn, they encouraged each of us to take one of the miniature baskets students in a basket-making class had made. Syd also provided a stash of bison jerky for Mary and Gordon to take home to their grandson who loves it.

(The contents of the gift bundles we brought and one of the small baskets we were given.)



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7 Wyandotte – Wyandotte Nation

Beci Wright, the Tribe's Cultural Researcher, greeted us warmly but was a little more reserved than her Modoc counterparts. Perhaps it was just a matter of personality, but we have had less contact this past year with the Wyandotte (pronounced 'wine-dot') cultural staff than with the Modoc.

Mary and Gordon's meeting with the Wyandotte last March was our first direct contact with the Tribe. It was serendipitous. They had gone to visit the museum and cultural center maintained by the Wyandotte on the site of the Seneca Indian School (SIS), formally the Seneca Shawnee and Wyandotte School. Walking through their exhibit, Beci urged Gordon to find her if he had any questions. Fearing a repeat of his awkward beginning with the Sac and Fox, tentatively, he asked if she would be interested in lists of students from the school. Beci responded enthusiastically. This led to a long conversation about the Wyandotte Nation and NEYM's work and commitment to candor and repair where possible.

This year, Gordon and Mary were eager to introduce Suzanna and see what further collaboration might be possible.

Beci and Sherri Clemons, the Wyandotte Tribal Heritage Director, talked about their efforts to be a resource to all of the families whose ancestors might have gone to SIS, which did not close until 1985. Former students and family of former students regularly gather at Wyandotte for reunions. The lists we had provided have been very valuable in this work.

We learned that Beci had been in touch with NABS (the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition) and was awaiting a copy of their digital archive. We also talked about one SIS graduate, Arizona Jackson, who had gone on to Earlham for two years and had returned as a teacher, and about Lucy and John Winney, two of the first Native people to be recorded as Friends ministers, who were associated with the Quaker Meeting that was established in conjunction with the school and mission at Wyandotte.

We found it interesting that the Wyandotte were connected to NABS but not to the archives at Earlham, Swarthmore or Haverford.

One of the topics that had been raised last year, locating the graves of students who had died while at the school, came up again. The Wyandotte have moved forward with radar mapping of the suspected cemetery grounds and were anticipating the arrival of a cadaver dog and its handler to evaluate the 'anomalies' that had been identified. It is tender work and we again invited them to let us know if there was any support that we might be able to provide.

We had a long and very pleasant conversation. We agreed that one of the best ways for us to be helpful to the Wyandotte people was to further facilitate their connections to Quaker and other archival resources. Gordon has already been in touch with Friends University in Wichita to begin this process.

No.	NAME	Degree of Indian blood	TRIBE	Age	Sex		Brand-ing	Day	No. of days in attend-ance
					M.	F.			
1	Pella Ballman	1/2	Ottawa	9		F			23
2	Nella Ballman	1/2	"	11		F			23
3	Ella Ballman	1/2	"	11		F			23
4	Lida Ballman	3/4	Seneca	13		F			19
5	Alice Ballman	3/4	Seneca	14		F			19
6	Sarah Ballman	1/2	Wyandotte	16		F			5
7	Aileen Bennett	1/2	"	9		F			23
8	Lida Bennett	1/2	"	10		F			23
9	Lottie Bennett	1/2	"	6		F			23
10	Marian Bennett	1/2	"	14		F			23
11	Bertha Bepko	1/4	Seneca	8		F			23
12	Sarah Bepko	1/4	S. Shawnee	10		F			16
13	Jennie Bepko	1/4	Seneca	7		F			23
14	Ethel Bepko	1/2	"	12		F			23
15	Hattie Black	1/2	Ottawa	11		F			19
16	Sara Black	1/2	Wyandotte	8		F			23
17	Ana Black	1/2	"	6		F			23
18	Ethel Black	1/2	"	16		F			5
19	Lida Black	1/2	Seneca	13		F			20
20	Maud Black	1/2	"	12		F			13
21	Edith Canning	1/2	"	11		F			23
22	Lena Canning	1/4	"	6		F			23
23	Mary Canning	1/2	Miami	15		F			23
24	Ethel Canning	1/2	"	11		F			23
25	Jessie Canning	1/2	"	7		F			23
26	Fanny Canning	3/4	Seneca	9		F			23
27	Nellie Canning	1/2	Shawnee	11		F			2
28	Suzanna Canning	1/2	Ottawa	13		F			23
29	Eva Canning	1/2	Seneca	6		F			19
30	Adie Canning	1/2	"	11		F			19
31	Christina Canning	1/2	Ottawa	10		F			23
32	Melinda Canning	1/2	"	12		F			23
33	Edna Canning	1/2	"	11		F			23
34	Ruth Canning	1/2	"	6		F			23
35	Maria Canning	1/2	Miami	13		F			23
36	Rosie Canning	1/2	Seneca	11		F			19
37	Elena Canning	1/2	"	11		F			23
38	Mary Canning	3/4	Seneca	13		F			23
39	Nannie Canning	1/2	Wyandotte	12		F			23
40	Rebecca Canning	1/2	"	8		F			23
CARRIED FORWARD									818

Seneca Indian School, student list, September 1902
last names blurred, page 1 of 4

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*#8 March 13, Wyandotte – Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma**

Among the first things we saw after entering the Visitor Center were a pair of glass cases containing 10 or 12 cultural objects the Eastern Shawnee had very recently retrieved from the Charles Kirk Collection at Earlham College. Displayed were several beaded items, including these mocassins, that had been collected by Rachel Kirk, Charles' wife and an important figure in the educational and missionary efforts of Quakers in Indian Territory in the 1870s through the 1890s. Recorded as having been "given" to Rachel Kirk, these were the kinds of precious, personal belongings children were forced to surrender when they entered the schools set up on the reservations to assimilate Indian children and break the ties to their families and cultures.

It is not clear whether Earlham has any more information about the child whose mocassins these were.

Finding the Eastern Shawnee Visitor's Center (their museum and cultural offices) proved to be tricky. Our first stop was a building in the Tribe's administrative complex that was labelled 'cultural center' but was obviously under renovation. Ambiguous directions from a staff member in a neighboring building sent us in the direction of the Tribe's Indigo Sky casino and hotel. A valet at the casino was able to get additional information that pointed us to building a few hundred yards away. Mary's and Suzanna's persistence made it possible

Organized primarily for classes, the main room is filled with chairs and tables covered with beads, tanned hides, feathers, and tools for traditional crafts. Additional display cases around the room hold baskets, shawls, and in one, a hip-length cape covered entirely with thousands of tiny, downy feathers from a turkey's belly. It was made by the Tribe's Cultural Educator, Talon Silverhorn (Eastern Shawnee), based on his study of many older capes made using traditional materials and techniques. A seven or eight-foot long frame standing nearby, holding the beginnings of another cape, showed just how much effort and time went into one of these garments.

Our visit began with what has come to seem like our standard awkward opening followed by the unexpected discovery that the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO), Lora Nuckolls (Seneca Cayuga), had been raised in the Wyandotte Friends Church and was well-acquainted with Quakers. She was eager to talk about the Seneca Indian School (SIS) where her parents had both worked for many years and she offered to show us her mother's voluminous scrapbooks the next time we visit. (Lora herself attended the local public schools.)

Lora was very happy to receive downloaded copies of the school's student lists. One of her priorities is clarifying the ancestry of the current holders of the nineteenth century allotments of Tribal land. She thought the student lists could be very helpful. One of the families of particular interest to us is the Winneys. Lucy and John Winney were the first Native people from Indian Territory to be recorded as



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ministers by Kansas Yearly Meeting. Members of the Winney family continue to live in a house on what had been the school's campus.

Our conversation ended with sharing pictures of grandchildren (in their rodeo gear) and our promise to return next year to see Lora's mother's scrapbook and maybe talk with her father.

After Lora left for a meeting, we had an opportunity to talk with Talon about his art and his efforts to pass on the traditional knowledge and techniques used by Shawnee artisans for many generations.

Our meetings with Lora and Talon were entirely unexpected. We have written to Lora each year before coming to Oklahoma. This year, they happened to be there and available when we managed to find the Visitor Center.



* There are three groups of Native people who identify as Shawnee in Oklahoma. The Absentee Shawnee further west just outside Shawnee, OK, and the "Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma" and the "Shawnee Tribe" in Ottawa County. See <https://www.estoo-nsn.gov/history> and <https://www.astribe.com/about-us> for some of the history.

#9 15 March, Wyandotte – Council House

For a trip filled with warm welcomes and the budding of new relationships, our visit to Council House was a fitting conclusion. Frankie Sue, their clerk and pianist, and her son, Stan, whose family have been the backbone of the Meeting for years, were there. You may remember them from our reports two years ago. David Nagle, pastor from the Hominy Friends Meeting, whom Mary and Gordon had met last year and we had seen the previous Sunday, was down for a periodic visit. And new acquaintances, Debbie, a regular attender, and Hoyt Bacon, a Seneca Cayuga elder and advocate for Indigenous development and Nation building filled out the local congregation. We made it eight.

The service consisted of old hymns, fervent prayer, and a moving homily about love. Potluck lunch followed and gave us a chance to talk further. Their warmth and enthusiasm made us feel very much at home.

The Meeting was established by legendary Friend's missionary Jeremiah Hubbard in 1873 with a largely Indigenous congregation. John Winney (Seneca) and his wife Lucy (Wyandotte) were among its ministers (recorded by Kansas Yearly Meeting). By 1889, the Meeting counted 58 members. NEYM contributions helped fund salaries, repairs to the meetinghouse and digging of a well. Over the years, the Meeting



membership shifted including many more White attenders than Native. The original building pictured above was replaced in the 1940s; an education building and a 'loom house' where local women continued to practice traditional crafts were added. Since the 1960s, attendance has dwindled.

After years of quiet persistence, new interest from members of the Seneca Cayuga Nation may be key to maintaining and revitalizing this historic Friends Meeting. We were delighted to be there and look forward to returning.

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Some concluding thoughts:

The world of Quakers is fractured and dispersed, so too is Indian Country. It was striking to us that while most of the Tribes we met with are connected to some of the archives and research efforts underway, they are not connected to the same sources or to each other. One of the ways we may be useful to Native researchers and advocates is to connect them with the widely scattered Quaker archives and to encourage an active rather than reactive stance among Friends who have care of the relevant resources.

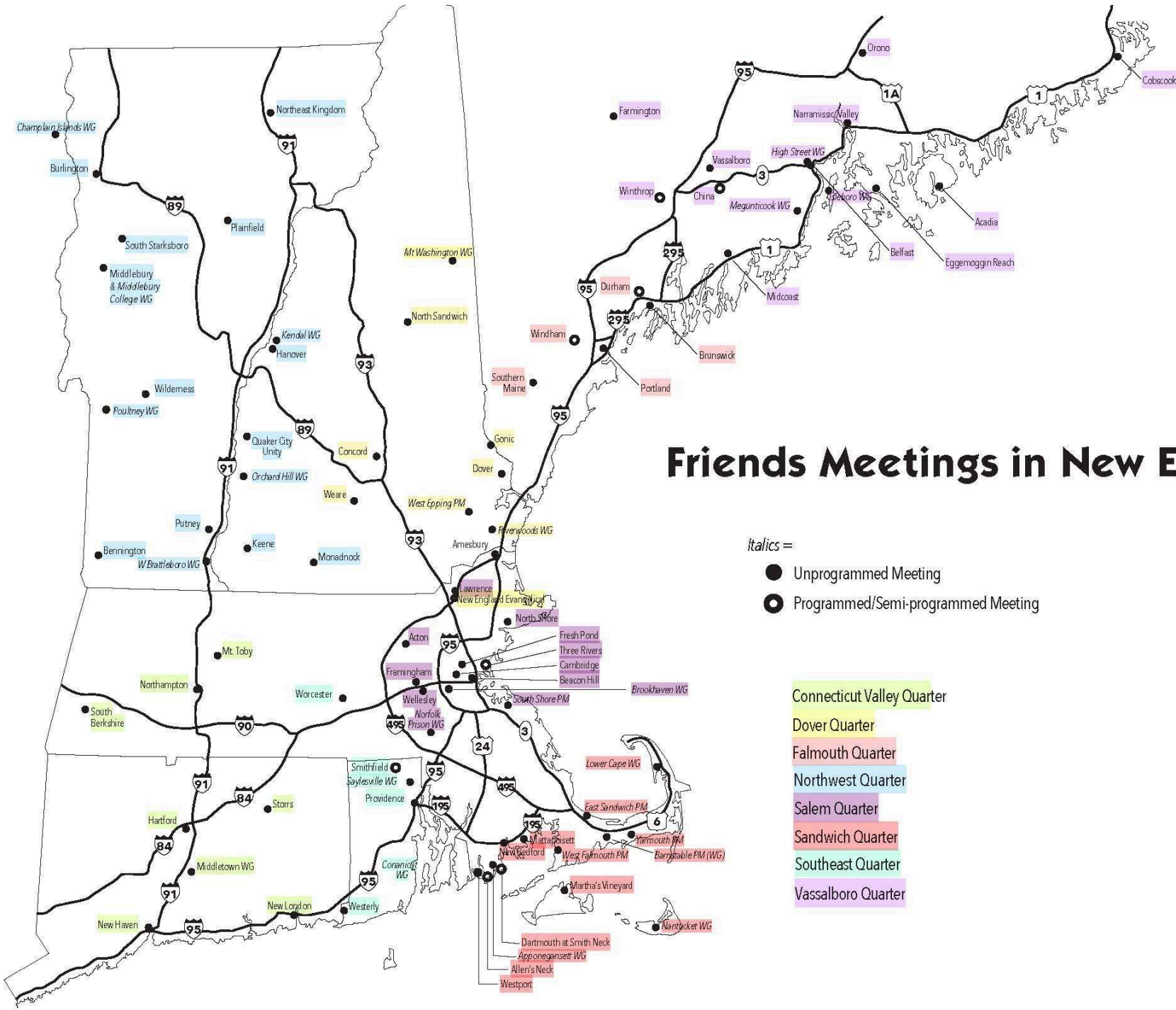
One of the Ioway elders we met and shared a meal with, is a deeply religious man. He identifies himself as a believer, a Christian. He sees no conflict between his faith in Jesus and the religious practices and traditions of his people. He is also very clear that the actions of the missionaries and the government that forbade speaking their language and broke up families and clans was profoundly destructive and a source of many of the problems they face today. For them, the arrival of Christianity has been both liberating and oppressive. Like much about relations between settlers and Indigenous people, the impact of evangelization has been complicated and deeply ambiguous.

We think we are beginning to understand what gkisedtanamoogk said at the end of the plenary of the 2021 Yearly Meeting Sessions when he concluded, 'Indian Country is waiting for you.' It's not that Native People cannot start without us. They are well on their way. There is an enormous amount of work to do, and it is a long road, but they are on the move. They are saying, it would be easier and go faster, and produce a much better world, if we would wake up to the deep connections linking all of Creation and join them.

We look forward to continuing this work and to sharing our experiences, insights, and questions with the Yearly Meeting and the wider Quaker world.

Thank you for your prayers and support!

Mary, Suzanna and Gordon



Friends Meetings in New England

- Italics =*
- Unprogrammed Meeting
 - Programmed/Semi-programmed Meeting

- Connecticut Valley Quarter
- Dover Quarter
- Falmouth Quarter
- Northwest Quarter
- Salem Quarter
- Sandwich Quarter
- Southeast Quarter
- Vassalboro Quarter

The Purpose of Quarterly Meetings in NEYM

adapted from a document presented at NEYM Annual Sessions in 2018

... with the aim of maintaining good order, comforting and instructing all within the society, and keeping us in the ways of truth, meetings of our members are called to provide care and conduct business. These are held monthly in each district, quarterly within each region, and yearly for the whole nation. These [meetings] are held to ensure accurate communications with each other on those things that sustain us in piety and charity. ... Thus, Reader, you can see the character of the people called Quakers in their doctrine, worship, ministry, practice and discipline.

p. 337, in *"Twenty-first Century Penn"*, Paul Buckley, 2003.

[From *Primitive Christianity Revived in the Faith and Practice of the People called Quakers* [First published in 1696]

The Monthly Meetings in each county made up a Quarterly Meeting, where the most devoted and well-known Friends of the county could meet to talk with each other and to offer advice or assistance to each other – especially when a particular piece of business seemed especially difficult or when a Monthly Meeting was unable to settle a matter.

pp. 382, in *"Twenty-first Century Penn"*, Paul Buckley, 2003

[From *A Brief Account of the Rise and Progress of the People called Quakers* [First published in 1694]

There have been ongoing tensions between an emphasis on maintaining order and discipline, and an emphasis on empowering individuals on their spiritual journeys, between authority centered in leaders and authority centered in the general membership. Many from Liberal meetings in the late 20th century have tended to resist anything that hinted at authority by the quarterly or yearly meeting over the separate monthly meetings, and look on QMs/YM as, at best, "useful groupings for common work & fellowship."

p13 *Quaker Process for Friends on the Benches*, Mathilda Navias, 2012

This structure was not merely a pragmatic way of balancing the "prophetic" or charismatic functions of preaching and witness and the "priestly" or institutional function of maintaining unity and order... Friends understood that individuals could misinterpret leadings, fall into pride or self-will, run off into notions. The discernment of the broader community was a surer guide to Truth.

p. 4-5, *Fellowships, Conferences, and Associations: The Limits of Liberal Quaker Reinvention of Meeting Polity*, Elizabeth Cazden, BHFH Quaker Issues, 2003.

In his writings, Penn describes how Quaker "doctrine, worship, ministry, practice and discipline" is rooted in direct experience of God, of Spirit at work in hearts and lives. Quakerism first spread through the fiery work of ministers who shared the prophetic truths revealed to them. They kindled fires around which local meetings emerged, where Friends shared ongoing openings, witness and ministry. Over time, processes and structures arose to formalize and "maintain good order, comfort and instruct all within the society, and keep us in the ways of truth." There remains a living and dynamic relationship between individuals' direct experience of God, of Spirit, and the ongoing care and accountability needed to maintain unity and order. Friends today are still called to engage fully and faithfully, with Spirit and with one another.

The Purpose of Quarterly Meetings in New England Yearly Meeting today

Quarterly Meetings are regional groupings of Monthly Meetings which generally meet four times a year, and which aim to help individuals and meetings grow in healthy relationship with one another. In this, Quarterly meetings have five areas of ongoing purpose, which are not separate and distinct, but rather are entwined and in creative, living tension:

- (1) Quarterly Meetings help cultivate social and spiritual connections between the Friends and meetings in a particular geographic region of NEYM;
- (2) Quarterly Meetings facilitate communication in person, in writing, and through social media;
- (3) Quarterly Meetings encourage inspiration, spiritual counsel, and mutual support between member monthly meetings, to comfort and instruct, to keep us in the ways of truth, faithfulness (piety), and love and compassion (charity);
- (4) Quarterly Meetings provide care and conduct business; QMs season and test in corporate discernment matters arising from MMs, QM committees, regional Quaker bodies, and NEYM, to enable us to do together what we cannot do alone;
- (5) Quarterly Meetings maintain good order, keeping us in the ways of truth through mutual accountability in matters of Quaker Faith and Practice.

(1) Quarterly Meetings help cultivate social and spiritual connections between the Friends and meetings in a particular geographic region of NEYM, prioritizing inclusion and encouraging relationships to grow and flourish between individuals of all ages, enabling meetings to undertake work together.

To this end:

- ❖ Quarterly Meetings offer regional opportunities for coming together in one place
 - By holding periodic Quarterly Meetings, generally four times a year, for worship, fellowship, and learning, as well as shared business. These meetings are generally held on set dates, for consistency, and are hosted by different meetings within the Quarter, on rotation, with financial support from the QM available. They may be planned and hosted in partnership with neighboring meetings.
 - By facilitating QM-wide gatherings, retreats and workshops, often with multi-meeting planning groups and QM financial support. These may be planned by and for particular ages & stages (youth, young adults, elderly, etc), or by and for multi-aged groups focused on particular areas of concern.
- ❖ Quarterly Meetings strengthen connections between meetings in the region by encouraging
 - Intervisitation: individuals and groups traveling within the region for worship and programs.
 - Welcome: meetings inviting Friends and seekers from around the region to participate in their programs and events.
 - Cooperation: two or more meetings coordinating and/or planning programs or events together;
 - Through regular meetings of Friends with similar callings, interests and concerns, both in-person and virtual meetings.
 - Engagement with Quaker and non-Quaker organizations in the state or region, including local offices of AFSC, state level policy work with bodies like Friends Committee for Maine Public Policy and FCNL Quaker outreach, state ecumenical and interfaith bodies, etc.

(2) Quarterly Meetings facilitate communication in person, in writing, and through social media

To this end Quarterly Meetings:

- ❖ invite wide participation in all their events and activities

- ❖ lift up and draw attention to what is happening in the region, sharing the good news and building connections between Friends and meetings
- ❖ help to bring the news from annual sessions back to the local meetings. This is especially important for those meetings without representation at yearly meeting sessions or on yearly meeting committees
- ❖ Help local meetings contribute to and access the resources available from around the Yearly Meeting; encouraging active connections with Yearly Meeting leadership, programs, committees and staff

(3) Quarterly Meetings encourage inspiration, spiritual counsel, and mutual support between member monthly meetings, to comfort and instruct, thereby strengthening the life of meetings in the region, with particular concern for meetings which are lacking in leadership, and small worship groups & meetings with widely-scattered or declining membership. (Some of this.)

To this end Quarterly Meetings:

- ❖ Attend to and support the spiritual life and condition of the constituent meetings. Meetings in the quarter, work together through Quarterly Ministry and Counsel Committees – or this work may be undertaken in other ways
 - Offer mutual assistance in matters of ministry, eldership, and pastoral care
 - Extend help to meetings in trouble, lovingly addressing challenging behaviors and embracing conflict
 - Engage in mutual seasoning and testing of emerging ministries: naming, nurturing and supporting gifts of vocal ministry and other ministries rising in the Quarter; sharing and learning together how to do this better
 - Support youth, young adult and multi-generational religious education
 - Receive and read State of Society and other statistical reports from Monthly Meetings; reach out to and encourage Meetings who have not contributed reports
 - Care for new and unaffiliated worship groups as they arise when they don't have a relationship with a monthly meeting
 - Serve as a resource to local clerks, providing peer support, and nurturing and mentoring emerging leaders

(4) Quarterly Meetings provide care and conduct business, QMs season and test in corporate discernment matters arising from MMs, QM committees, regional Quaker bodies, and NEYM, enabling meetings to do together what they cannot do alone.

To this end:

- ❖ Quarterly Meetings empower the work of the quarter by pooling spiritual, human, and financial resources, towards healing and cultivating the Beloved Community, maintaining the life of the yearly meeting in right relationship with creation.
- ❖ Quarterly Meetings for Business engage member monthly meetings in discernment to
 - Prepare and season concerns rising from member monthly meetings, as well as concerns shared by other QMs and coming from NEYM; when clear to do so, endorsing minutes to be sent to PB or to NEYM annual sessions
 - Engage with concerns and ministries which have been embraced by YM sessions in response to Spirit promptings to healing, wholeness, and transformation
 - Receive reports and engage in discernment on matters brought by Quarterly Meeting Ministry and Council, Finance, and other Quarterly Meeting committees and groups of concern.
 - Consider endorsing Travel Minutes for Friends seeking to travel outside the quarter under a concern or in ministry, when these are brought forward by Monthly Meetings; when clear to

do so, endorsing Travel Minutes and forwarding them to NEYM Permanent Board. (see PB and NEYM M&C procedures for Travel Minutes).

- Consider endorsing the naming, recognizing or recording gifts of ministry, when these are brought forward by Monthly Meetings. When clear to do so, endorsing the naming or recording and informing the NEYM Permanent Board when they have done so. (see F&P)
- Receive and read memorial minutes submitted by monthly meetings; endorse those to be forwarded to the Yearly Meeting
- Nominate and appoint Quarterly Meeting clerks and officers, as well as any representatives to Quaker bodies and organizations; and supporting all of them
- Nominate representatives to state ecumenical councils; and supporting them. Note: Representatives to state ecumenical councils serve as representative of NEYM
- Maintain minutes of Quarterly Meeting proceedings and archive them in accordance with procedures set out by NEYM

(5) Quarterly Meetings maintain good order, keeping us in the ways of truth through mutual accountability in matters of Quaker Faith and Practice. Quarterly Meetings have limited but important authority in some matters, as stated in *NEYM Faith and Practice*. Ongoing care in many of these matters are functions of QM Ministry and Counsel, with members appointed by Monthly Meetings. Some work may be entrusted to individuals appointed by the Quarterly Meeting for Business. As necessary and appropriate matters are reported to QM Meeting for Business for approval or for information. Quarterly Meetings are responsible for:

- ❖ Maintaining financial oversight of Quarterly Meeting funds and the finances of member meetings
- ❖ Preparing annually a Quarterly Meeting State of Society report, to be brought to Quarterly Meeting for Business for approval, shared with meetings in the quarter, and sent to NEYM Ministry and Counsel
- ❖ Establishing and laying down Monthly Meetings; ordinarily this involves mutual discernment with the local meeting. This includes reviewing the status and spiritual condition of Monthly Meetings and discontinuing Monthly Meetings that have ceased to function in good order. The QM may determine that, in the best interests of the Society of Friends as a whole one or more MM may be joined/divided/laid down (see F&P pg. 220 – 221)
- ❖ Recognizing gifts in ministry as these are brought forward by Monthly Meetings in the Quarter; supporting and holding accountable those with recorded gifts in ministry; and rescinding recognition when gifts in ministry have come to an end (see F&P pg 246 on naming/recording gifts of ministry)
- ❖ Seasoning Travel Minutes for Friends seeking to travel outside the quarter under a concern or in ministry, when these are brought forward by Monthly Meetings. When clear to do so, endorsing travel minutes, and informing Permanent Board. QM endorsement permits travel within the yearly meeting. For travel outside the bounds of the yearly meeting, Travel Minutes must be sent to Permanent Board for their consideration for endorsement.
- ❖ Supporting and holding accountable those with QM endorsed travel minutes is primarily the responsibility of the monthly meeting. When there is an ongoing care and support committee it can be helpful to include one or more members from outside the meeting.

REPORT OF VISIT TO IRELAND YEARLY MEETING AND UGANDA RESTORTION PROJECT-April 8-24,2026

I thank God for the journey to Ireland. When I arrived at Boston airport, I discovered that no computers can be put into the checked luggage (they contain lithium), so I had to carry the two laptops I had been given for Nyama Friends School in my backpack, which enabled me to lose some weight as I lugged the heavy bag down many long corridors in the airports. In Boston after the confusion of this, somehow, the airplane pillow around my neck slipped off. I stopped to buy some tea to help calm down and decide what to do. I happened to sit between a couple going for a wedding in Ireland, and a runner going to Dublin Marathon. We began sharing our stories, and they got so interested in the stories I shared about East Africa, that the racer donated me his pillow when I mentioned its loss! The second miracle, was when we landed at Dublin, a trio of men on a business trip who sat near me offered to carry my backpack to the baggage claim place. I then went with the backpack and small suitcase on a bus and a train to visit Heather Bewley who lives just outside Dublin. It was a joy to find the gorse bushes all bright yellow, as well as other flowers and trees in bloom, as I had left some snow in New Hampshire. Heather took me to the Yearly Meeting. The first night, I couldn't figure out how to get the showers to work and it was chilly so I slept in several layers of clothes including my jacket with a hood. When I woke up I thought it had snowed at night, but it was trees white with blossoms instead of snow!



View from Bewley dining table

Mountain with gorse bushes in foreground

It was a joy to visit this small yearly meeting in session. The theme of the sessions was "Deepening our Spirituality". It seemed to focus more on all the ways that ministry can be done using the arts- Much of my time was spent with the young adult Friends- including two women travelling in ministry from Britain and Ohio Conservative YM plus the clerk of Oslo,(Norway) Friends Meeting. It seemed like there were as many visitors from other countries a there were Irish Friends present. I had many interesting times of informal sharing with others during meals and tea breaks, and then was asked to share about Friends in East Africa during the last business session.



Ireland YM in session

Speaking at Ireland YM

The last day I was collected by Charles and Marge Lamb and driven to their home out in the countryside. I was grateful that there was a national protest going on blockading major highways over the increase in carbon taxes and cost of petrol (due to the closing of the strait.) It meant that instead of taking the expressway across Ireland, we took all back roads, enjoying the lush greenness of the rural countryside.



Charles and Marge Lamb



Charles on morning walk.



Magpie

it was a joy to see Charles and Marge after many years, take a walk through the countryside, and relax a day before travelling on to Uganda. Seeing the wind turbines and solar panels that I thought were a lake at first helped me prepare to go to Uganda for a climate restoration project.



Wind turbines



Solar panels that look like a lake!



Peaceful cows

I then took a bus back to Dublin airport. Had only 1 hour in Heathrow to change flights from Terminal 2 to terminal 5. Had to run the whole way with heavy backpack. I arrived panting and extremely thirsty, so the stewardess let me have a bottle of water - but otherwise you have to pay for water in planes these days. Arrived in Nairobi that night, slept some hours and returned to airport ready to fly on to Kisumu. However there was a confusion in the ticket and the only flight they could offer was one the next night. I was blessed to have met a Kenyan woman who was in the same predicament who had come from London as well. She offered me a ride in her family's car direct to Kakamega, so we drove across Kenya arriving in Kakamega as night began. Pastor Shamala from Kakamega rescued me and drove me to Agnetta's. I arrived there at 9PM, ate a quick meal and went to bed and slept for over 10 hours. Due to a mistake of Safaricom, I had to go to Kakamega the next day, instead of resting, in order to get my Kenyan cell phone working. I travelled on the back road by piki (motorcycle) driven by Elkanah, a young man I had known since he was a young boy. He drove slowly and carefully and I greeted or waved at all those along the way. Showing strangers that they are worth greeting, is a way to cheer them, as well as give me joy. I was reminded of the Buddhist monks who walked on foot from Texas to Washington DC this year who smiled and greeted all peacefully, that ended up attracting large crowds wanting to live peacefully again (during the violent times in USA).

On Friday, Agnetta and I then went by pikis and matatus to eastern Uganda. We visited Alfred and Centrine Wasike and met their new daughter (named after me). Then on to Apollo and Sylvia Wopichos in Mbale. On Saturday we woke up at 4am, and took a matatu to Lira, and another to Kigumba, and pikis to Nyama Friends School in northwestern Uganda.



Leaders of Nyama Friends Church



Children dancing with joy to see visitors

We arrived as Juliet and Jacqueline, officials from USFW Uganda from Semuto Friends were finishing their workshop with the women. They encouraged them and helped them see how it would benefit them to join the USFW and the many things they can learn to lift themselves up.

On Sunday the 19th, we visited Nyama Friends Church in the morning for their regular service. Agnetta was given a chance to preach and spoke on John 15:14. "You are my Friends if you do what I teach", emphasizing the need to live and act as Friends of Christ, not just speak about Christ. I gave them my travel minute and explained to them how such documents help you know who is a genuine Quaker and their responsibility to endorse the minute sharing what I did there (not just send greetings back to the traveler's home meeting.)

That afternoon, we held a workshop for leaders of the community, leaders of the Friends church, and leaders of the school. We had the district forester teach a lesson. He cleverly had the people figure out how much money could be earned by planting 2.5 acres of trees versus 25 acres of maize (corn). At first it looked like you gained a lot more planting maize, until you realize the difference in acreage. Then he also shared about which indigenous trees provided medicine, and what were the best ways to plant trees to insure their survival. After a big meal, we then all planted a bunch of trees= most of which were indigenous fruit trees on the school property. I also taught a lesson on how to avoid needing to use medicines.



District Forester teaching. Head teacher with meal Women plant a tree Community leaders.

On Monday morning, we met all the students of the school at their morning assembly. Each class lined up, from kindergarden to grade 7, raised the Uganda flag (that has a crested crane as its logo), and sang their national anthem. They were supposed to start at 8:30am but by 9:30 the students gathered and Agnetta and I both spoke to them all some words of encouragement. Then we officially handed over the two computers I had carried. The staff then prayed over the computers and the head teacher enjoyed opening them up to find they worked. Their staff member who is the technology expert had not yet arrived!



Part of the 250+students at morning assembly

Teacher arrives late

Trying the computers

We then had to return via pikis, buses and matatus and reached Mbale, Uganda by 9PM. On Tuesday we returned to Agnetas in Kenya.

On Wednesday, we went to Kakamega and had a very helpful visit with Getry Agizah at the new FUM office in Handidi, followed by a lunch meeting at a local cafe with Margaret Bolenge. We enjoyed a time to share together and support each other. All Friends in Kenya are mourning the sudden death of Wilhite, a middle aged man who ran the radio station for Friends and had helped East African Friends join the digital age, as well as run all the electronic equipment at many conferences.



Getry at work

Flowers at USFW Kenya

Calf born this week at Agnetas.

Daffodils welcome me home

On Thursday I began my journey back to USA. I was surprised that the airlines in Kisumu would not check my bag direct to Boston, but made me carry it onto the small prop plane, and meanwhile their agent had broken the handle, so it would not close to fit properly. It was impossible to check in or reconfirm my flight via British Air, using my cell phones so I ended up in Nairobi 6 hours early. I was glad to feast at the airport cafe on an Asian salad- of ramen noodles with peanut sauce, cashews, orange and apple slices, lettuce, red cabbage, and parsley. It was my one meal for the day, as the airplane food was extremely overspiced or overcooked- almost inedible. Flew on to Boston after the dash between terminals at Heathrow, and took the bus from Boston to Concord, NH, where my kind neighbor collected me. Arrived home at 4PM. Cooked up a quick supper, took a shower and went to bed and slept almost 12 hours!

The spring flowers had burst into bloom while I had been away, and welcomed me home. On Sunday, I attended my local meeting plus a planning session for the memorial service for Betty Straw, who died on Easter Sunday after having completed 100 years of life.

Thanks to all for the time on the ground in Ireland and Uganda, plus passing through Kenya. So much better than the flying in airplanes these days!

In gratitude,
Marian

Annual report on work in the ministry
to Weare/Henniker Monthly Meeting,
Wellesley Friends Meeting, and New England Yearly Meeting
Brian Drayton
3/11/26

This report is being written in a time of transition for myself and Darcy Drayton, as we have left our home in New Hampshire where we've lived since 1996, and transferred our membership from Weare/Henniker meeting to Wellesley meeting. With regard to my work in the ministry, this transition will naturally bring changes, questions, and experiments in the stewardship of whatever gifts I have, in a new community context. Since I am sending this to a meeting which has known me well for nearly 30 years but also to a meeting where I am a newcomer, I think that I cannot take for granted the knowledge that my former meeting has of me,; I hope that I explain enough — but not too much! — so that my new meeting can understand and make use of the report.

I have always understood that any gift or concern is a result, however indirect, of a motion of the Spirit, and that the particular form and scope of a gift may well have a natural end or conclusion. It is the part of good stewardship to love and to take joy in the exercise of the gift, but not to take ownership of it. Consequently I ask myself at least once a year (and usually oftener) whether I believe that the concern for ministry continues, or whether it is time to lay it down. This determination does not only lie with me, of course, but I feel that I owe it to my meeting to say how it is with me, so that they can take that into consideration as they may want to answer the same question.

This past year of transitions and health challenges, not to mention the onslaught of dismaying news from the nation and the world, has been a burdened time for me, as it has for so many others. I am often dissatisfied at my lack of faithfulness, and at my failures of diligence, as I try along with the rest of my life to rightly occupy my gift and the ministry. To carry the anxieties and discouragements and moral injuries of our times adds to the risk of having the spirit quenched within me.

Nevertheless, where I am favored with times of inward quiet, I can feel and see the gospel life at work in humans and in all creation, renewing, refreshing, repairing, empowering, and bringing strength in weakness, which is the astonishing paradox at the heart of the phrase "the Kingdom (Kingship, regime) of God."

In those moments of clarity, I can regard my own weaknesses, misjudgments, and misdeeds with a compassion that comes from beyond myself, and which I can see rains down on every living thing. On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus told his friends many things, of warning, mystery, and consolation and instruction. In full knowledge of what he was about to encounter, he nevertheless spoke of joy and of the fullness of joy. This joy, which is akin to that peace which the world cannot give, is the still and fruitful heart within this whole complex and restless universe, and the complex and restless universes of the human heart and mind. To get a taste of that, as one can sometimes in the quiet, is to be reoriented towards true hope, and refreshed with the sense of life that flows like a stream of clear water.

It is my understanding that ministry among other things is intended to encourage and support people as they turn again and again to that living source, do the work of repair and reconciliation that may be needed for its fuller knowledge, and continue to experimentally incarnate the life and light flowing from that center in our lives, our works, and our words.

When I return to considerations such as these, I feel a deep kind of delight and good cheer in being able to collaborate with the Holy Spirit, in company with my friends, to take some share in this work, in my measure. My hope is renewed, despite myself, and I feel that I yet have some strength and capacity to render service as it is called for from me.

As ever, I assure you who read these words, that if you find guidance, or rebuke, or insight that might help me to a better understanding of my condition and my sense of service, I am very ready to hear. Any consecrated gift, whether in gospel ministry, or in financial management, or in hospitality, or an education, or witness, consists in a dual responsibility: the individual must do to the best of their

ability what feels consistent with the gift and leadings that are laid on him or her, but the individual is part of a body, whose health depends on everyone's faithfulness in their own exercise of function and service. This is why it's so important for meetings to include, as they consider the nurture of gifts, a steady prayerful intention that all gifts in the meeting be seen as originating from one source and devoted to the health and faithfulness of the community as a whole and beyond that to all the children of God, each offering what they can in their measure, earnestly desiring the best gifts, and eager to grow from infancy in their gift to a mature and capacious adulthood. We must always be praying towards unity, not as an accomplishment, but as a process,, a fundamental aspect of the metabolism of the mystical body of Christ.

In what follows, as usual, I will look back on the things I projected for 2025, and what I actually did, and then turn to what I see coming towards me in 2026. Again, if Friends have guidance or questions on any of these points, I will be very happy to engage with them, and grateful.

What I did last year

Writing. As expected, *The Gospel in the Anthropocene* has taken a fair amount of attention this year, as it moved through editing and design (including integrating the art by Darcy Drayton). I believe it will now be available starting April 7th, 2026.

As I had forecast last year, I continued writing on my blogs (Amorvincat.wordpress.com, and bloghaunter.wordpress.com). The major shifts in our residence and related changes (e.g. finding a new meeting) have disrupted my writing rhythms, so I have not been as regular as I would wish. However, recent weeks have made me hopeful that I am settling again. I still intend to think about whether there is material for another book or two lying amongst all those short pieces, but this is lower priority for me.

I had also hoped to take up work again on an edition of William Dewsbury's works, in which Gordon Bugbee joined, once the urgent concern of the *Gospel in the Anthropocene* was addressed. However, I have not yet made progress on that project, beyond unpacking and organizing the materials.

Ministry to ministers. With Noah Merrill, I have continued to convene gatherings for ministering Friends roughly every 3 months through 2025. My recent leg injury (late February) will prevent my carrying this forward until late Spring, but the concern continues.

Travel. In this year of disruptions, intervisitation has been disrupted as well, but I have worshipped with several meetings, and was asked to be one of the presenters for a series that Providence Meeting held in the fall as they considered the nurture of spiritual gifts.

Midweek meditations. I am finishing the final series of these meditations, with three more (March-April-May). I think these have been serviceable to the attenders, who are mostly from New England, but also include Friends from farther afield. I am grateful for the concern that led to this series, and I have very much benefited from carrying it out.

Yearly Meeting. At last Yearly Meeting, I agreed to serve on the Ministry and Eldership Working Group, which feels directly related to concerns that I carry.

What I see for 2026.

Overview. I feel a strong leading to give more systematic attention to the teaching ministry. This has always been part of what I do, but almost always it has been as a result of a request from meetings or other groups. I will continue to respond to requests as they come, discerning which to take, but I will also begin more actively to seek opportunities for adult education. This will also shape my writing, as well. This is different from any leading to travel in the ministry, following the motions of love.

Accountability. I do not yet know whether my new meeting, Wellesley, will wish to take steps such as appointing an oversight/accountability committee for me. If they do not, I think I will seek to

constitute such a committee, including (perhaps) Friends from the meeting, and from elsewhere. I will continue to make annual reports to the meeting (unless they ask for some other process, or tell me just to stop!), and it would be best for my oversight committee to make some report as well. In any case, it will be needful to develop some discipline with the committee, so that the accountability is substantive, with the aim of making best use of gifts I am stewarding.

I am returning two long-standing travel minutes to Weare/Henniker meeting, along with endorsements. I currently also have a standing travel minute from Yearly Meeting, through the Permanent Board. I am not sure, but I believe it's in right ordering to return that minute as well, even though the concern continues, while my discernment and accountability are re-centered at Wellesley.

Writing. *Blog.* We Friends often say that "everyone is a minister," but we don't always get a glimpse into what that means in practical terms. I have often said that one of the roles of a recognized minister in these days is as "guinea-pig," someone to try things that may be of value, but that people are hesitant to undertake ("Anything worth doing is worth doing badly") So I conceived of my blog, *Amor vincat*, as one attempt at transparency. It is one of my workbenches: and I hope it makes some of the learning and thinking that I engage as part of the work of ministry visible for others who may find the notes useful. The topics range widely, but tend to fall into a few big categories — Quaker theology and practice, topics in church history and theology that arise in my reading, bible study, Erasmus studies; climate change, and other witnesses. A special continued topic is the history, practice, and nurture of the ministry as traditionally understood by Friends. The other blog, *Bloghaunter*, is reserved for topics in science, science education, politics, climate change, biodiversity issues, and sundry such topics. I expect to continue writing in these venues, because I intend to keep learning and working to be of service.

Dewsbury. I continue to hope that this year I will take up again my edition of William Dewsbury's works. Gordon Bugbee and I have transcribed about 2/3 of the manuscripts I photocopied at the Friends Archives in London a few years ago. The rest need to be transcribed, then all the transcriptions need to be checked and revised, and then integrated with the working manuscript of the *Works* that I began based on the published *Works* of 1691. A few MSS were not accessible at Friends Library when I visited before, and more correspondence and travel may be required to secure the few remaining items. Finally, some notes and introductory material would be needed to make the materials as useful as possible.

Other. Meanwhile, I am happy to report that my book with Bill Taber, *A language for the inward landscape*, is soon to be reissued (for some value of the word "soon"), with some corrections to text and index (many thanks to Tom Etherington!!), by the Tract Association of Friends, in collaboration with Barclay Press.

Also, a Spanish translation of the second edition of my book on ministry is likely to appear in 2026 as well (*Del vivir con un interés espiritual por el ministerio del Evangelio*). Susan Furry and Benigno Sanchez-Eppler did the translation for FWCC Section of the Americas, and in the strenuous interrogation of the text which translation requires, I think it has turned out to be the best version of the book!

Two more pieces of "old business": I am in a slow conversation with Noah Merrill and others, in response to a sense that my booklet of selections from the writings of James Nayler should be republished. This would be a 4th edition, and I would hope to revise it on various points. Finally, my Bible Half Hours (*Treasure in earthen vessels*) from 1995 have been passed around and in slow-but-steady use all these years, and I have collected some comments and ideas that might support a revision and improvement as a stand-alone booklet.

Travel. I will be open to leadings to travel as they come, but have no specific concern in view as of now.

Ministry to ministers. I currently anticipate continuing to convene gatherings of ministering Friends around the Yearly Meeting. I will continue with the Ministry and Eldership Working Group.

Teaching. At present, I can see one specific effort: I intend to develop a series I am currently calling "Topics in Quaker faith, practice, and history." As I have envisioned this, it will take the form of a monthly Zoom presentation with discussion, supported by preparatory readings. These sessions will be intended to help and engage committed Friends. I imagine them beginning next fall, if way opens.

I am developing a preliminary list of topics, and if I have an oversight/accountability committee I will definitely bring these ideas to them for guidance. Once the format is set, I imagine that "guest teachers" will be welcome, and perhaps other formats on occasion. No doubt this series will interact with writing on my blog.

Other teaching may arise during the year.

Finally, I remember again the line from Psalm 71 that has come to seem like the motto for this time in my life:

You have taught me from my youth, O God... and so even into age and grey hairs, do not forsake me, until I have proclaimed your upholding strength to the coming generations.

For the Sake of the Joy: Meetings, Pilgrimage, and the ReOlding of Quakerism

Noah Bishop Merrill

Good evening, Friends It's good to be together.

As I speak to you this evening, I am humbled and grateful, understanding that Friends both here in Richmond, Indiana and from meetings across the United States and beyond—including my father and stepmother, as well as Friends from my home meeting in the foothills of the Green Mountains in southeastern Vermont—have gathered to listen to this message, and to reflect together on how the Spirit might be speaking to each of us in our own context through this shared time.

I want to speak for a moment about the particular gift of being invited to offer this lecture, and to the season of prayer, reflection, and searching that an opportunity like this provokes. If you're like me, the busyness of many demands on our attention can distract us from setting aside time to reflect deeply on the wisdom which might be wrung from the warp and weft of our lives.

The invitation to be with you tonight offered such an opportunity, perhaps because I was vulnerable enough to receive it. It arrived during a season of grief following the sudden passing of my mother and the murder of my brother within the course of nine months. Yet within this season of grief was also an interweaving of unimagined joy, as my beloved Friend Honor and I were found clear to be married under the care of our home meeting, receiving a blessing beyond either of our expectations, through God's Grace.

Many of us know that these kinds of experiences—great losses and great joys alike—can and do change us, causing us to re-examine the uses of our time and energy, even our vocations, in this brief and blessed life we have been given.

Receiving this invitation during a time of doubt and darkness for us both, comingled with the candles of joy which, for incandescent moments, chased back the shadows, rekindled in me a spark of reassurance, a fragile trust that I might have something to offer that could be helpful to you who might share in this time, something that might be of use to us in our pilgrimage of faith as Friends. And that initial illumination, as I experienced and followed it, helped to bring me home once again to the calling to service that has come to be the through-line of my own wayward wandering life.

I mention this because I think it's easy to forget the gift it can be to invite one another into deeper reflection and sharing of what glimpses of insight and humble wisdom each of us has encountered in our lives. I am grateful for the encouragement and the

occasion for recommitment to service that the Friends who offered this invitation have given me, and I hope that this might also serve as an invitation to you to be watchful in your own lives and meetings for opportunities to remind others of the gifts you see in them, and of the responsibility those gifts bring: that they be exercised in building one another up.

This invitation, coming as it did, also reminded me once again of two of the most difficult lessons I believe we can learn as human beings: **There is no amount of grief that can make you unfit to be an instrument of God's love. And there is no Joy—if it is true Joy indeed—that cannot endure the presence of suffering and evil.** In my experience, abiding in these truths—even as in the eye of a hurricane—brings a gratitude beyond measure.

I don't know about you, but for me it is a fearful thing—and a challenging one—to be asked to offer a lecture on the broadly construed theme of “the future of Friends”. I have recently done a little looking into the messages Friends much more seasoned than I have offered on this theme.

Many of you listening may know better than I do that if I were to begin now in reciting *only the titles* of lectures and addresses with a similar focus given in the last 100 years (perhaps not counting those few I have given myself!)—I would likely not be finished listing them until our time together tonight had long passed. The same can be said for messages seeking to energize Friends to a renewal, to reclaim the fire of the early Friends, of Primitive Christianity Revived, to return to our roots, and from these embers to resuscitate a Quaker Movement that will meet this moment, and respond to the many needs that assail us daily in the wider world, both in this country and beyond.

This conversation about the future has also included countless propositions for the reinvention of Quakerism to respond to today's audiences, to adapt to a changed and changing world, to seek ways to revise Quakerism for the “young people” and “seekers” of our day by removing supposedly outdated understandings or uncomfortable aspects of religiosity, to open wide the doors of participation to an ever-widening set of beliefs and world-views—or, some argue, to focus the message of Quakerism on a particular set of strongly held politically progressive views. Other voices, almost in mirror image, call for jettisoning Friends' sometimes awkward or misunderstood distinctives to allow for a fuller participation in the wider movements of American evangelicalism. In this context, with such crosscurrents, polarization, and disparate voices, saying something new—much less, something new and useful—is a challenging task, indeed.

It is clear that there are many both within and beyond our meetings, yearning for a deeper spiritual grounding and hungry for something that can sustain them in these harrowing times.

I'm aware that many meetings across North America are seeing waves of new people coming through their doors, seeking connection. Even the renewed participation of many Friends in local ecumenical networks and the increased visibility of Friends in the public square create new opportunities—and crying needs—to articulate and model the life of faith in which newcomers might choose to participate, or which the wider world might be able to understand, even in part.

As I have held this opportunity in prayer, asking whether there might be anything of use that I could offer as part of this conversation, what has arisen in my heart is *nothing new*. Instead, I have been led to offer you a handful of tattered field notes from a journey of seeking to be faithful in company, a partial and patchy account of a pilgrimage in progress. I hope, with humility, to invite us to a way of seeing that might help us respond to the very real yearning that so many are experiencing, that can help us remember in some way the treasure that is already present and that has accompanied us since our beginnings. **I want to invite us to a ReOlding of Quakerism.**

By ReOlding, I mean remembering that the story didn't begin with us. ReOlding means understanding ourselves as part of a story, a story that we did not begin, a story still unfinished, a slow and humble story still in process about a pilgrimage of faithful people journeying together through time who have sought, in their own seasons and circumstances and sufferings, to respond to and make visible the inbreaking of Love, even now coming into the world. ReOlding our faith means living *now*, not in the past or the future. It means deepening our roots in and drawing nourishment from Friends living tradition, in this moment, in this world, as these people, where we are. ReOlding stakes our faith on a trust that, with help, we can grow into fuller life and fuller understanding; that we are participants in a process of continuing revelation, yes, but that any claim to continuing revelation both *presumes and requires* prior revelation. ReOlding is understanding our lives in the light of what has come before, allowing our way of living and our worldview to be shaped by the living stream of which we are a part, and then—through ReOlded Eyes—facing the tribulations and trials of the times we have been given.

And so tonight, I am offering *nothing new*.

Because I believe with all my heart that it is ultimately *not* a grand vision that will create the future of Quakerism. In reality, as it always has been, what we call “the future of

Quakerism” will come into being through the lives and testimony of each of us who have set out in some way on this journey of becoming Friends. The future of Quakerism will be settled and determined by the ways we allow ourselves to be met, guided, patterned, sustained and sent by the same Spirit—full of Grace and Power—that has accompanied us always.

Due to the sometimes meandering nature of my field notes, I think it might be useful now to offer you a summary of what I most hope to express this evening. It comes from one of the first people to be called “Friends” (or perhaps more likely, from a community of them), writing anonymously in what we now call the twelfth chapter of the New Testament letter to the Hebrews, in the first years of the movement of the Holy Spirit that would give birth to the Society of Friends as one child among a diverse and ever-growing family in the Christian tradition. Here’s a paraphrased translation of this passage, seeking to amplify and make accessible these ancient words for our modern ears:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that clings so closely—that so easily distracts—and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, the founder and perfecter, **who for the sake of the joy that was set before him** endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and now abides at the inflection point, where everything comes together: the place of the homecoming in the Power and the Presence of God...”

So there—that’s it! I hope you will now feel free to log out of the meeting, turn off your cameras, collect your things, and move on to whatever else you might want to do with your evenings.

Or, if you’re still with me: Let’s begin.

The Second Miracle

I want to speak with you about the Second Miracle.

Jesus wept. Having learned that his dear friend Lazarus has fallen ill and died, he has traveled with his disciples to the cave where Lazarus’ body has been laid. By this time, the man has been dead for four days.

And there, standing at the tomb, Jesus weeps. I believe there is something here, at the beginning of this story, something about the tenderness of Jesus’ heart, about the intimacy of this friendship, about the compassion God feels for each of us, seeing our

suffering, and mourning with us, accompanying us in the depth of our pain and struggles with the profound loss that is inextricable from our life as human beings in this world so full of pain and injustice. It says something about the nature of grief and grace that the story we are about to explore begins here. Everything that follows in this story—and perhaps, we may come to see, in ours—flows from a recognition that, whatever our condition, it is there that we can be met.

But the story doesn't end there—and neither does ours, since we're a part of this story, too. Jesus asks what is now a gathering crowd, including Lazarus' sisters, his beloved friends Martha and Mary, to roll away the stone that has been placed as a seal on the cave that has become Lazarus' tomb. Then, in a loud voice, Jesus calls to the dead man: "Lazarus—come out!" And indeed, according to the Gospel of John, this friend who has lain dead for days staggers slowly out of the cave, stumbling in a new flood of vitality, yet still bound tightly in grave wrappings, his face covered by a shroud. We can imagine, through the eyes of those who have passed down this story to us, what a sight he would have been. This man who had descended into death was now returned to life, through the compassion and the call of his Friend.

And then, something else happens. At first, it might be easy to overlook. It's certainly not as striking or dramatic as the first miracle, Jesus' raising of Lazarus from the dead. And yet, I have come to believe that what happens next is just as significant, and can be just as instructive, if we read it as Friends and meetings seeking to be faithful today.

What happens next is this: Jesus turns to the people gathered, to the community surrounding Lazarus, and Mary, and Martha, and commands them: "Unbind Lazarus; let him go." And the community responds.

This, and what follows from it, is to me the "Second Miracle." The first miracle is clear. The power of the Spirit restores life to Lazarus' body. And yet: removing the tightly bound grave wrappings and the cloth covering his face—helping to free Lazarus— so that the gift of new life he has received can be expressed in all its fullness and beauty—this, Jesus says clearly, is the work of the community.

I don't believe it's a coincidence that these events, these two miracles, occur immediately before what follows them in the story as given to us by John. You see, immediately after these events the news of the raising and freeing of Lazarus reaches the religious leaders who have opposed Jesus. It is upon receiving this news, and not before, that they commit themselves to a dedicated effort to have Jesus arrested, tortured, and assassinated. This moment in the story after the re-enlivening and unbinding

is an inflection point in the whole story of the Gospel, according to John, where the corrupt religious leadership unite to end the threat they can now recognize.

So: what is so threatening about what has happened in this brief encounter? And why does it lead so directly to the decision of Jesus' enemies to seek a way to end his life?

Clearly, the evidence of new life returning to one who was lost was a powerful event. But Jesus' instructions to "unbind him, and let him go" seem to demonstrate an understanding that the experience of new life alone was insufficient to bring about the *fullness of life* into which Lazarus was invited by Christ. The renewal of life, the overpowering experience of enlivening, was—and is—the work of God. And yet, with the mutual encouragement, accompaniment, and reciprocal nurture of the community of faith, so much more becomes possible.

I have come to believe that this aspect of "unbinding one another" is at the heart of why our Friends meetings exist. Through our worship together, as we are nourished, strengthened, and challenged—often over the long arc of time—we are offered countless opportunities to try again to "unbind" one another from whatever may restrain the divine Life from becoming more and more expressed in our own living. The first miracle is the immediate work of the Spirit. We are given to each other so that the second miracle may unfold.

As we continue tonight, however we might otherwise relate to this text, I want to invite us to hold the story of Lazarus as a way of seeing our life together in our meetings. Always, there is the direct in-breaking of the Spirit, bringing new life, calling us out of death. And always, there is the challenge and the charge to the community, to draw near to one another, to grasp the entangling grave clothes, to help one another to find another breath of freedom to live in the Life and Power.

So I want to ask this question again. Why were these events perceived as such a threat? As with the raising and unbinding of Lazarus, the fullness of Life and unshakeable joy- in the Power and Presence of the living God which is stirred in us through these encounters shake the foundations of the death-dealing powers that occupy and corrupt this world, and herald the birth of a new creation. It is this way of living together, and the deep Joy in which it is rooted, that was experienced as a mortal threat to the corrupt leaders of Jesus' day. It is equally threatening to those same forces in our own time. The more free we help each other to become in the life of the Spirit, and the more our liberated lives bear witness to the reality of God's Love, always seeking new strongholds in the world, the more the powers of deceit, confusion and violence lose their grasp.

Okay, so there's something deeply important about this unbinding, something that happens in the context of the community. But how, more particularly, does this happen in the life of Friends meetings, and *why do our local meetings matter?*

Rhythms of Common Life

In the course of my life, I have been blessed by many experiences of what I might call "mountaintop moments", whether as part of spiritual retreats, youth groups, global conferences, or in wider relationships beyond my local meeting. I am profoundly grateful for these opportunities for growth and connection, for the forging of lasting spiritual friendships, for learning and inspiration, that these opportunities afforded me.

And so for a long time, I believed that it was from these kinds of exciting gatherings and events that renewal would come. Local meetings by contrast can seem so slow, so quiet, so mundane. Sometimes in worship it can feel as if nothing is happening at all. But through ReOlded eyes, I have come to know that it is in these little cells where the Divine Life is most patiently, persistently, and powerfully at work, shepherding hearts and shaping souls in relationship: daily forming the future of Friends. Through ReOlded eyes, it becomes absolutely clear that our local meetings are the crucible, the inflection point of the Quaker movement, and that it is there—here—that we who seek to tend the unfolding of this adventure of becoming Friends must focus our sustained efforts and attention.

With this in mind, I hope to share something from my field notes that might offer a glimpse into how this unbinding happens, seen with ReOlded eyes. Reflecting on travel in the ministry across North America and beyond over more than two decades, and in the particularity of seeking to serve and nurture those who serve in the more than 60 monthly meetings and dozens of smaller groups that make up New England Yearly Meeting, I see aspects of what I have come to understand as five **rhythms of common life** that are integral to the thriving of Friends meetings.

These rhythms-of worship, exploration, service, guidance, and testimony-are threads through which the Spirit weaves the fabric of our faith, sculpts the pattern of our hearts, and teaches us to live in the fullness of life for which we were born. As we move in these rhythms of common life, we are journeying together on a shared pilgrimage in the Light.

The **first and formative rhythm** at the center of our life as meetings is a rhythm of Worship. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, we share in a process of listening and yielding to the Spirit moving among us, and learn to receive and respond to the messages—both silent and spoken—that may arise in this time

together. In this process we are drawn together into what our tradition calls *covenant community*. As each of us learns, in the unfolding of time, to open our hearts to the Presence in our midst, we grow in tenderness and sensitivity to the promptings of Love and Truth that make a home within us. As this happens, we also grow in relationship and tenderness with those who share and have shared these benches with us. In this way, we become a covenant community.

Through Re-Olded eyes—if we persist in it—coming to meeting for worship becomes not an activity we fit into our already overburdened schedules when we can, but the anchor of our lives. A place of refreshment, of refuge, of testing, a pool of living water into which we can dive deeply, from which we can drink deeply and feel our thirsting spirits restored.

And so, the rhythm of worship is inextricably bound up with the formation—if we allow it—of a covenant community: that is, a sacred bond that is both Divine and human, an anchor point where we can come to discover our primary identity and belonging as children of God that is both always being offered and which must be accepted by each of us who choose to walk this path with one another in the Spirit. With this choice comes a commitment to be prepared to offer and receive both encouragement and challenge, both celebration and consolation, to meet each other where we are and to invite one another, when the time is right, to more.

We are called into an ever-deepening relationship with the Love at the Center of existence, an intimacy with the divine Reality that sustains our lives. This discovery can be felt in a moment; coming to know it more fully is the fruit of time.

Whatever additional beautiful ways we express our faith as a worshipping community—through dance, through song, through prepared messages or prayers—this common life of a covenant community is grown, nurtured, and tested through a regular rhythm of expectant waiting worship.

A **second rhythm** that sustains the life of a meeting is a rhythm of Exploration, where this covenanted community seeks regular opportunities to explore Friends' living tradition together, including both the writings and experience of Friends past and present, as well as the deeper roots of our life in the Christian and Hebrew Scriptures. In this rhythm we seek to reflect on and invite the guidance of our spiritual ancestors into our lives today. Here, through ReOlded eyes, we might ask: "How deep are my roots?" "How much have I explored, and how might I explore, the tradition of which we are the spiritual inheritors? What might I learn from the experience, writing, testimony, and traditions from which our life as contemporary Friends arises? How might we grow in our

shared spiritual understanding if we opened ourselves together to the wisdom offered through these sources?

In some of our meetings, this rhythm of exploration happens formally, through some kind of dedicated class or program. But the essence of this rhythm is the recognition that *we are not the first* to have sought to open our hearts to the living Spirit, not the first to have wrestled with the tension between God's invitation and the invitation of a culture of distraction and confusion. We are not the first to have sought the deeper wells of wisdom, the greater meaning for our lives, the place where grief and gratitude can take counsel, we're not the first to have despaired at the failures of leadership, and the capacity for human evil.

Exploration of our living tradition can happen in a spiritual friendship between two people who meet for tea or take a walk together, or through a regular practice of retreat, carried out over years among a small and sometimes-changing collection of Friends within the meeting. It can happen through a summer book group, where those interested in exploring a particular topic make a short commitment to gather, reflect, and learn together. It can happen through sharing our spiritual journeys, through open and reflective Bible study informed by the insights of early Friends and of fellow travellers whose provocative perspectives might help us to deepen our sense of the profound and vast waters of tradition and interpretation in which we swim. It can happen through personal reading of the journals of Friends from generations before, and how that exploration might find form in vocal ministry, or in a moment of humble counsel over coffee after the rise of meeting.

How we engage with tradition matters. The theological historian and teacher Jaroslav Pelikan, whose work I first discovered through just such a "rhythm of exploration" with my good friend Wess Daniels, makes a helpful and (for me) memorable distinction, a powerful contrast between "traditionalism" and "tradition." "Traditionalism", Pelikan suggests, is the dead faith of the living. "Tradition", in contrast, is the "living faith of the dead." It is this understanding of tradition as the living faith of those who have come before us, present and dynamic and available in our own times, that I believe is essential to our common life as Friends, and why this rhythm of exploration is so important.

Like any living tradition, ours is multi-vocal; we will assuredly find within our shared tradition aspects which give words to our deepest experiences and responses to our persistent questions, just as we will no doubt encounter voices, perspectives, practices, and understandings that are obstacles to us, which we cannot hear or see as true, which we may need—even if only for this time—to strenuously reject. That is the nature of life

in a covenant community which practices a rhythm of exploration of this kind. Like anything worthwhile, it can be challenging. But it is also vital.

I can't ignore that tonight those of us in Richmond are gathering just steps from the former study of D. Elton Trueblood, a founder of Earlham School of Religion and one of the Friends whose service most shaped the Religious Society of Friends in the twentieth century and beyond. A consistent focus of his teaching was that if we as Friends come to view the traditions in which we are rooted as simply "roots from which we have grown" rather than "roots that sustain us, from which we draw present nourishment", we would quickly, in a generation or two, become like "cut flowers": beautiful for a moment, but in some ultimate sense, already dead.

We who have ears to hear, let us hear.

However this rhythm happens, the ongoing nurture of the covenant relationship between each participant in the meeting through the exploration of our living tradition nurtures the meeting as a whole.

A **third** rhythm which we can discover as essential in the life of a healthy meeting is a rhythm of Service, where we take responsibility both for calling forth the diverse spiritual gifts and capacities of those who are covenanted with us, and for faithfully stewarding and sharing the gifts, resources, and capacities we carry for the building up of the whole community.

Foundational to earlier generations of Friends' understandings, and of many today, is the trust, drawing from the writings and experience of the early Church, that spiritual gifts are given by God through each member of the whole body of the meeting for the building up of the covenant community, and to help us to be channels of love, mercy, and justice in this world we share.

Central to the Re-Olding of service is the affirmation that it is our responsibility, as part of a covenant community, not simply to keep watch for the gifts, whether nascent or more fully flowering, in every one, but to *joyfully call them out*—perhaps Lazarus-style—and then, to do all we can to remove barriers so that they might be given their fullest expression.

This nurture and encouragement of the exercise of gifts is not about elevating anyone over anyone else, or about someone gaining a special status or privilege. It is about trusting, from a foundation of gratitude, that God's abundance is poured out among us, and that every gift, every capacity, every resource of our lives can be turned into the

channel of universal Love, if we choose it, with the help of the covenant community. No act of service is insignificant. The forms they take are myriad, but at their heart they all spring from the same source, and the same intention: to help make visible, in practical, embodied terms, a community that is a sign, a foretaste, an outpost, even a rampart—of the Reign of Heaven, here, now, and yet still coming into the world in fullness—both to those in the meeting, and any whose lives might be touched through relationship.

It can happen at a bedside in a critical care unit, or in the work of keeping the meetinghouse warm, or giving a ride to a traveling minister, or helping another Friend find release from financial entanglements by helping them make a plan to pay off their debt. It can happen when we pray for an angry, wayward and suffering teenager, or hold the meeting for worship in the Light of God's Love, or clerk the meeting's discernment. It can happen when we sit together in the presence of a profound inexplicable loss beyond words. It can happen in doing the dishes after a potluck, or delivering food so someone won't have to miss a meal tonight. It can happen as Friends not as vulnerable as some accompany an immigrant neighbor, or as Friends among us from recent immigrant backgrounds as well as those who were born here nurture the web of resilience within and beyond our Quaker communities, bringing us all to live more fully as one People in the Spirit, regardless of nationality or status.

These acts of service reveal our hearts and knit us together; they are practical, tangible, touchable signs of the work of the Spirit through and among us. The life of the covenant community is sustained and renewed by this rhythm of service.

Through a **fourth rhythm**—a rhythm of Guidance— we seek—or seek to return to—the intimate and liberating instruction and counsel of the Spirit, the will of God however imperfectly we may be able to name it for ourselves and for our covenant communities —a Way that in some sense wants to be known by us. Both through personal discernment as well as through communal practice, it is essential to the life of a Friends meeting to cultivate openness, receptivity, and responsiveness to God's guidance, and to clear away whatever distractions or obstacles may stand in the way.

I take it as a basic understanding of the Religious Society of Friends that each of us can be intimately led and guided by the Spirit—the same Spirit that was, before the world was. And that, however imperfectly, we have come to discover that we can communally experience this guidance for our life together as a covenant community.

In acknowledging this to be true, it can be tempting to place the emphasis almost exclusively on the message we might receive, the decision we might make, or the outcome we think it points to. Essential to our practice of discernment however is the

cultivation of a listening heart and the loosening of the binds that might prevent us from hearing clearly, both individually and as covenant community. Through the rhythm of Guidance we come to know the will and way of God that becomes imprinted on our hearts. As we listen and live this Way, we can unbind each other's attention from the distractions of the world and help each other more and more to orient our hearts to the work of the Spirit around us and among us.

Foundational to this understanding is a rootedness in gratitude—for the breath in our lungs, for the rising of the sun on a new day and the first flowers of Spring, for the opportunity to gather in fellowship as Friends, for the quiet joy that meets us as we discover the place of unity with God, and witness the fruits of the Spirit being born among us.

Discernment, then, is not simply a *decisionmaking* process, but rather a process of having our hearts prepared to be the recipients and bearers of the Love and Compassion that come through studying with a Teacher whose heart seeks to be made known among us. If we allow it, this rhythm of Guidance reshapes our own hearts. On this long and winding path, we might someday—often with surprise and wonder—come to discover that we suddenly experience the world in a new way, perhaps with a fuller measure of acceptance, humility, patience, or loving humor. Long-held hurts might gently fall away. We are coming to see ourselves and others with the gaze of a Shepherd whose gentle direction we are learning to heed. This can happen slowly, as little by little we find ourselves more free from the resentment and anger that may be plaguing us. It can happen in a moment, when in the midst of rising rage or condemnation we are swept with compassion or forgiveness, overcome with a humble empathy that displaces prideful insistence.

Through ReOlded Eyes, we come to understand discernment as an unfolding in which the Reign of Heaven comes more alive in us, offering the opportunity to turn toward every decision, every crisis, every aspect of our living with greater attention to the Voice we have come to know. And from this place, the next step becomes clear.

When we consider the rhythm of guidance we might also speak about “a leading” or “a call” to take up a particular piece of work. While this sometimes may involve a concrete project or action we are to take, responding to a leading in a fuller sense can be understood as less about a fixed outcome and more about learning to be led. It takes time and regular practice to learn to hear the Shepherd's voice. It is the work of a lifetime to humbly seek to distinguish that Voice from the many others that demand our attention.

Generations of Friends have placed great emphasis on the importance of being watchful about where we place our attention, even and especially in the small things. Because it is where we place our attention that will shape how we live. As Jesus reminded his disciples, “It is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.”

The more we find time and ways to listen for the Voice of the Spirit in our lives, the more finely tuned the ear of our heart becomes so that we may hear more easily and respond more readily—and reflexively—when we are called.

An orientation of Re-Olding reminds us that this has been a key concern of Friends since our early days. James Nayler warns: *For you will find many plants besides the tree of life, all of which seek to be fed and strengthened in the mind and in the affections.*

Another way of saying this might also be that the more we fill our lives with other voices, the more we give our time and attention to things that distract us, or that call us toward grievance rather than gratitude, toward an orientation that places our self-centered desires above the needs of others, the further we are drawn away from the capacity to hear the voice of Truth calling us home. This is why a communal practice of Guidance is essential in the life of our meetings.

A **fifth rhythm of common life** that is vital for a meeting to thrive is a rhythm of Testimony, where we support one another, again and again, as we each—and all—seek to carry the treasure and the implications of our faith into the whole of our lives, partnering with the Spirit in the redeeming of Creation, bearing the witness of joy and new life, as the community of Lazarus did, in the face of an often discordant and deadening culture.

And here is where I want to especially emphasize a particular gift that an attention to ReOlding might offer us. I believe that more than ever, we need to re-examine what we mean by “testimony”, and how our understanding of this term shapes our living.

I want to invite you to close your eyes for a moment as we settle into a brief period of stillness, and turn your attention to a person who has been a mentor, guide, or example to you in your walk of faith. Whose example, explicit or otherwise, offered you a pattern in some sense for how you hope to live today? Whose character, being, presence illustrates for you what it means to lead a faithful life, as part of a covenant community on pilgrimage in the Friends tradition?

Someone once asked me who I would say my mentor was. I will always remember the startled silence I fell into, finding myself at a loss for words. Why was this such a difficult

question to answer? Did I believe, from some deep wound of loneliness, that I had no one in my life I could claim in that way? And then, with a rush of tears, I realized: The question was difficult to answer, not because I had not been blessed by a mentor, but because I have been blessed with so many. These include not least a substantial number of you who are in this room, or listening online from your own home places. And I feel the presence of many others, no longer with us in body, hovering 'round us as we open our hearts to remember. So great a cloud of witnesses.

This, Friends, is what we might glimpse through ReOlding of our understanding of Testimony. I remember how powerful it was for me, and yet also how ringingly natural, when I first learned that the term “memorial minute”—that kind of spiritual obituary that many meetings write to remember and celebrate the life of a Friend after their passing—was relatively new in some Friends communities. The older term for this practice and the text that results, still in use among some of us, is “A testimony to the Grace of God as witnessed in the life of [this Friend].” And here, to me, is the place where the meaning of testimony turns.

ReOlding our understanding of testimony invites us to consider every aspect of our lives as bearing witness—as giving evidence—not to an abstract set of principles, but to the reality of the Love of God, at work in the world, through the vehicle of our changed and changing lives.

I want to invite you to think back to the faces of those Friends you brought to mind a few moments ago. Can you see, amidst whatever other qualities come to mind, the presence of their joy?

I have felt led several times over the years to open my eyes during a meeting for worship in my home meeting, and, with a tender gaze, to look around the room at those gathered. Through the years, through life together as covenant community, I have been given glimpses into the wounds, the pain, the grief, the triumphs, the struggles, the catastrophic heartbreak, the redemption, and the profound resilience that abides in the hearts of these particular Friends with whom I share in worship, and who have walked with me in the wildernesses of my own life. Sharing life together on this path of faith has changed us, and our lives bear witness to this humble and grace-filled Truth—even when all we have to give is a “cold and a broken hallelujah.” “By my works, the apostle James writes, I will show you my faith.” By our living, we make visible what is truly at the Center of our lives.

There is no perfection here; the story isn't finished. There is plenty of messiness and ugliness and woundedness and stumbling.

But through all this, the testimony that is the life of our meetings can and does bear witness that the steps of our feet are turning toward a way of being and becoming more alive in wonder, more free to love, more resilient, more forgiving, more grounded in joy. This testimony isn't just for us—it is a testimony to the whole world, to all of our siblings of all faiths and none, all with whom we share this wonder-filled, suffering, resplendent Creation. Perhaps as we seek to be in relationship with our neighbors, welcoming their gifts as well, the wider communities in which our meetings are rooted might grow in love, in tolerance, in resilience, in common care. And perhaps, for some we meet, the witness of our common life just might be received as a welcome and open invitation to join us on the journey.

In the rhythm of testimony, we learn to support one another as we seek to carry the promptings, implications, and fruits of our faith into the whole of our lives. This is not limited to public activism, or to political advocacy, or to public preaching, or to grand acts of courage. Testimony is the way that our repatterned hearts make palpably present the character of the Friend we are coming to know. It is the daily willingness to be instruments of a humble, world-changing power, sowing perennial seeds of a deeper and more resilient hope, an enduring and steadfast joy, wherever we may come. This is the rhythm of Testimony.

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So: five rhythms of common life, always in process in the covenant communities of a Friends meeting on pilgrimage, revealed with ReOlded Eyes. Five ways that the bound-up Lazarus among us—both thee and me—can be set free to more fully express the pattern of Divine Love in our world.

I have borne witness to the unbinding of Lazarus many times over the years through an unfolding journey of ministry under the care of my home meeting in Vermont. For two decades my service in ministry has been under the care of our local meeting, held in various forms by a group of Friends appointed by the meeting to exercise oversight and to assist in the stewardship of the responsibility the meeting has recognized in me.

I say responsibility, because that is my understanding of what it has meant to be recognized as carrying a particular gift of ministry in speech, writing, and presence: a charge from the community that has seen the life of the Spirit arising in me, calling me out of the cave of brokenness, again and again, and who in the unbinding of my heart and the unraveling of my grave clothes, has helped me to be a sometimes encourager for others. **I can testify tonight to two miracles, then:** To the infinite grace and

presence and re-enlivening power of God. And to the sacred participation of a particular collection of people, woven together in Spirit and shared living, in whose hands my grave clothes became part of a tapestry of resilience and joy.

And so we come to Joy.

We can hear its echoes in the Book of Job, when the Voice of the Eternal speaks from out of the Whirlwind to describe the first moments of Creation: "when the morning stars all sang together, and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy..." We can perhaps recognize that joy as the same that came to certain shepherds in the frozen night of First Century Palestine under foreign occupation and local corrupt misrule. It is the same joy that was born of the community in the unbinding of Lazarus—and the joy of those in later years who gave us this story—which so threatened the foundations of empty religion and empire that what followed from it bent the arc of history.

It is the same joy that embraces us in the testimony of James Nayler: tried for horrid blasphemy; tortured, branded; beaten and robbed by brigands, left for dead; yet still proclaiming with humble beauty the character of the Spirit in whose power he was set free. It is the same joy on the lips of Mary Dyer, as she was led to the gallows on Boston Common for preaching freedom in the Life and Power, proclaiming in that darkest hour the deepest joy she had ever felt, that "no eye could see, no ear could hear, no tongue could speak, no heart could understand." It is the joy that made its unassailable home in the heart of the Dutch-Jewish mystic Etty Hillesum, as she chose—though she could have avoided it—to accompany her neighbors and family to the Auschwitz death camp, to bear the witness of what she knew as "the thinking heart of God" among them, knowing that Love is stronger than death.

It is the same Joy described by Elise Boulding, the 20th Century Friends minister and peace advocate, who in 1956 offered this witness:

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 [us] to travel to the very gates of heaven and to the depths of hell, and never cease rejoicing.

It is this same joy, and the unshakable power of it—which we can discover together in the common life of our meetings—that mourns with God's beloveds held even now in the misery of detention camps; with the sick, the suffering, and the lonely; which cradles

children made orphans by the blasphemy of war waged in the name of the Prince of Peace. It is the joy that rekindles the fires of hope and animates the heart yearning, willing and laboring for justice and wholeness in these times. It is the Joy that is set before us also, now and forevermore. It is the Joy that overcomes the world.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that clings so closely—that so easily distracts—and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, the founder and perfecter, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and now abides at the inflection point—where everything comes together—the place of the homecoming in the Power and Presence of God.”

An Invitation, for after the lecture

Someone once jokingly suggested to me that if they were to assign me a “life verse” from Scripture, it would be the one from near the end of the Gospel of John where Jesus says to his disciples, “I have so much more to say to you...” And I do. I had hoped to explore with you the potential implications of this practice of seeing with ReOlded Eyes for other dimensions of our common life as Friends.

I’d have loved to explore further how, with ReOlded Eyes, we might approach the challenges of nurturing servant leadership in our meetings, or spiritual authority, or our relationship with the seasonality and the longer view of time, perhaps through our participation in quarterly and yearly meetings. Or how a ReOlding of our perspective might help us reveal and perhaps turn toward an emphasis on function over form in Friends organizations. Or how a perception of ReOlding might help us more fully restore a responsibility and rootedness in place, a more whole relationship between humanity and all with whom we share this miraculous, generous, suffering Creation.

I was excited to share with you about the spring migration of salamanders in the vernal pools in the hills where I live, and about the autumnal pilgrimage of thousands of raptors through the forested river valleys and ridges of my home. About seasoning firewood, and making honey. About the parable of the swallows, and what it might have to teach us about our spiritual journey together.

But I won’t—not tonight. Because we are finite creatures in finite time, and more would be distracting. So—perhaps even better—I must leave that to an unfolding conversation of which I hope this evening might be just an early invitation. So if you are willing, I want to send you out with some homework. The full and imperfect text of this address will be available to each of you who registered to attend, or anyone who emails the Quaker Leadership Center to ask for a copy.

My invitation to you is that you—and we—become (and receive through the Spirit) the “so much more to so say” that I was yearning for. This evening, or in the coming weeks and months, I invite you to find someone (hopefully with their permission) with whom to share your reflections, questions, or wonderings about anything you heard or felt tonight—ideally with someone who is a part of your local community of faith. Once you have shared—if they are willing—ask them to share with you, too. And see where the conversation might go from there.

REPORT OF VISIT TO IRELAND YEARLY MEETING AND UGANDA RESTORTION PROJECT-April 8-24,2026

I thank God for the journey to Ireland. When I arrived at Boston airport, I discovered that no computers can be put into the checked luggage (they contain lithium), so I had to carry the two laptops I had been given for Nyama Friends School in my backpack, which enabled me to lose some weight as I lugged the heavy bag down many long corridors in the airports. In Boston after the confusion of this, somehow, the airplane pillow around my neck slipped off. I stopped to buy some tea to help calm down and decide what to do. I happened to sit between a couple going for a wedding in Ireland, and a runner going to Dublin Marathon. We began sharing our stories, and they got so interested in the stories I shared about East Africa, that the racer donated me his pillow when I mentioned its loss! The second miracle, was when we landed at Dublin, a trio of men on a business trip who sat near me offered to carry my backpack to the baggage claim place. I then went with the backpack and small suitcase on a bus and a train to visit Heather Bewley who lives just outside Dublin. It was a joy to find the gorse bushes all bright yellow, as well as other flowers and trees in bloom, as I had left some snow in New Hampshire. Heather took me to the Yearly Meeting. The first night, I couldn't figure out how to get the showers to work and it was chilly so I slept in several layers of clothes including my jacket with a hood. When I woke up I thought it had snowed at night, but it was trees white with blossoms instead of snow!



View from Bewley dining table

Mountain with gorse bushes in foreground

It was a joy to visit this small yearly meeting in session. The theme of the sessions was "Deepening our Spirituality". It seemed to focus more on all the ways that ministry can be done using the arts- Much of my time was spent with the young adult Friends- including two women travelling in ministry from Britain and Ohio Conservative YM plus the clerk of Oslo,(Norway) Friends Meeting. It seemed like there were as many visitors from other countries a there were Irish Friends present. I had many interesting times of informal sharing with others during meals and tea breaks, and then was asked to share about Friends in East Africa during the last business session.



Ireland YM in session

Speaking at Ireland YM

The last day I was collected by Charles and Marge Lamb and driven to their home out in the countryside. I was grateful that there was a national protest going on blockading major highways over the increase in carbon taxes and cost of petrol (due to the closing of the strait.) It meant that instead of taking the expressway across Ireland, we took all back roads, enjoying the lush greenness of the rural countryside.



Charles and Marge Lamb



Charles on morning walk.



Magpie

it was a joy to see Charles and Marge after many years, take a walk through the countryside, and relax a day before travelling on to Uganda. Seeing the wind turbines and solar panels that I thought were a lake at first helped me prepare to go to Uganda for a climate restoration project.



Wind turbines



Solar panels that look like a lake!



Peaceful cows

I then took a bus back to Dublin airport. Had only 1 hour in Heathrow to change flights from Terminal 2 to terminal 5. Had to run the whole way with heavy backpack. I arrived panting and extremely thirsty, so the stewardess let me have a bottle of water - but otherwise you have to pay for water in planes these days. Arrived in Nairobi that night, slept some hours and returned to airport ready to fly on to Kisumu. However there was a confusion in the ticket and the only flight they could offer was one the next night. I was blessed to have met a Kenyan woman who was in the same predicament who had come from London as well. She offered me a ride in her family's car direct to Kakamega, so we drove across Kenya arriving in Kakamega as night began. Pastor Shamala from Kakamega rescued me and drove me to Agnetta's. I arrived there at 9PM, ate a quick meal and went to bed and slept for over 10 hours. Due to a mistake of Safaricom, I had to go to Kakamega the next day, instead of resting, in order to get my Kenyan cell phone working. I travelled on the back road by piki (motorcycle) driven by Elkanah, a young man I had known since he was a young boy. He drove slowly and carefully and I greeted or waved at all those along the way. Showing strangers that they are worth greeting, is a way to cheer them, as well as give me joy. I was reminded of the Buddhist monks who walked on foot from Texas to Washington DC this year who smiled and greeted all peacefully, that ended up attracting large crowds wanting to live peacefully again (during the violent times in USA).

On Friday, Agnetta and I then went by pikis and matatus to eastern Uganda. We visited Alfred and Centrine Wasike and met their new daughter (named after me). Then on to Apollo and Sylvia Wopichos in Mbale. On Saturday we woke up at 4am, and took a matatu to Lira, and another to Kigumba, and pikis to Nyama Friends School in northwestern Uganda.



Leaders of Nyama Friends Church



Children dancing with joy to see visitors

We arrived as Juliet and Jacqueline, officials from USFW Uganda from Semuto Friends were finishing their workshop with the women. They encouraged them and helped them see how it would benefit them to join the USFW and the many things they can learn to lift themselves up.

On Sunday the 19th, we visited Nyama Friends Church in the morning for their regular service. Agnetta was given a chance to preach and spoke on John 15:14. "You are my Friends if you do what I teach", emphasizing the need to live and act as Friends of Christ, not just speak about Christ. I gave them my travel minute and explained to them how such documents help you know who is a genuine Quaker and their responsibility to endorse the minute sharing what I did there (not just send greetings back to the traveler's home meeting.)

That afternoon, we held a workshop for leaders of the community, leaders of the Friends church, and leaders of the school. We had the district forester teach a lesson. He cleverly had the people figure out how much money could be earned by planting 2.5 acres of trees versus 25 acres of maize (corn). At first it looked like you gained a lot more planting maize, until you realize the difference in acreage. Then he also shared about which indigenous trees provided medicine, and what were the best ways to plant trees to insure their survival. After a big meal, we then all planted a bunch of trees= most of which were indigenous fruit trees on the school property. I also taught a lesson on how to avoid needing to use medicines.



District Forester teaching. Head teacher with meal Women plant a tree Community leaders.

On Monday morning, we met all the students of the school at their morning assembly. Each class lined up, from kindergarden to grade 7, raised the Uganda flag (that has a crested crane as its logo), and sang their national anthem. They were supposed to start at 8:30am but by 9:30 the students gathered and Agnetta and I both spoke to them all some words of encouragement. Then we officially handed over the two computers I had carried. The staff then prayed over the computers and the head teacher enjoyed opening them up to find they worked. Their staff member who is the technology expert had not yet arrived!



Part of the 250+students at morning assembly

Teacher arrives late

Trying the computers

We then had to return via pikis, buses and matatus and reached Mbale, Uganda by 9PM. On Tuesday we returned to Agnetas in Kenya.

On Wednesday, we went to Kakamega and had a very helpful visit with Getry Agizah at the new FUM office in Handidi, followed by a lunch meeting at a local cafe with Margaret Bolenge. We enjoyed a time to share together and support each other. All Friends in Kenya are mourning the sudden death of Wilhite, a middle aged man who ran the radio station for Friends and had helped East African Friends join the digital age, as well as run all the electronic equipment at many conferences.



Getry at work

Flowers at USFW Kenya

Calf born this week at Agnetas.

Daffodils welcome me home

On Thursday I began my journey back to USA. I was surprised that the airlines in Kisumu would not check my bag direct to Boston, but made me carry it onto the small prop plane, and meanwhile their agent had broken the handle, so it would not close to fit properly. It was impossible to check in or reconfirm my flight via British Air, using my cell phones so I ended up in Nairobi 6 hours early. I was glad to feast at the airport cafe on an Asian salad- of ramen noodles with peanut sauce, cashews, orange and apple slices, lettuce, red cabbage, and parsley. It was my one meal for the day, as the airplane food was extremely overspiced or overcooked- almost inedible. Flew on to Boston after the dash between terminals at Heathrow, and took the bus from Boston to Concord, NH, where my kind neighbor collected me. Arrived home at 4PM. Cooked up a quick supper, took a shower and went to bed and slept almost 12 hours!

The spring flowers had burst into bloom while I had been away, and welcomed me home.

On Sunday, I attended my local meeting plus a planning session for the memorial service for Betty Straw, who died on Easter Sunday after having completed 100 years of life.

Thanks to all for the time on the ground in Ireland and Uganda, plus passing through Kenya. So much better than the flying in airplanes these days!

In gratitude,

Marian